The Normativity of Public Freedom:
Arendt, Exemplarity, Judgment

Nicholas Poole

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ABSTRACT

Democracies today face a crisis of exemplarity. Figures who once populated our political landscape are being contested or replaced, while new exemplars are as likely to be curated by algorithms and celebrity culture as discovered through democratic struggle. The problem is not only empirical but theoretical: if examples inform our normative horizons, how can they serve as standards for justice without collapsing into moralist abstraction or realist resignation? At the center of this puzzle lies what I call the circle of exemplarity: if examples guide judgment, yet judgment also determines which examples to follow, how can exemplarity yield genuine standards for justice?

This dissertation positions Hannah Arendt as uniquely responsive to this circle and the crisis it names. Against traditions that either reduce exemplars to illustrations of principles or deny their normative power altogether, Arendt locates exemplarity at the very heart of judgment, the 'most political of our mental faculties.' By reconstructing her scattered but insistent appeals to exemplarity across her unfinished writings on judgment, I argue that Arendt redeems the circle of exemplarity as a worldly practice of critical judgment: a reflective mode of responsiveness that orients freedom and responsibility toward building more just worlds.

Chapter One re-reads *The Human Condition* to dislodge the view that Arendt was uniformly hostile to standards in politics. I argue that her rejection of instrumentalism in fact prepares the ground for exemplarity as a non-instrumental kind of standard appropriate to plurality and natality. Chapter Two clarifies the objective axis of exemplarity: how exemplary appearances disclose emergent norms that make an indeterminate claim to be followed in the imaginations of spectators. Chapter three develops the subjective axis: how responsiveness to exemplarity becomes responsibility for action. Here I introduce the concept of *heautonomy*, drawn from Kant, to describe how citizens cultivate democratic agency by reflectively endorsing examples as company in view of their own appearing in the world as potential examples to be followed. Across these chapters, I show why examples that affirm freedom and equality are worthy of public endorsement from within the resources of exemplarity itself.

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Judgment alone can find standards
—from the old German words stehen *and* ort*, a standing place—*
around which we can rally and for which we strive that they may prevail.
It is our great misfortune that Hannah Arendt did not live to explore these matters
and it is our great fortune that she pointed the way.[1]

Each one, so liberal is the law,
May choose whom he appears before,
Pick any influential ghost
From those whom he admires the most.[2]

[1] Michael Denneny, "The Privilege of Ourselves: Hannah Arendt on Judgment," in *Hannah Arendt: The Recovery of the Public World*, ed. Melvyn A. Hill (St. Martin's Press, 1979), 266.
[2] W. H. Auden, *Collected Poems* (Random House, 1976), 164.

INTRODUCTION

There seem to be many sources of norms in our world. The *ought* by which we infer that two plus two equals four appears distinct from the *ought* that governs our choices not to lie or steal, for instance. But while it may appear comfortable to distinguish epistemic from moral normativity,[1] the question as to whether politics similarly constitutes its own normative domain has occupied political philosophers for some time. Realists have argued that politics indeed constitutes its own domain insofar as it is uniquely oriented toward the satisfaction of a distinct set of norms observable throughout the history of its practice, like order, security, and social cooperation.[2] Moral political philosophers, by contrast, have argued that since there are many ways of pursuing such norms, moral principles are required to guide their pursuit in the right direction.[3] Where both positions embrace a broadly political understanding of normativity, then, the derivation of the ought in each case is different: from the history of politics on the one hand, moral principles on the other.

Both positions have advantages and disadvantages. If realism has sobriety on its side, it can come close to accepting practices that our moral intuitions reel against. If moralism seeks to honor those intuitions, it does so at the risk of drifting from the actual world we live in. This dissertation operates under the belief that the best way to avoid the pitfalls at either extreme is by clarifying a source of normativity that lies between them. If realism derives its norms from what *is* the case, and moralism from what is *ideally* the case, then we would do well to consider cases that *appear as ideals,* or as they *ought to be*. These are exemplars: persons and events that, through very particularity, reveal norms and possibilities that can be generalized through public endorsement and emulation.

The domain in which exemplarity is traditionally most recognizable is aesthetics, where it is common to adjectivize or generalize the names of persons and works to indicate a domain of aesthetic influence, as in 'Kafkaesque,' 'Orwellian,' or 'Impressionism.' But politics and morality are no different.

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[1] Since Hume, the question 'what should I think?' is often considered distinct from the question 'what should I do?' Recent work argues, however, that this division is misleading. McHugh, Way, and Whiting note that our core normative terms—'ought', 'right', 'justification'—apply to both belief and action without obvious ambiguity, suggesting that the epistemic/practical distinction itself remains in need of explanation rather than presupposition (Conor McHugh, Jonathan Way, and Daniel Whiting, eds., *Normativity: Epistemic and Practical*, First edition (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2018).

[2] Bernard Williams characterizes these and others as "first political questions," which precede moralist approaches that take morality as an 'instrument' (utilitarianism) or 'structure' (Kantianism) for political practice (Bernard Williams, "Realism and Moralism in Political Theory," in *In the Beginning Was the Deed: Realism and Moralism in Political Argument* (Princeton University Press, 2007), 1–17). Raymond Guess similarly positions realism against ideal approaches that treat politics as 'applied ethics' (Raymond Geuss, *Philosophy and Real Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

[3] See: Jürgen Habermas and Thomas MacCarthy, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action* (Wiley-Blackwell, 1990); John Rawls, "The Priority of Right and Ideas of the Good," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 17, no. 4 (1988): 251–76.

Our language for styles and forms of government, for instance, also derives from exemplary cases, as in 'Bonapartism,' 'Thatcherism,' or 'totalitarianism,' and the common law tradition (perhaps the most enduring exemplarist institution in Western history) also develops its norms through exemplary cases. *Brown v. Board of Education* in the United States or *Delgamuukw v. British Columbia* in Canada exemplify how legal reasoning can turn singular cases into general measures of justice by renewing the meaning of equality and belonging through precedent-defining judgments.[4] And moral traditions of various kinds have always looked to exemplars for guiding ethical and spiritual development, as when a Christian imitates the example of Jesus,[5] a Buddhist meditates on living examples of the Buddha,[6] or an Aristotelian pursues *eudaimonia* by modelling a practically wise *Phronimos*.[7] Indeed, every era and every culture has promoted persons and events that reveal capabilities they find worthy of emulation.[8] And ours is no different. We internalize the claims of exemplars over the course of our lives, whether by exposure to the cultural artifacts that represent them, or by directly witnessing and reflecting upon the exceptional actions of those around us.[9] We reify their otherwise fleeting lessons through various kinds of memorialization, like storytelling, displaying photographs, maintaining libraries, constructing syllabi, or building monuments, each of which provides occasion for imaginative return and establishes a kind of normative recursivity that serves to fashion, if indeterminately, our values, character, and conscience over time.[10] So deeply can exemplars

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[4] According to Maksymilian Del Mar, the concept of exemplarity "captures the complexity of the process of common law reasoning: coming to a decision is a multifaceted, multitemporal exercise, which requires a decision maker to move dynamically between describing past cases in light of the present case so as to minimize friction between them (''typicality''), describing the particular facts and the specific issue in the present case (''atypicality''), and describing the present case with a view to how it will be used by people (officials and citizens) in the future (''modelling for the future'') (Maksymilian Del Mar, "Exemplarity and Narrativity in the Common Law Tradition," *Law & Literature*, no. 3 (2013): 392.).

[5] Thomas Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ* (Vintage, 1998).

[6] Robert Thurman, *The Jewel Tree of Tibet: The Enlightenment Engine of Tibetan Buddhism* (Atria Books, 2006), 1.3.

[7] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Terence Irwin (Hackett, 1999), bk. VI.

[8] Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, First Princeton Classics ed, ed. Willard R. Trask and Edward W. Said, Princeton Classics (Princeton University Press, 2013); W.M. Brinner, "Prophet and Saint: The Two Exemplars of Islam," in *Saints and Virtues*, ed. J.S. Hawley (University of California Press, 2013); Peter Brown, "The Saint as Exemplar in Late Antiquity," *Representations* 1, no. 2 (1983): 1–25; Jane D. Chaplin, *Livy's Exemplary History* (Oxford University Press, 2000); Amy Olberding, *Moral Exemplars in the Analects: The Good Person Is That* (Routledge, 2012); Mathew B. Roller, *Models from the Past in Roman Culture: A World of Exempla* (Cambridge University Press, 2018).

[9] Social psychologists have recently been exploring this dimension of social learning: Jonathan Haidt and Sarah B. Algoe, "Witnessing Excellence in Action: The 'Other Praising' Emotions of Elevation, Gratitude, and Admiration," *Journal of Positive Psychology* 4, no. 2 (2009): 105–27; Albert Bandura, *Social Learning Theory* (General Learning Press, 1971); Anton Bucher, "The Influence of Models in Forming Moral Identity," *International Journal of Educational Research* 27, no. 7 (n.d.): 1998; Scott R. Garrels, *Mimesis and Science: Empirical Research on Imitation and the Mimetic Theory of Culture and Religion*, Studies in Violence, Mimesis, and Culture (Michigan State University Press, 2011); Kang Lee, "Can Classic Moral Stories Promote Honesty in Children?," *Psychological Science* 25, no. 8 (2011): 1630–36; M.K. Matsuba and L.J. Walter, "Young Adult Moral Exemplars: The Making of Self through Stories," *Journal of Research on Adolescence* 15, no. 3 (2005): 275–97.

[10] For a good discussion of this recursivity from an Aristotelian/psychoanalytic perspective, see: Jonathan Lear, *Imagining the End: Mourning and Ethical Life* (The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2022), chap. 3.

inform our normative horizons that we might go as far as to say, with the poet W.H. Auden, "Give me a list of names in your life, and I will tell you who you are."[11]

Yet for all its ubiquity, as a public source of normativity exemplarity is far from stable. We do not today have an unambiguously authoritative pantheon of heroes, sages, and saints available to us as models for our norms and principles, and the politics of pluralism everywhere demonstrates that even those persons and events that do enjoy some measure of public authority are by no means immune to deep contestation. The signs that we are living through something like a *crisis of exemplarity* are all around us: longstanding statues are being toppled and new one's erected; mountains, rivers, streets, and institutions are being renamed to reflect the shifting values of the communities who refer to them; publishers, curators, and content creators are liberating themselves from the constraints of inherited canons by promoting authors, artists, and actors from historically under-represented groups, if only to face renewed criticisms from a wide range of viewpoints within the societies they aim to serve; once lauded names like Churchill, Jefferson, Gandhi, and St. Theresa of Calcutta have experienced such a reduction in public value that some have wondered whether our capacity to admire the virtues of imperfect persons is being swept away by a rising tide of puritanism in our political culture; and there has appeared from within democratic societies powerful figures like Donald Trump whose exemplification of domination and cruelty not only threaten to undermine many of the rights and freedoms won through democratic struggle over the last century, but also basic norms fundamental to democracy itself. Indeed, the horizon of figures in our imaginations is being turned over, revised, innovated, condensed, and expanded with such intensity that it may seem that any presumption of commonality with our peers can feel dangerously optimistic.

Adding to this is the fact that the imaginations of political spectators today are increasingly inundated by a flood of mimetic images the volume and frequency of which is unprecedented. While innovations in media technology have always reduced spatial and temporal distance, the speed of such innovation over the last several decades has served to collapse that distance almost entirely. The most consumed images today are the most condensed: bite-size memes and reels travelling around the globe in milliseconds often (though by no means always) to be forgotten soon after their parabola of influence crescendos.[12] Instead of imagining what was or could be, these technologies encourage spectators to outsource the exercise of their imaginations to ad agencies, corporations, content creators, AI algorithms

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[11] W. H. Auden, *Secondary Worlds* (Faber and Faber, 1968), 123.

[12] The effect of memes on political culture has been the subject of a growing field of research that explores their power to reflect and mobilize beliefs and attitudes towards current events. They have played significant roles in supporting or undermining the use of vaccines, political parties and representatives, and social movements like #MeToo or #BlackLivesMatter, to name a few. I am grateful to Caitlin Kyle for urging me to take social media spaces seriously as sites of political struggle with their own distinctive constraints and affordances. She has shown me that, despite my own minimal participation, these spaces have become consequential arenas of appearance through which political power now circulates and is contested.

and generators.[13] Exemplars are less often chosen for their democratic virtues than curated for us by the convergent forces of corporate profit, celebrity culture, and algorithmic amplification such that figures like Elon Musk more readily occupy our feeds than those like Malala Yousafzai, for instance.[14] While the internet has brought about new forms of interpersonal connection and creativity,[15] the democratic optimism that followed their advent seems to be withering under the sense that social media is making us lonelier, more fearful, less able to distinguish fact from fiction or discover commonality across differences.[16]

Evidently, then, we are still living through what Friedrich Nietzsche called the 'twilight of idols.'[17] But while every twilight portends darkness, the stars it makes visible carry the promise of a new dawn.[18] It is in the horizon of this new dawn that this dissertation moves. The crisis of exemplarity is less a symptom of waywardness as an expression of the freedom of citizens struggling to shape the world that shapes them. And the question on the horizon is whether exemplarist normativity contains within itself resources to honour the aspirations of the moral approach to politics by orienting these struggles towards the possibilities of freedom and equality that the crisis makes available, without for that relinquishing ties to the actual world of politics. For whether the twilight dims to a prelapsarian longing for lost traditions or a cynical disavowal of the pasts we invariably inherit will depend on reconciling the inevitability of the exemplary in our lives

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[13] The Instagramer 'eugbrandstrat' describes what he calls the 'culture of whiplash' that has taken hold of online spaces, in which it is no longer stories that matter but 'vibes': "Online, first class airplane walkthroughs sit next to people marching on the street sit next to 'get ready with me' reels sit next to images of children being starved. This semiotic breakdown is the new normal. Meaning is in free-fall when our context switches so violently with every scroll. We're left in a culture where no one can make sense of anything. Everyone has to process contradictory signals simultaneously. Luxury and suffering, sincerity and irony, progress and regression all fighting for cognitive real estate" (Eugbrandstrat. "Cultural Whiplash, Brands, and Hope vs. Cynicism." *Instagram*, August 4th, 2025, https://www.instagram.com/reel/DM88pSXybsW/).

[14] The managed horizon of admiration implied here might be recognized as a hallmark of what Sheldon Wolin called 'inverted totalitarianism,' a novel mode of power in late modern democracies, particularly the United States, in which corporate and state interests converge to manage rather than mobilize the public. Unlike the overt terror and ideological uniformity of classical totalitarian regimes, inverted totalitarianism preserves the outward forms of democracy—elections, rights, public speech—while hollowing them of substance, rendering citizens passive spectators within a system that subtly depoliticizes rather than openly represses (Sheldon S. Wolin, *Democracy Incorporated: Managed Democracy and the Specter of Inverted Totalitarianism* (Princeton University Press, 2008)).

[15] Social media was famously taken as an enabling condition for the popular uprisings of the Arab Spring, for instance, although the extent of its role has since been shown to be less significant than originally thought.

[16] While the most influential perspectives seem to be the most pessimistic, there remains considerable debate about the nuances and trends of social media's effect on democracy. See: Jonathan Haidt, "Why the Past 10 Years of American Life Have Been Uniquely Stupid: It's Not Just a Phase," *The Atlantic*, May 1, 2022, https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2022/05/social-media-democracy-trust-babel/629369/.; Gideon Lewis-Kraus, "How Harmful Is Social Media?," *The New Yorker*, July 2022.; C. Thi Nguyen, "Escape the Echo Chamber," *Aeon*, April 8, 2018, https://aeon.co/essays/why-its-as-hard-to-escape-an-echo-chamber-as-it-is-to-flee-a-cult.

[17] Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *Nietzsche: The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols, and Other Writings*, ed. Aaron Ridley and Judith Norman (Cambridge University Press, 2005).

[18] To adapt the words of Martin Luther King Jr: "Only when it is dark enough can you see the stars" (Martin Luther King, *A Call to Conscience: The Landmark Speeches of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.* (New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2001), 209). Nietzsche also used the metaphor of dawn as contrastive to twilight (Friedrich Nietzsche, *Daybreak*, ed. Maudemarie Clark and Brian Leiter, trans. R. J. Hollingdale, 1st ed (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997)).

with the fact that we share the world with others whose standpoints differ from our own. It will depend, in other words, on embracing a democratic politics of the exemplary.

This dissertation attempts to do just that. It responds to the crisis of exemplarity by exposing some of basic conditions of the kind of democratic politics it makes possible. I therefore take it as 'critical' in the original sense of the Greek word *krinein,* from which both 'crisis' and 'critique' derive. It seeks to discern the conditions or 'criteria' (*kritērion*) of a crisis (*krisis*) with an eye to moving through it (*krinesthai*); to bring to light the contours of the terrain in which we find ourselves stumbling to uncover the path by which it can be navigated freely. Critique in this sense is not a method applied to a topic, but the *way* appropriate to, and emergent from, crises as such.[19] It is a mode of responsiveness by which otherwise fragmented elements reveal their reciprocal relations to grow in the direction of wholeness. By granting the reality of crises within our world, then, critique serves to dissolve the pulse-raising connotations ordinarily associated with the word.[20] It supposes that crises are not sources of disorientation but of reorientation, and that for all our stumbling there is still a *terra firma* upon which we may walk and build freely.

The way of critique can also be called *judgment,* which is also implied in *Krisis* and *Krinein*.[21] To judge in the critical sense is not to stand outside a crisis and adjudicate it by reference to external principles, but to turn towards whatever appears within it to discern the conditions they themselves reveal.[22] This dissertation is thus both an exercise of, and argument for, the role of critical judgment in responding to the crisis of exemplarity. It is through judgment, I wish to argue, that the diffuse claims of exemplars can be oriented towards world-building projects promotive of the freedom and equality of plural persons. And behind this practical argument lies a more searching phenomenological one: judgment and the crisis of exemplarity are, in fact, coeval. They belong together in an originary way. Judgment is originally *responsive* to exemplarist normativity, and exemplarist normativity originally *calls forth* judgment. While judgment

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[19] It is perhaps worth noting that the Collins Dictionary word of the year for 2022 was 'permacrisis,' which it defines as "an extended period of instability and insecurity, especially one resulting from a series of catastrophic events" ('Permacrisis,'" in *Collins Dictionary*, 2022, https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/permacrisis.).

[20] "A crisis becomes a disaster only when we respond to it with preformed judgments, that is with prejudices" (Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought* (New York: Penguin, 2006), 174).

[21] *Krinein/Krisis* also meant "to separate, distinguish, choose, decide, judge." ("Crisis, N." *Online Etymology Dictionary.* January 2025. https://www.etymonline.com/word/crisis.). For a conceptual history of the link between crisis and judgment, see: Reinhart Koselleck, *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts*, trans. Todd Samuel Presner, Cultural Memory in the Present (Stanford University Press, 2002), chap. 14.

[22] Judgment in this sense is distinct from several alternative meanings, like the one operative in the Christian dictum, 'judge not lest ye be judged,' or the epistemic one animating the highly influential 'Good Judgment Project,' *viz*., the ability to accurately forecast future events (see: Philip E. Tetlock, *Expert Political Judgment: How Good Is It? How Can We Know?* (Princeton University Press, 2017).). As will be discussed below, these senses of judgment are in different ways indebted to a determinative model (Kant) in which judging is a matter of applying pre-given rules or laws to intuitions (be they transcendent, transcendental, or statistical). The kind of judgment I am here calling critical is rather the one that Kant calls reflective.

may be appropriate to crises *as such*, no matter their shape, it is the crisis of exemplarity that reveals what it is properly about.

The way I pursue these arguments is consistent with this coincidence. Instead of developing a free-standing articulation of the democratic politics of the exemplary through a direct consideration of its relevant phenomena (which may have its virtues), I rather embark upon a reconstructive reading of an exemplary political theorist whose writings I take as so many exercises of judgment responsive to the crisis of exemplarity in her midst.[23] This is Hannah Arendt. Arendt called judgment "the most political of our mental faculties" and placed exemplarity at its center. In so doing, she also placed exemplarity at the very heart of her political thought. Just how judgment and exemplarity relate to one another, however, has remained under-clarified in the now voluminous literature surrounding her work, the consequences of which have been, in my view, profound. By reconstructing Arendt's writings from the perspective this relationship, then, I not only wish to expose the core elements of the exemplarist conception of democratic politics for the sake of navigating the crisis of exemplarity in *our* midst, but also to provide a path of resolution to longstanding interpretative debates surrounding the reception of Arendt's writings.

Before introducing these elements any further, however, I wish to first problematize a range of issues that arise when we reflect on exemplarity in political life, and then to situate these issues in the context of the tradition of Western political thought. My hope is that by doing so we will gain a clearer sense of the significance of this project as well as Arendt's exemplary contribution to it.

I. Problematizing Exemplarity

In addition to their presence in monuments, photographs, artworks, place names, and memes, the claims of exemplars are also present in public and inter-personal speech. Many of the issues that arise when we consider exemplarity as a democratic source of normativity appear in this domain. Let us look at a few examples that, taken together, reveal the breadth of these issues:

a. In a 1968 speech in Memphis, Martin Luther King inspired a crowd of thousands to non-violent action in support of the city's striking sanitation workers by drawing upon the parable of the Good Samaritan from the book of Luke. In the parable, Jesus tells of a man who was left beaten and stripped of his clothes by robbers. A priest and a Levite pass him by, choosing not to help. Then "a man from another race," as King puts it, appears, administers aid, helps him onto his own donkey, brings him to an inn and pays for his lodgings. King said that Jesus called this man good because

[23] For Arendt, crises served as a kind of *epoché* or bracketing of the sense of order upon which we ordinarily rely to move through and orient ourselves in the world with others. Crises remind us of the fragile condition of political life, rooted in a delicate web of words and things that emerge between and are sustained by plural persons acting together.

"he had the capacity to project the 'I' into a 'thou,' and to be concerned with his brother." And it was precisely this question that he laid before his audience that night: "If [*we*] do not stop to help the sanitation workers, what will happen to *them*?"[24]

b. To justify his 2022 invasion of Ukraine to the Russian people, Vladimir Putin repeatedly invoked the horrors of the holocaust. The Ukrainian government "are a gang of […] neo-Nazis that settled in Kyiv and took the entire Ukrainian people hostage," he said in one instance.[25] When the atrocities committed by the Russian military on civilians were revealed to the world over the course of the ensuing war, Nazism was once again evoked, this time by the Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky in his attempt to keep alive the outrage, condemnation, and support of the West: "'Never again' has lasted only 77 years. We missed the evil. It was reborn, again and now. This is understood by all countries and nations who support Ukraine."[26]

c. When in 2021 the American senate reconvened to ratify the election of Joseph Biden after the storming of the capitol by supporters of the outgoing president Donald Trump, many of the ensuing chamber speeches passionately evoked moments of American history, like the American revolution and signing of the declaration, the war of 1812, the civil rights movement, and even the ancient Roman republic from which the founders drew inspiration. "I can think of only two times in America history that individuals laid siege to our capitol," said Cory Booker. "One was in the war of 1812. And the other was today. […] Both were waving flags […] to an individual surrendering democratic principles to a cult of personality. One was a monarch in England […] the other was Donald Trump. Yet the difference between these two is that one was another nation that tried to challenge the United States of America, while this time we brought this hell upon ourselves. […] I saw a confederate flag [in the mob]. I pray that we remember […] those Georgians who joined hands on a bridge called the Edmund-Pettus […] and said what we should say now, […] that 'together we shall overcome.'"[27]

d. During the Good Friday agreement between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, there appeared in the Irish Times a poem called 'Ceasefire' by Michael Longley that was read by millions. Written in the voice of King Priam, Longley evoked a moment near the end of Homer's

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[24] King, *A Call to Conscience: The Landmark Speeches of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.*, 219.

[25] "Ukraine War: President Putin Speech Fact-Checked," *BBC*, February 21, 2022, https://www.bbc.com/news/64718139.

[26] "War in Ukraine: Zelensky WW2 Speech Accuses Russia of Nazi Atrocities," *BBC*, May 8, 2022, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-61370906.

[27] *LIVE COVERAGE | Mob Storms the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6th 2021*, (Washington Post, 2021), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_EQfUbE4bL8&ab_channel=WashingtonPost.

The Iliad that spoke to the difficulty of forgiveness after conflict: "I get down on my knees / and do what must be done. / And kiss Achilles' hand, / The killer of my son."[28]

e. In 2002, bell hooks travelled to the home of her friend and fellow Kentuckian, Wendell Berry, where they discussed the relation between place, belonging and racism largely in reference to Berry's 1970 memoir, *The Hidden Wound*. She recounts a powerful moment in this text where the young Berry leaves his family, friends, and the unopened birthday gifts they had given to him to sit with his Black friend, Nick Watkins, who worked on the family farm but was excluded from the party on account of his race.[29] "This is just such a perfect metaphor," hooks says, "of what it means to give up unearned white privilege."[30] In her preamble to the conversation, hooks quotes a passage in which Berry himself reflects on that event and the importance of Nick and his partner Aunt Georgie in confronting racism: "The memory of [Nick and Aunt Georgie] has been one of the persistent forces in the growth of my mind. If I have struggled against the racism that I have found in myself, it has been largely because I have remembered my old sense of allegiance to them. That I have gone back to my native place, to live there mindful of its nature and its possibilities, is partly because of certain things I learned from them, of what they exemplified to me."[31]

f. My mother sometimes invokes a saying of her mother's, "Life is not a Pepsi cola commercial," which often springs to both our minds whenever we encounter excessive idealism in ourselves or others.

g. In the second episode of season five of *Star Trek: The Next Generation,* Captain Jean-Luc Picard finds himself stranded on a planet inhabited by an alien race called the Tamarians about whom little is known on account of the untranslatability of their language. Although their words could be translated, the meaning of their grouping within sentences could not. Before long, Picard encounters a member of this race, Dathon, who throws Picard a dagger and repeats the phrase "Darmok and Jalad at Tanagara." Picard is puzzled, assumes hostility, and holds his ground until Dathon leaves. When Dathon returns the next morning under threat by an aggressive creature, Picard slowly learns that the phrase refers to two figures of different races from Tamarian history who became friends by uniting in a mutual struggle. The reason that Tamarian language is untranslatable, Picard discovers when the dust settles, is because it is composed entirely of stories

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[28] Patricia Craig, "Michael Longley Obituary," *The Gaurdian*, January 23, 2025, https://www.theguardian.com/books/2025/jan/23/michael-longley-obituary.

[29] Wendell Berry, *Wendell Berry: Essays 1969-1990* (Library of America, 2019), 132–33.

[30] bell hooks, *Belonging: A Culture of Place* (Taylor & Francis, 2009), 189.

[31] bell hooks, *Belonging: A Culture of Place* (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2009), 177.

of historical events. The closing shots thus find Picard sitting down with the Homeric hymns in the hope that "more familiarity with our own mythology will help us further relate theirs."[32]

This list is, of course, highly selective. There is an *embarrass de riches* both beyond and within each example. I have chosen this collection because together they help draw forward five issues that the use of exemplars in political life raises: First, there are issues concerning the meaning of an example and its relation to the ends towards which it is used. In (b), an example (Nazism) carries roughly the same meaning for different actors, while the ends towards which those meanings are directed are opposed (supporting the conflicting aims of waring nations). In (c), the ends are the same (revitalizing commitment to American democracy), but the exemplary meanings attributed to them are different (a republic struggling to realize racial equality, the inheritor of roman institutions, etc.). Second, there are issues concerning the nature of the event from which an example is drawn. In (d) and (g), the events are fictitious (*The Iliad*, 'Darmok and Jalad at Talaga'), whereas the rest are drawn from history (civil rights struggles in America, the holocaust, etc.). In (e) and (f), the events are of a personal or interpersonal nature (Wendell Berry leaving his presents to sit with his racially excluded friend, my grandmother offering wisdom to her daughter), while the rest are more clearly public. Third, there are questions concerning the availability of an example for its intended audience. Each case presupposes the familiarity of the public with the example used, and thus demonstrates the bounded nature of those publics—a point that (g) dramatizes from an external perspective (Picard's inability to understand 'Darmok and Jalad at Talaga'). Fourth, there are issues concerning the relation between examples and related terms, like myth (*The Iliad*), metaphor (Pepsi commercial for excessive idealism; Nazism for evil), parable (The Good Samaritan), and symbolism (confederate flag). Fifth and finally, there are also issues concerning moral and political value. All the above carry a normative valence: it is right to imitate the good Samaritan, it is wrong to govern fascistically, it is dangerous to be excessively idealistic.

There is therefore considerable complexity lying just under the surface of our frequent reliance on examples in speech. It presupposes interpretative, motivational, valuative, and rhetorical considerations. As I am principally concerned with the democratic potential of this reliance, however, let us refine these issues into a series of questions that point in the direction we will be travelling: How do we discover meaning from exemplary event? What is the relation between an event or action and the example derived from it? How are examples different from other kinds of imaginal objects, and what significance might these differences hold? How are examples related to the publics they are oriented towards? How can our inclinations toward imitation, which often link us to the norms of our communities, be adjusted to situations where sources of admiration are diverse and authoritative exemplars are publicly challenged? What

[32] *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, 5:2, "Darmok," written by Joe Menosky and Jay Chattaway, directed by Winrich Kolbe, aired 1991, on Paramount Television.

responsibilities do these practices place upon us, and how can our relation to exemplars promote, not hinder, our capacity to act by our own lights and speak in our own voices? How might autonomous persons with different exemplars, or different understandings of the same exemplar, possibly arrive at shared visions for how the world should look? And on what grounds can our choices of exemplars affirm the world as a space between free and equal persons?

Addressing these questions is essential to developing a democratic politics appropriate to the crisis of exemplarity. But these questions are by no means new. They have been entertained in various ways by the tradition of Western thought from its Greco-Roman inception. While I take the work of Hannah Arendt to provide the most promising approach to them, a detour through this history will therefore help us appreciate the contours of her contribution.

II. A Brief History of Exemplarity

Given the highly contextual nature of exemplarity in political life, one particularly influential strand in the history of Western political thought has combatted the suggestion that examples should be considered a free-standing source of normativity. Examples are just too contingent to orient our ethics and politics. This view generally holds that examples should only ever serve a subsidiary function: while an exemplary case of justice may serve to animate our understanding of justice, the legitimacy of the example always depends on its conformity to rules that prescribe, in advance, what does and does not count as justice. For without such rules, this perspective holds, exemplarity would merely serve to reify communal traditions or individual experiences, and thus be regressive from the standpoint of rational enlightenment.

The roots of this tradition can be traced to Plato, who despite leaving room for an approach to politics in which examples (and related terms like myths and stories, of which more will be said below) play a fundamental role,[33] generally encourages the view that examples serve as heuristics for transcendent forms supervenient to them. In his *Statesmen,* for instance, the Visitor from Elea argues that true knowledge of the forms is gained by discerning patterns across models (*paradeigmata*). When a child learns to read and write, they do so by comparing written letters they already know ('A,' 'B,' 'C') as they appear in the syllables of different words. By discerning similarities and differences across those examples, they move in increasing degrees towards knowledge of their forms and in this way become masters of reading and writing. The same holds for becoming a *politikos,* or master of statecraft. By comparing models of different kinds of craft, students of politics (represented in the dialogue by a young Socrates) come to discern its distinctive essence. For the Visitor, it is the craft of weaving that comes closest in this respect, for both

[33] See, e.g.: Jill Frank, *Poetic Justice: Rereading Plato's "Republic"* (University of Chicago Press, 2018).

involve intertwining (*sumplokē*) diverse elements into a harmonious and, in the case of politics, just, whole.[34]

Plato's idealism provided the pattern for the tradition following in his wake. In his *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle inverted the priority that Plato attributed to transcendent forms, but his vision of ethical development relied on a teleological conception of human flourishing predicated on the belief that appearances reveal principles towards which they naturally aim. The ethical exemplarity of persons is therefore defined in terms of their satisfaction of this natural aim. An exemplar of practical wisdom or *phronimos* is thus she who provides a "standard or measure" by "seeing what is true in each case."[35] In his attempt to redirect the glorification of ancient heroes in the Roman republic towards Christian virtue, St. Augustine grounded exemplary value in God's transcendence. "The glory which the Romans so ardently desired to possess is the judgment of men thinking well of other men. But virtue is better, because it is not content with any human testimony apart from that of its own conscience."[36] It is by following the word of God, exemplified by the life of Jesus, that our judgments of the exemplars arounds us is secured by the light of conscience and true glory is to be found. When Descartes revolutionized the course of Western thought by inaugurating the modern turn to subjectivity, it was in reaction to the instability of the exemplary that he did so: "The greatest benefit I derived from [observing the customs of other nations] was that […] I learned not to believe too firmly in anything that only example and custom had persuaded me of. So it was that I freed myself gradually from many of the errors that can obscure the natural light of our minds."[37] When Thomas Hobbes similarly sought to establish a secure foundation for ordering the tumultuous world around him, he also discredited the use of examples as a means to do so. Examples, he said, "prove nothing." At best, they afford the mere "probability of right."[38] And although Immanuel Kant made considerable room for examples in each domain of his critical philosophy, their value in each case also depended upon the priority and distinctiveness of the rational principles and ideas they are intended to illustrate or symbolize. As he puts it in the *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*: "One could not give morality worse advice than by wanting to derive it from examples. For, every example of it must itself first be appraised in accordance with principles of morality, as to whether it is also worthy to serve as an original

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[34] Plato, *Complete Works* (Hackett, 1997), 294–358. For discussion, see: David Bronstein, "Learning from Models: 277c7-283a9," in *Plato's Statesmen*, ed. Panos Dimas et al. (Oxford University Press, 2021).

[35] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 37.

[36] Saint Augustine, *City of God Against the Pagans*, trans. R. W. Dyson (Cambridge University Press, 1998), 210.

[37] René Descartes, *A Discourse on the Method of Correctly Conducting One's Reason and Seeking Truth in the Sciences*, trans. Ian Maclean, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford University Press, 2006), 11.

[38] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. J. C. A. Gaskin (Oxford University Press, 1998), 389.

example, that is, as a model. […] Even the Holy One of the Gospel must first be compared with our ideal of moral perfection before he is cognized as such."[39]

Across many influential contours of the Western tradition, then, examples are seen as sources of instability. They conflict with the desire to order the world by some transcendent or immanent principle. And yet, each project can be seen to betray a dependence on the very thing they attempt to secure. The children in *The Statesmen* are already familiar with letters in a rudimentary way. They are not starting from ground zero but have already been encultured into the first steps of reading and writing. Aristotle's ethics starts from the perception of a "virtual agreement" across "most people" that the good towards which all action strives is happiness and directed the development of that idea to Athenian students who were already primed in its direction.[40] Augustine's attempt to resituate the pursuit of glory in the Roman republic depended upon the availability of Jesus as revealing the word of God. Descartes saw his method of radical doubt as responsive to the failure of the 'common capacity' of judgment to operate soundly and presented his *Discourse* as a first-personal 'fable' that could be imitated by others in the face of the instability of custom. And Kant directed his critical enterprise to a reading public that was, on his own account, at a historical stage akin to that of adolescence where dogmatic metaphysics had given way to popular philosophies that relied on the 'leading strings' of examples, and thus found itself in the unique position to take the next steps towards the full maturation of reason.

It might therefore be said that each project relies in various ways on the exemplary for both revealing the contours of the problem towards which it is directed and, if more obliquely, as the (extra-philosophical) means by which they respond to that problem. If we want to know how to reason in the practical sense defined by Kant, we should look to his example to do so (something that, as Nietzsche remarked, few beyond the university have wished to do).[41] Although this point requires considerably more

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[39] Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), para. 4:408. The line sketched in this paragraph is carried into the twentieth century by philosophers who have contested virtue ethics in its ancient and contemporary forms for providing insufficient criteria for action guidance (see: Robert B. Louden, "On Some Vices of Virtue Ethics," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 21, no. 3 (1984): 227–36; David Solomon, "Internal Objections to Virtue Ethics," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 13 (1988): 428–41; J. B. Schneewind, "The Misfortunes of Virtue," *Ethics* 101, no. 1 (1990): 42–63; Bernard Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*, Transferred to digital print (Routledge, 2008).)

[40] I am indebted for this point to Johnathan Lear's portrayal of Alasdair MacIntyre's *Conflicts in the Ethics of Modernity*. Lear understands MacIntyre as advancing Aristotelianism in a world comprised of different normative starting points, a fact he finds presupposed in *The Nicomachean Ethics* (Jonathan Lear, "Alasdair MacIntyre and Therapeutic Method," (University of Notre Dame), 2019.

[41] "Kant clung to his university, submitted himself to its regulations, retained the appearance of religious belief, endured to live among colleagues and students: so it is natural that his example has produced above all university professors and professorial philosophy" (Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale, Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy (Cambridge University Press, 1997), 137.)

elaboration than is possible here,[42] my hope is that its coherence can be gleaned to a significant enough degree that three further ideas can be entertained, if not embraced. First, there is a circularity at the heart of the discourse against the exemplary. Every attempt to ground it presupposes it. Second, this circularity is far from closed. Every grounding attempt evidences a capacity to break the claims of repetition presented by exemplars by locating a mental activity immune to them. And third, if these grounding attempts evidence a freedom *from* the exemplary, they do not fully embrace a freedom *through* the exemplary. Each attempt at liberation is aimed at containing the normative waywardness they find within it. Hence, while each project expresses an element of freedom dwelling within the circle of exemplarity, that freedom is exercised to limit and orient that circularity in a definitive direction, thereby denying the potential fulness of that freedom.

The means by which this freedom from the exemplary is pursued can go by many names — *logos,* reason, or science, for instance. If we want to pursue exemplarity on its own terms, however, we will need to expose a kind of freedom that remains wholly within its circularity. This approach, too, has historical roots.

Aristotle's *Rhetoric* is a good place to start. There, he describes a form of inductive reasoning proper to rhetorical arguments from example (*paradigmata*) in which a rhetor appeals to a commonly known case to persuade the value of a related course of action in public. On one reading, such arguments are derivative of the other main kind of rhetorical argument, enthymemes*,* which are inductive syllogisms in which a general term mediates the relation between the example and proposed course of action, where that term is not derived from knowledge of telic principles (as in philosophy) but from beliefs widely held within an audience. In this case, a rule of common-sense implicitly governs the value of an example, raising questions about the source of authority of those rules as well as their availability to change. On another reading, however, arguments from examples are fully distinct from enthymemes. Here, the relation between an example and proposed course of action is analogical. It moves between their particularity without mediation by a general rule. And the rhetorical power of such arguments depends on the perception and evaluation of similarities and differences within the field of particulars. While it is debated which of these readings Aristotle himself held,[43] it is worth noting that the questions that arise in the former point in the

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[42] Rhetorical approaches to the history of philosophy might offer broad support to this reading. See, for instance: Thomas Hove, "Communicative Implications of Kant's Aesthetic Theory," *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 42, no. 2 (2009): 103–14.; Quentin Skinner, *Reason and Rhetoric in the Philosophy of Hobbes* (Cambridge University Press, 1996).; Jeanette Bicknell, "Descartes's Rhetoric: Roads, Foundations, and Difficulties in the Method," *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 36, no. 1 (2003): 22–38.; Catherine Conybeare, "Augustine's Rhetoric in Theory and Practice," in *The Oxford Handbook of Rhetorical Studies*, ed. Michael J. MacDonald (Oxford University Press, 2017), 300–312.

[43] Gerard A. Hauser, "The Example in Aristotle's Rhetoric: Bifurcation or Contradiction?," *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 1, no. 2 (1968): 78–90; Gerard A. Hauser, "Aristotle's Example Revisited," *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 18, no. 3 (1985): 171–80; Gerard A. Hauser, "Reply to Benoit," *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 20, no. 4 (1987): 268–73; William L. Benoit, "On Aristotle's Example," *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 20, no. 4 (1987): 26–267.

direction of the latter: rules of common sense are not rules *absolutum* but remain wedded to exemplary particulars that have sedimented within a community over time. From this perspective, the first reading would be enveloped within the more fully exemplarist second reading.[44]

This vision of exemplarist normativity unmoored from grounding principles is explored again by the Renaissance tradition of civic humanism. Diverse writers of this tradition grappled with the problem of how to resuscitate the past in service of a present that is marked by significant historical change, and they took their cue not from philosophy but from the dynamics of rhetoric that engagement with the history of exemplars invites. "History is philosophy teaching by example," ran the commonplace taken from Dionysius of Halicarnassus.[45] Appreciating that the value of the examples of Greek culture catalogued by Herodotus were far from absolute, writers like Machiavelli sought a way to reconcile the weight of the past with the shifting horizons of the present, the annals of virtue with the exercise of (sometimes vicious) virtuosity, and in so doing sought to resuscitate resources (*buoni essempi*) outside the sanctions of prevailing Christian dogma.[46] But as Timothy Hampton has explained, where the writings of early humanists expressed a "somewhat anxious reverence" towards the models of old, later humanists like Shakespeare, Cervantes, and Montaigne explored ways in which writing itself could construct new exemplars appropriate to the present, which included the innovation of literary devices like irony that served to encourage a sense of distance between a work of exemplary literature and its readers.[47] Instead of seeking continuity with the past, then, there arose a greater appreciation of its alterity and the need for creative transfigurations. The mirror that literature holds up to the publics it writes within is not merely reproductive of inherited ideals but can be productive of new ones.[48]

The freedom through the exemplary indicated by civic humanism gained renewed traction in the modern period with writers who, in similar fashion, sought to shed the weight of the traditions structuring

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[44] There is a possibility of reading continuity between Aristotle's ethics, politics, and rhetoric. Among the conditions for successful rhetoric is the good character of the speaker, suggestive of a *phronimos,* and the availability of a deliberative assembly where it can take place, suggestive of a republic or *polis*.

[45] Quoted from: Timothy Hampton, *Writing from History: The Rhetoric of Exemplarity in Renaissance Literature* (Cornell University Press, 1990), 9.

[46] Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, ed. Quentin Skinner and Russell Price, Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought (Cambridge University Press, 2019), 81.

[47] Hampton, *Writing from History*, 9. See also: François Rigolot, "The Renaissance Crisis of Exemplarity," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 59, no. 4 (1998): 557–63.

[48] This dynamic between reproduction and production points towards the civic humanist rhetorical technique of *paradiastole,* or redescription, as discussed by rhetoricians like Quintilian. As Quentin Skinner puts it, within *paradiastole* "there is no categorical distinction between descriptive and evaluative terms […] Given this crucial fact about normative language, it is easy according to Quintilian to see how the technique of substituting *res pro re* can be used to express and solicit an 'augmented' or 'extenuated' emotional response to a given action or state of affairs. We simply replace whatever descriptions our opponents may have offered with a different set of terms that serve to describe the action with no less plausibility, but place it at the same time in a different moral light. We seek to persuade our hearers to accept our redescription, and hence to adopt a new emotional attitude towards the action involved - either one of increased sympathy or acquired moral outrage" (Skinner, *Reason and Rhetoric in the Philosophy of Hobbes*, 145.) Insofar as redescription includes augmentation, it is productive of new ways of seeing and feeling.

their world. In 'The Eighteenth Brumaire of Luis Bonaparte,' for instance, Karl Marx described the reliance on examples in revolutionary struggle with enough ambivalence to mark this text as contributory to the exemplarist tradition I am sketching. In periods of revolutionary crisis, he wrote, "[revolutionaries] timidly conjure up the spirit of the past to help them; they borrow their names, slogans, and costumes so as to stage the new world-historical scene in this venerable disguise and borrowed language," thereby "exaggerating their given task in the imagination."[49] On the one hand, this "world-historical necromancy" serves the important task of encouraging the imitation of core revolutionary practices, which for him included "self-sacrifice, terror, civil-war, and battles."[50] Yet, on the other hand, Marx also warned that excessive adoration of past examples risks collapsing the needed appreciation of the content of a revolutionary situation into farcical imitation and self-deception. In a helpful analogy that picks up Plato's example of language-learning, Marx suggests a middle path between these counter-vailing positions: "The beginner who has learned a new language," he writes, "always retranslates it into his mother tongue. He can only be said to have appropriated the spirit of the new language and to be able to express himself in it freely when he can manipulate it without reference to the old."[51] And this, he thinks, is precisely what happened in the French Revolution in contrast to the faltered uprising of the 18th Brumaire: once the dust had settled on the events of 1789-99, the ghosts of Rome that inspired the revolutionaries were eclipsed by the appearance of new exemplars (like Cousin, Constant, Guizot, and Say) that revealed not the return of Rome, but the emergence of something wholly new—the Bourgeois content of the revolution itself. But if the proper role of past examples in revolutionary situations is to inspire a break in historical continuity such that new examples can emerge, the next and for Marx final revolution from capitalism to communism requires that new examples derive their motivating power not from what *was* or even *is*, but from what *could be*: "In order to arrive at its own content," Marx writes, "the revolutions of the nineteenth century must let the dead bury their dead" by creating "poetry from the future."[52] Here, Marx is referring to a kind of poetry that emerges from the exemplary words and deeds of those who, acting into the present, point in the direction of the world to come. The appropriate aim of appealing to past examples is not to "set the ghost walking again," but to inspire the opening of the revolutionary terrain in which new exemplars emerge that illuminate that very terrain.[53] Such exemplars would appear *as if* from the future, like flares along the horizon.[54]

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[49] Karl Marx, *Karl Marx: Surveys from Exile*, vol. 2, ed. David Fernbach, His Political Writings, v. 2 (New Left Review, 1973), 148.

[50] Marx, *Karl Marx: Surveys from Exile*, 2:148.

[51] Marx, *Karl Marx: Surveys from Exile*, 2:147.

[52] Marx, *Karl Marx: Surveys from Exile*, 2:149.

[53] Marx, *Karl Marx: Surveys from Exile*, 2:149.

[54] Arguably, the inauguration of universal freedom and equality through the overthrow of capitalism would in the next revolution detach exemplarity from the linear temporality of past-present-future by introducing a horizontal politics through which free and equal persons continually work out the terrain of their mutual belonging unmoored from class

In a similar fashion, Friedrich Nietzsche also sought a path from the constraining force of inherited examples to the creation of new ones. For him, it was not the revolutionary potential contained within exploitive modes of production that the transfiguration of the exemplary was to be found, however, but the powers of self-becoming coiled within the individual will. The proper role of exemplars for Nietzsche was not to reveal a path to follow, but to inspire the activity of path-breaking itself. And this he understood as both the root of morality as well as the means by which everyone can overcome its stifling force: "If the genius in art is always the first, the throng of imitators being always in his train, in morality, each agent has the prerogative of genius.... [H]e who 'imitates' the example of a moral creator or a sublime model is in his turn a creator."[55] It is thus also from a stance of inspiration that Nietzsche implicitly and explicitly positions himself and the examples he creates with respect to his reader: "A: 'What? You want no imitators?' B: 'I do not want to have people imitate my example; I wish that everybody would fashion his own;"[56] Zarathustra seeks not 'disciples' but 'companions' "who follow me because they want to follow themselves."[57] As with Marx, freedom *from* the exemplary involves going *through* an example by learning the spirit of its teaching, in this case how to affirm one's own life as a singular work of ethical art pursued for its own sake. And just as fully learning a new language enables its user to move across the old and new without translation, it is also by overcoming the authority of past exemplars that persons acquire the ability to admire the lives of the exemplars around them untroubled by envy or *ressentiment*—that is, *joyfully*. Nietzsche's sense of exemplarity therefore traces the condition of possibility by which independent wills can remain in free companionship with the very exemplars whose authority they are required to forget. "Only when you have all denied me," says Zarathustra, "will I return to you."[58]

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belonging and the progress of history derived from it. Marx does not pursue this dynamic, but its possibility is at the core of a democratic politics of the exemplary. It is, however, intimated by Miguel Abensour in his reading of the 'insurgent' or 'true' democracy in the humanistic strain of Marx's thought. For Abensour, insurgent democracy appears within the caesura between past and future against the emergence of state power, which he locates in Marx's appreciation of the 1871 Paris Commune as "the political form discovered at last" (Miguel Abensour, *Democracy Against the State: Marx and the Machiavellian Movement*, trans. Martin Breaugh and Max Blechman (Cambridge: Polity, 2011)). As Abensour's translator Max Blechman puts it, the 'form' of true democracy revealed by the commune is not that of "a political model" that can be applied to subsequent democracies, since "such delineation contradicts the subject of the model – the very working existence of the Commune – which itself had made a virtue of rejecting the ready-made systems of government on offer" (Abensour, *Democracy Against the State: Marx and the Machiavellian Movement*, xxi.). It is rather to be understood as 'exemplary' of true democracy, an instance of the ongoing working-out of the relation between the people and its government (xx). But if the commune is exemplary *of* true democracy, what is the role of exemplarity *within* it?

[55] Quoted in James Conant, "Nietzsche's Perfectionism," in *Nietzsche's Postmoralism: Essays on Nietzsche's Prelude to Philosophy's Future*, ed. Richard Schacht (Cambridge University Press, 2000), 191.

[56] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science: With a Prelude in German Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*, 3. print, ed. Bernard Williams, Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy (Cambridge University Press, 2004), 255.

[57] Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*, ed. Adrian Del Caro and Robert B. Pippin, Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 14.

[58] Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 59. We might therefore say there is an implicit communal dimension at work in self-becoming, provided we understand 'community' in the paradoxical sense expressed in the subtitle of *Thus Spake Zarathustra,* 'A Book for *All and None'* (my italics). The exemplarity of one's own self-becoming for others does not imply

This sketch of the western thought's engagement with exemplarity is, of course, far from exhaustive. It is intended to map out a basic division between views that see exemplarity as a source of instability and hence a problem to be solved, and those that see it as a source of freedom and hence an opportunity to be realized. The latter views contain several elements of relevance to the leading questions of the last section. They spoke, in various ways, of the meaning of examples as properly a matter of inspiration, located this inspiration in both historical and literary sources, attested to the relevance of the publics towards which it is directed and through which it emerges, evidenced sensitivity to the ways exemplarity can be expressed in oral and written language, and sought to protect the distinctiveness and creativity of individuals and groups against the potentially constraining authority of the past. While these perspectives could each be unfolded more fully in response to those questions, however, my sense is that they would in each case prove limited in their ability to do so because the central question around which those questions gravitate – how exemplarist normativity can be distinctly democratic – remains shrouded. Consider the last two perspectives. Although Marx's consideration of the role of exemplarity in revolutionary struggle seems to point in the direction of a democratic politics of the exemplary within and beyond those struggles, the contours of that politics remains underarticulated. Instead, Marx's later work aimed to provide a scientific basis for socialism that left in abeyance the development of a free politics oriented around the exemplary as it is practiced by free and equal persons relatively independent of their belonging to economically defined social groups. And despite Nietzsche's sense that self-becoming entails an expressivist form of exemplarity poised toward the loosely communal dimension of companionship, that dimension remains subsidiary, perhaps accidental, to the project of an individual's self-becoming.[59] It is not *for* companionship that self-becoming is oriented, but by the affirmation of the contingencies and possibilities afforded to one's own distinctive life. Hence Nietzsche also leaves in abeyance the question of how exemplarity may encourage a democratic kind of belonging between free and equal persons relatively independent of their projects of self-becoming.

Elaborating this politics therefore requires carrying forward the project of redeeming the circle of exemplarity in a way that avoids the poles that these latter perspectives respectively tend towards. Doing

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a claim to what every other should *be* (none), but to their potential to *become* themselves (all). For Conant, Nietzsche's appeal to exemplary genius is therefore not only anti-elitist, but also consistent with the need of democracies to constantly regenerate themselves against tendencies to conformity or majoritarianism. Far from being destructive of democratic equality, as Rawls understood Nietzschean perfectionism, Nietzschean exemplarity is rather a precondition for it (Conant, "Nietzsche's Perfectionism," 226–32.) For a similar defense of Nietzsche on this point, see: Stanley Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome: The Constitution of Emersonian Perfectionism* (Open Court, 1990).

[59] This can be seen in how Nietzsche understands taste: "And how do you know someone has turned out well! By the fact that the well-turned out person does our senses good. […] He only has a taste for what agrees with him; his enjoyment, his desires stop at the boundary of what is agreeable to him" (Nietzsche, *Nietzsche: The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols, and Other Writings*, 77.) As we will see, Arendt's notion of taste places aesthetic pleasure not in self-relation but public-relation.

so promises a middle path from which a distinctly public kind of freedom can come into view of more direct pertinence to my leading questions. The name for this middle path is the one I suggested in the first section, namely, that of *judgment*. And the thinker that I take to exemplify its practice is Hannah Arendt.[60] Let us, then, turn to Arendt's account of judgment.

III. JUDGMENT AND EXEMPLARITY

Hannah Arendt's turn to judgment represented the culmination of three decades of coming to terms with the unprecedented rupture in political life brought about by totalitarianism. By overturning the most established axioms of politics and morality, totalitarianism defied prevailing categories and introduced something wholly new into our horizon of possibility. Yet Arendt did not think it could be understood apart from the tradition in which it arose. Its sudden crystallization in the 1930s, she argued, condensed elements that were forged at the beginning of the Western thought and allowed to ossify along the twisting veins of its history without enduring interruption.[61] By exposing those elements and their sources, she sought both to understand the conditions that made totalitarianism possible and to recover dormant resources that might help ensure it would not happen again. Chief among the tendencies she identified was the Western prioritization of the solitary self, or 'man in the singular,' that regards the world as an object of control. This perspective repeatedly foreclosed the first-person-plural 'we' that emerges when persons appear to one another as free and equal actors engaged in shaping their shared world. By adopting the perspective of action, Arendt aimed to expose the sovereigntist roots of totalitarianism and recover the "lost treasure" of radical participatory politics it had eclipsed. [62]

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[60] Arendt is by no means the only resource for developing a theory of exemplarity. Over the last three decades, a robust literature has emerged to salvage exemplarism from criticisms by neo-Kantians and utilitarians, largely from a neo-Aristotelian perspective. See, for instance: Amalia Amaya Navarro, "Exemplarism and Judicial Virtue," *Law & Literature* 25, no. 3 (2013): 428–45; Michel Croce, "Exemplarism in Moral Education: Problems with Applicability and Indoctrination," *Journal of Moral Education* 48, no. 3 (2019): 291–302; Del Mar, "Exemplarity and Narrativity in the Common Law Tradition"; Alessandro Ferrara, *The Force of the Example: Explorations in the Paradigm of Judgment* (Columbia University Press, 2008); Lear, *Imagining the End*; Maria Silvia Vaccarezza, "The Exemplary and the Right: Contemporary Virtue Ethics, Action Guidance, and Action Assessment," *Rivista Di Storia Della Filosofia* 1 (2023): 148–64; Maria Silvia Vaccarezza, "Paths to Flourishing: Ancient Models of the Exemplary Life," *Ethics and Education* 15, no. 2 (2020): 144–57; Michel Croce and Maria Silvia Vaccarezza, "Educating through Exemplars: Alternative Paths to Virtue," *Theory and Research in Education* 15, no. 1 (2017): 5–19; Linda Trinkaus Zagzebski, *Exemplarist Moral Theory* (Oxford University Press, 2017).

[61] This is not to say, of course, that other kinds of politics did not emerge within that history. See, for instance: Martin Breaugh, *The Plebeian Experience: A Discontinuous History of Political Freedom* (Columbia University Press, 2013).; Massimiliano Tomba, *Insurgent Universality: An Alternative Legacy of Modernity* (Oxford University Press, 2019).

[62] Arendt speaks of the content of this treasure – public happiness or virtue – as discoverable in modern revolutions, which trace "the innermost story of the modern age." Such treasures "appear abruptly, unexpectedly, and disappear again, puts it in *The Life of the Mind,* the "demise of metaphysics and philosophy" allows us to "look on the past with new eyes, unburdened and unguided by any traditions, and thus to dispose of a tremendous amount of raw experiences without being bound by any prescriptions about how to deal with these treasures" (Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind* (Harcourt, 1977) I.12).

Although Arendt's adoption of the perspective of action placed her at odds with the philosophical tradition, she did not for this abandon the mental realm that that tradition made its home. She did not wish to perform yet another inversion of the tradition she was writing within (which she took both Marx and Nietzsche to have done) but sought to describe how the mind and action relate to one another in a mutually sustaining way outside hierarchical ordering.[63] Actors have minds, of course, and what they do with their minds has profound effects on their actions. It was in Kant's articulation of reflective judgments of beauty presented in his *Critique of the Power of Judgment* that she found the richest articulation of these activities. In her engagement with this text, she came to see how the extreme evils perpetrated by the Nazi bureaucrat Adolf Eichmann were made possible by his unwillingness to judge what he was doing, and how the total domination of society by the Nazi regime was sustained by the widespread failure of citizens to judge the events unfolding around them. For Arendt, Kant's account of reflective judgment describes a mental capacity stripped of reliance on supervening rules and thus fundamentally opposed to the politics of domination. Since judgments of this sort respond to appearances in the fullness of their particularity, they offered to Arendt the most promising path to understanding how free actions appear to the mind and how the mind appears in free action.

It was also in Kant's account of reflective judgment that Arendt came to discern the importance of exemplarity as a source of normativity uniquely suited to free action:[64] the exemplary particularity of appearances we find beautiful occasions public-oriented judgment, and public-oriented judgment inspires free action.[65] By locating the political significance of exemplarity through the realm of aesthetics,[66] then, Arendt picked up a core thread running through the redemptive reading of the circle of exemplarity. But by weaving that thread through the exercise of judgment, she found a way to redeem that circle in the direction of non-violent exercises of democratic freedom.

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[63] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (University of Chicago Press, 2018), 17; Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind* (Harcourt, 1977), 12; Arendt, *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought*, 5.

[64] This is not to say that Arendt was unaware of exemplarity prior to her turn to the third *Critique* in the late 1950's. As far as I know, her first mention of it appears in reference to her biography of Rahel Varnhagen written in the 1930's: "What this all really adds up to – fate, being exposed, what life means – I can't really say in the abstract (and I realize that in trying to write about it here.) Perhaps all I can try to do is illustrate it with examples" (Hannah Arendt et al., *Hannah Arendt / Karl Jaspers Correspondence, 1926-1969*, trans. Rita Kimber and Robert Kimber (Harcourt, 1992), 11).

[65] The coincidence of the beautiful with the exemplary is fundamental to what follows. It should not be strange. As Elaine Scarry has put it, "Beauty, as both Plato's *Symposium* and everyday life confirm, prompts the begetting of children: when the eye sees someone beautiful, the whole body wants to reproduce the person. But it also, as Diotima tells Socrates, prompts the begetting of poems and laws, the works of Homer, Hesiod, and Lycurgius. The poem and the law may then prompt descriptions of themselves—literary and legal commentaries—to make the beauty of the prior thing more evident, to make, in other words, the poem's or law's 'clear discernability' even more 'clearly discernable […] It is impossible to conceive of a beautiful thing without the attribute [begetting]'" (Elaine Scarry, *On Beauty and Being Just* (Princeton University Press, 1999), 4–5, 8.)

[66] Arendt understood this term to in the general sense indicated by the Greek *aesthetikos*: "of or for perception by the senses or mind" ("Aesthetic," *Online Etymology Dictionary*, accessed February 20, 2025, https://www.etymonline.com/word/aesthetic.). And in her marginalia to the third *Critique*, she further qualifies "aesthetical" as "phenomenal," or as referring to appearances.

This reading, however, is far from obvious. It not only runs against standard interpretations of Kant's aesthetic philosophy,[67] but also depends on placing Arendt's scattered remarks on exemplarity at the center of her account—an interpretive move few have made.[68] The task is complicated by the fact that Arendt did not live to complete *The Life of the Mind*'s planned third volume on judgment, leaving interpreters divided over what her full account would have been and whether it is ultimately desirable. Any attempt to advance her contribution to a democratic politics of the exemplary must therefore take up these questions. To do so, however, requires first having a clearer sense of Kantian reflective judgment and what Arendt found within it.

Kant held that our capacity for judgment comes fully into its own when we judge appearances that are beautiful. Judgments of this sort are reflective insofar as they do not subsume particulars under determinate concepts (determining judgments), nor are they reducible to expressions of private pleasure (judgments of the agreeable). Beauty pleases impartially: we find "disinterested delight" in appearances that defy our sensory appetites and cognitive preconceptions, setting our faculties into harmonious "free play."[69] For Kant, such free play is communally oriented insofar as it makes claim on the possible agreement of others. Whereas moral and epistemic judgments secure agreement through *a priori* rules that hold universally for all beings endowed with reason, reflective judgments *persuade* agreement through what Kant calls *sensus communis*, a sense for commonality in judgment.[70] Since this sense is not grounded in objective but subjective principles, however, there is no guarantee that others will in fact share my judgment, and so the 'general validity' of reflective judgements depend on the extent to which a judge has 'enlarged their mentality' by imaginatively inhabiting the perspectives of the judges they wish to

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[67] Interpreters of the third *Critique* have stressed its general function as providing a bridge between causal nature (the first *Critique*) and rational freedom (the second *Critique*), where the beautiful, in both its natural and adherent (cultural) kinds, serves as a 'symbol' for morality (see: Susan Meld Shell, *The Politics Of Beauty: A Study Of Kant's Critique Of Taste* (Cambridge University Press, 2022).; Henry E. Allison, *Kant's Theory of Taste: A Reading of the Critique of Aesthetic Judgment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), chaps. 9–10). Interpreters of Arendt have drawn attention to her perhaps overly selective emphasis on the third *Critique* as containing the political philosophy Kant would have written at the expense of engaging the political philosophy he did write (Ronald Beiner, "Hannah Arendt on Judging," in *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, ed. Ronald Beiner (University of Chicago Press, 1992), 142–44.)

[68] For dedicated discussions, see: Ferrara, *The Force of the Example: Explorations in the Paradigm of Judgment*, chap. 2.; Martin Blumenthal-Barby, *Arendt, Kant, and the Enigma of Judgment* (Northwestern University Press, 2023), chap. 3.; Morten Timmermann Korsgaard, "Visiting Exemplars. An Arendtian Exploration of Educational Judgement," *Ethics and Education* 15, no. 2 (2020): 247–59. For less dedicated discussions, see: Brian Garsten, "The Elusiveness of Arendtian Judgment," *Social Research* 74, no. 4 (2007): 1071–108.; Jonathan P. Schwartz, *Arendt's Judgment: Freedom, Responsibility, Citizenship* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), chap. 5.; Linda M. G. Zerilli, "The Practice of Judgment: Hannah Arendt's 'Copernican Revolution,'" in *Theory after Theory*, ed. Derek Attridge and Jane Elliot (Routledge, 2011).

[69] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (Cambridge University Press, 2000), 5:217.

[70] I am here treating the *sensus communis* not as orientational. For support of this point, see: Rudolf A. Makkreel, *Imagination and Interpretation in Kant: The Hermeneutical Import of the Critique of Judgment* (University of Chicago Press, 1990), chap. 8.)

persuade.[71] Reflective judgments for Kant are thus expressions of the perspectival breadth of our minds; our ability to imagine how objects look to others as mentally endowed as we are.[72]

What Arendt appreciated most about this account is the way it reconciled the particularity of appearances with human plurality. Particularity was important for Arendt because in the domain of human action it preserves the dignity of persons. Blindness to particularity leads to violence of both discrete and mass kinds, since in its absence persons are liable to viewed as instances of general categories and thus made substitutable, exchangeable, or even expendable. While Arendt did not deny the salience of these terms in descriptions of persons,[73] she thought that judgment dignified their freedom to exceed those categories through their boundless capacity to act in novel ways and, in so doing, reveal their 'unique distinctness,' or *whoness.*[74] At the same time, the communal orientation of judgment reflects our belonging to what she called a public. Unlike communities structured by interests or laws, publics are comprised of actors and spectators whose perspectives are liberated by the particularity or newness appearing between them, and are thereby placed in a position of freedom and equality with respect to everyone else. In this sense, Arendt understood publics as genuine spaces of plurality, and saw in the exercise of the enlarged mentality the means by which our minds can remain in ongoing dialogue with the plural others with whom we share the world. For it is only by maintaining such dialogue that the actions stemming from our judgments may stand a chance of striking a chord of concertedness with our peers.

Reflective judgment thus characterizes for Arendt the mental activity by which the world we share with others is actuated as a public space in which plural perspectives are held together and apart through their shared relation to novel appearances. The recurrence of its exercise serves to renew those spaces, and the exercise of the enlarged mentality brings into view a range of aspects belonging to shared appearances otherwise hidden from our parochial perspectives. What Arendt called the fact of human freedom – that we from birth to death appear ever anew through our words and deeds – means that particularity will always be with us. And it is the gift of judgment to publicly dignify the freedom it expresses.

While this picture offers a general description of what I take as the core of Arendt's uptake of Kantian reflective judgment, it does not address several puzzles that have occupied her interpreters for some time. Each of these puzzles will be served, I think, by introducing exemplarity into the picture. Let us look at four of them.

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[71] Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 5:295.

[72] Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 5:239.

[73] A thought perhaps most strikingly put in her response to anti-Semitism: "If one is attacked as a Jew, one must defend oneself as a Jew. Not as a German, not as a world-citizen, not as an upholder of the Rights of Man, or whatever" (Hannah Arendt, *Essays in Understanding, 1930-1954: Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism* (Schocken Books, 1994), 12.).

[74] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 176.

First, there are questions concerning the *language* of judgment. Among the many indications that Adolf Eichmann had failed to exercise his capacity for judgment, Arendt placed special emphasis on the "horrible comedy" of his language.[75] His reliance on stock-phrases, cliches, and technical jargon betrayed an inability or unwillingness to face reality, she thought.[76] But although Arendt was clear that dependence on standardized language betrayed a lack of judgment, just how language properly faces up to reality *through* judgment has remained relatively obscure in the literature. While many commentators have discussed the importance Arendt assigns to storytelling for redeeming human freedom as an activity *par excellence* of spectatorial judgment,[77] basic questions concerning linguistic creativity and its relation to democratic communication still loom. If communication is to be more than a mere relay of facts, if it is to *persuade* rather than compel, then there must be something *original* in the words we use to describe the world around us and our stance towards it. The freedom of action must be met with a freedom of language. The difficulty is that Arendt's writings on linguistic freedom are most fully developed in her account of the role of metaphor in the first volume of *The Life of the Mind*, 'Thinking,' which left by itself seems to bind her view, as Nir Ervon has argued, to the very solitary self her writings were intended to overcome.[78] Making clear the creativity of language in judgment is therefore crucial not only to making sense of linguistic practices like storytelling that Arendt repeatedly invokes, but also for learning how to respond to newness by discovering a public voice of our own.

Second, there are questions concerning the *community* of judgment. These questions revolve around how we are to understand the relation between the actual communities of which are members and the *sensus communis* that Arendt with Kant ascribes to reflective judgments. If the *sensus communis* calls forward the activity of imagining the perspectives of other judges, Kant's portrayal tends to suggest that the relevant perspectives are fully virtual or ideal, and that the relevant community to which our judgments appeal is (a never experienceable) universal humanity.[79] Arendt's reading by contrast encourages the view that representative thinking takes into account the actual perspectives of others that we encounter in the

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[75] Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (Penguin Books, 2006), 198.

[76] Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, 49.

[77] Annabel Herzog, "The Poetic Nature of Political Disclosure: Hannah Arendt's Storytelling," *Clio* 30, no. 2 (2001): 169–94; Seyla Benhabib, "Hannah Arendt and the Redemptive Power of Narrative," *Social Research*, no. 1 (1990): 167–96.

[78] Nir Evron, "Hannah Arendt, Thinking, Metaphor," *Telos* 196 (2021). For Evron, although Arendt explicitly rejects the Platonic hierarchy of "(true) Being" over "(mere) Appearance," her theory of metaphor represents something like an "existential bridge" that actually reinstates this "two-world" theory she otherwise rejects. This leads, as Evron sees it, to the very un-Arendtian consequence that the mind is beyond the world: metaphor serves to cloth the properly pure (wordless) activity of thinking (25).

[79] In one formulation, Kant says the kind of consensus expected of reflective judgments corresponds to a "power to judge that in reflecting takes account (*a priori*) in thought of everyone else's way of representing" (Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, sec. 5:214.).

world.[80] To make sense of Arendt's reading, we need an account of what other perspectives are in the relevant sense. If judgment neither 'counts noses' nor idealizes other perspectives into abstraction, what remains? And how can thinking from other perspectives not only lead us to make more *inclusive* judgments, but *good* or *better* ones? Commentators that take up this strand of Arendt's writings often embrace the contingency of judgment as an open-ended process operating between its rhetorical and normative aspects.[81] Since the fact of plurality dissolves unitarian senses of community at every level (as empirically or transcendentally bounded), the enlargement of mind always remains a possibility.[82] But a problem remains that links the discussion of language above to the next: if the persuasiveness of judgment depends on thinking from other perspectives, how is that our judgments can not only persuade in directions alternative to the views of actual others, but also in a direction that is normatively desirable or endorsable?

This leads, third, to questions concerning the nature and availability of *normative standards* in judgment. These questions often circle around the distinction Arendt makes between morality and politics. If judgment is pre-eminently political (about the shared world not the self) it does not have moral standards available for evaluating actions, at least in any clear sense. The whole point of Arendtian judgment, so the view goes, is to rid ourselves of rules, principles, and bannisters so that the space of commonality can be sustained anew. Any attempt to foist standards onto judgment seems to her more agonistic interpreters a step toward foreclosing the radical nature of judgment as an exercise of unbounded reflective freedom in response to the unbounded freedom of action.[83] Other commentators, however, have been less comfortable with the normative arbitrariness that this aesthetical picture seems to invite.[84] These commentators often try to make good on Arendt's repeated statements that judgment is a capacity to 'tell right from wrong,' but

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[80] "To think with an enlarged mentality means that one trains one's imagination to go visiting" (Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* (University of Chicago Press, 1992), 43.); communicability "obviously implies a community of men who can be addressed and who are listening and can be listened to" (Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 40.); judgment "is never universally valid," its "claims to validity can never extend further than the others in whose place the judging person has put himself for his considerations" (Hannah Arendt, "The Crisis in Culture," in *Between Past and Future: Six Exercises in Political Thought* (Penguin, 2006), 221.)

[81] Patricia Cochran, *Common Sense and Legal Judgment: Community Knowledge, Political Power, and Rhetorical Practice* (McGill-Queen's Press - MQUP, 2017), chap. 4.

[82] Jennifer Nedelsky, "Receptivity and Judgment," *Ethics and Global Politics*, no. 4 (2011): 231–54.; Iris Marion Young, "Asymmetrical Reciprocity: On Moral Respect, Wonder, and Enlarged Thought," in *Judgment, Imagination, and Politics: Themes from Kant and Arendt*, ed. Ronald Beiner and Jennifer Nedelsky (Rowman & Littlefield, 2001).

[83] Zerilli, "The Practice of Judgment: Hannah Arendt's 'Copernican Revolution."; Dana Richard Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger: The Fate of the Political* (Princeton University Press, 1996), chap. 3.

[84] Seyla Benhabib, "Judgment and the Moral Foundations of Politics in Arendt's Thought," *Political Theory* 16, no. 1 (1988): 29–51.; Garsten, "The Elusiveness of Arendtian Judgment."; Jurgen Habermas, "Hannah Arendt's Communications Concept of Power," *Social Research* 44, no. 1 (1977): 3–24.; Jennifer Nedelsky, "Communities of Judgment and Human Rights," *Theoretical Inquiries in Law* 1, no. 2 (2000).

because in their view she did not provide any clear answer as to how it can do so, search for standards outside the aesthetical realm to which Arendt adheres.[85]

Fourth, there are questions concerning the relationship between *theory and practice* in judgment. Arendt's writings invite, but do not fully settle, the issue of how the retrospective, world-redeeming aspect of judgment (theory) is to be related to its prospective, action-orienting aspect (practice). On the one hand, she resists collapsing judgment into a purely contemplative activity removed from the urgencies of action; on the other, she rejects the idea that judgment should be reduced to the instrumental application of principles in the service of political goals. This tension has left commentators divided. Some emphasize judgment's retrospective, spectatorial dimension, arguing that its chief function is to preserve the meaning of past action and disclose its significance within a shared world.[86] Others stress its prospective and deliberative potential, treating judgment as a faculty that can and should orient actors toward future possibilities and decisions.[87] Still others question whether the theory/practice distinction is even appropriate for a capacity that, in Arendt's account, refuses the hierarchical ordering of mental and active life.[88] Yet without a clear account of how judgment moves between redeeming the past and preparing the future, it remains unclear whether its role is primarily to consolidate meaning after the fact, to guide action in the moment, or to sustain a dynamic interplay between the two.[89]

Arendt's scattered but insistent appeals to exemplarity can be read as an underdeveloped but promising response to each of these debates. She concluded each major discussion of judgment with examples. In her *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, for instance, she called Kant's notion of "exemplary validity" the "by far most promising solution" to the problem of standards in judgment,[90] suggesting that examples can carry normative power without fixed rules. In her seminar on the imagination delivered after those lectures, she likened examples to Kantian schemata (general shapes in the imagination that allow spontaneous recognition of particulars).[91] Although this analogy has led some commentators to

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[85] Ursula Ludz, "Arendt's Observations and Thoughts on Ethical Questions," *Social Research* 74, no. 3 (2007): 797–810.; Dierdre Lauren Mohanty Mohanty, *Arendt's Ethics* (Bloomsbury, 2018).; Craig Reeves, "Exploding the Limits of Law: Judgment and Freedom in Arendt and Adorno," *Res Publica* 15, no. 2 (2009): 137–64.

[86] See: Beiner, "Hannah Arendt on Judging," 101.; Richard J. Bernstein, *Philosophical Profiles: Essays in a Pragmatic Mode*, vol. (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 221–37.; Garsten, "The Elusiveness of Arendtian Judgment."; Lara María Pía, "Reflective Judgment as World Disclosure," *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, nos. 1–2 (2008): 83–100.; Veronica Vasterling, "Plural Perspectives and Independence: Political and Moral Judgement in Hannah Arendt," in *The Other: Feminist Reflections in Ethics.*, ed. Helen Fielding et al. (Palgrave-Macmillan, 2007), 260.

[87] Habermas, "Hannah Arendt's Communications Concept of Power."; Schwartz, *Arendt's Judgment: Freedom, Responsibility, Citizenship*, 179–84.;

[88] David Marshall, "The Origin and Character of Hannah Arendt's Theory of Judgment," *Political Theory*, no. 3 (2010): 370.

[89] For an insightful discussion in this direction, see: David Marshall, "The Origin and Character of Hannah Arendt's Theory of Judgment," *Political Theory*, no. 3 (2010): 370.

[90] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 76–85.

[91] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 82–84.

worry that examples in Arendt's account seem uncomfortably close to stereotypes,[92] what she in fact intended was to open the question of how reflective judgment creates such shapes in the first place. Examples do not rely on determinative concepts but on imaginative insight, and thus point towards an appreciation of particularity against vulgar common sense. She also observed that examples enable us to "communicate" with others in a "language they understand," provided the examples that we "carry in the backs of our minds" are shared.[93] Although Arendt does not here explore the role of examples in persuasion, which is otherwise implied in reflective judgment and requires acknowledging that the sharing of examples is by no means a matter of course, the suggestion that they are pivotal for a non-determinative kind of communication nevertheless suggests that the rhetorical dynamic of exemplarity would have likely been part of the picture she was preparing to develop. And in her essay 'Some Questions of Moral Philosophy,' she said that our "ability to tell right from wrong" depends on the examples we choose as "company," a remark that frames moral orientation itself as a matter of the exemplars we admit into our reflective lives. While Arendt does not here offer any overt indication as to how examples as company lead us to senses of rightness, or how they promote the freedom of their host to build the world anew with others democratically, it is nevertheless clear that exemplarity would have lied at the center of her considered response to the vexed question of morality after totalitarianism.

The perplexities surrounding these remarks will be taken up in the work to follow. Allow me for now to sketch five aspects of exemplarity implied by these remarks, and then move on to suggest how further elucidation allow us to unhinge the debates mentioned above. First, Arendt is principally concerned with examples derived from *actions*, either as attributable to persons, in which case we can speak of exemplary persons (e.g., Jesus for goodness; Eichmann for the banality of evil), or as the 'outcome' of the concerted actions of persons but not reducible to any one of them, in which case we can speak of exemplary events (the American revolution for political founding; Nazi Germany for totalitarianism). We may therefore distinguish them from examples of natural kinds, like a red rose for redness, and from produced things, like Monet's *Impression, Sunrise* for Impressionism. Second, the kinds of examples that concern us are also practical, and in two ways. They are practical in a topical sense insofar as they refer to the breadth of communally endorsed exemplary moral and political actions (virtuous and virtuoso conduct, instituted forms of government, etc.),[94] and they are practical in the formal sense of being of *use* or *good-for* guiding judging and acting in a world shared with plural others, provided we understand 'use' in the ana-teleological

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[92] Alessandro Ferrara, "Judgment, Identity and Authenticity: A Reconstruction of Hannah Arendt's Interpretation of Kant," *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 24, no. 2/3 (1998): 120–24.; Zerilli, "The Practice of Judgment: Hannah Arendt's 'Copernican Revolution,'" 128.

[93] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 83.

[94] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 85.

sense that Kant intended with his description of the beautiful as 'purposelessly purposive.'[95] Third, examples are *original sources of meaning*. They are "particulars that in their very particularity reveal generalities that otherwise cannot be defined," and thus in the first instance distinct from their more familiar role as *illustrating* a concept, in effect whenever we use the phrase "for example…" in speech.[96] Fourth, if examples are discovered from exemplary actions that reveal practical meaning to spectators, exemplarity entails a conjunction of the order of facts and norms, of the *is* and the *ought,* particularity and generality.[97] Exemplars, as it were, *represent themselves*, and therefore are distinguishable from imaginal objects that *represent something else,* like myths, symbols, or tokens. And finally, the mode of relation to examples operative in judgment is as *company.* As companions in reflection, examples are neither idols nor heroes, but free equals whose represented presence in the mind enlivens care for the world and a sense for justice.

With some of Arendt's core remarks concerning exemplarity now in view, we may glimpse a path through the interpretive puzzles mentioned above. If it can be shown that actions properly appear to the mind as exemplary, then we are afforded a first step in seeing how the language of judgment can face up to reality in an original way. 'Coming to terms' with exemplary appearances entails acts of description that are at the same time acts of evaluation,[98] as well as, in some sense, original to the speaker. With respect to debates concerning the community of judgment, introducing exemplarity into the picture enables us to see how the actual opinions of others are reflectively elevated without for that becoming ideal in the regulative sense entailed by 'universal humanity.' Thinking from the perspectives of others names a reflective engagement with the possibilities that their words and deeds reveal such that we retain freedom with respect

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[95] See: Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of the Power of Judgment*, trans. J. H. Bernard (New York: Hafner, 1951), 5:220-21. We might here mark a point of distinction from neo-Aristotelian approaches to exemplarity like that of Linda Zagzebski who understands admiration as the means of both value-perception and motivation for imitating exceptionally virtuous agents (see: Linda Trinkaus Zagzebski, *Exemplarist Moral Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017). Although it cannot be unpacked here, the ana-teleological perspective that Arendt finds in Kantian aesthetics might rather locate the relevant feeling in disinterested delight, as occasioned by the free play of the cognitive faculties in the reflective presence of the beautiful, which is possible only where self-interest is interrupted or held in abeyance. I take Zagzebski's admission that one can abstain from imitation on grounds of dissimilarity with the virtuous agent to point in a similar direction, even if it is not thematized in these terms.

[96] To be sure, Arendt's attention to the linguistically disclosive function of exemplarity is not at the expense of their illustrative function in speech. The communicative salience of an illustrative example depends upon on its ability to reveal the meaning of the indeterminate concept it is intended to illustrate. The primary question is therefore how this disclosure comes about, that is, how worldly appearances generate and substantiate the meaning of words, and secondarily how they gain communicative validity across persons and communities. The benefit of this prioritization is that communicative validity retains worldly moorage and thus remains available to the renewed judgments of differently situated persons. When our words fail to make sense or we anticipate their ambiguity to our listeners, we may draw forward an *exemplum*, tell a story, as Arendt often does. The primary question will be taken up in chapter two, the secondary in four. For discussion along similar lines, see: Stanley Cavell, "Aesthetic Problems of Modern Philosophy," in *Must We Mean What We Say?* (Cambridge University Press, 1976).

[97] For a historical-philosophical contextualization of this point, see: Alessandro Ferrara, *The Force of the Example: Explorations in the Paradigm of Judgment* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), Introduction.

[98] Kant says that reflective judgment (*Urteilskraft*) includes the (ordinary) sense of judging as normative assessment or evaluation (*Beurtheilung*) (Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 20:211.).

to them. Regarding the puzzle of normative standards, exemplarity will also help us see how judgment can tell right from wrong without fixed rules: the standards that inform our judgments are formed and reformed through the exemplars we choose to keep as company, and it is through the normative power of such exemplars that our judgments are weighted in a direction of (possible) rightness or justice. Finally, exemplarity also helps us bridge the divide between theory and practice. Judging an exemplary act preserves its original meaning while positioning us toward the possibilities it opens. If meaning is exemplary, then the redemption of action is always also an indeterminate preparation for future action, thus entangling retrospective understanding with prospective orientation in a dynamic, world-building movement.

IV. Democratic Imagination and Care for the World

If judgment is the name Arendt gives to the faculty through which exemplarity becomes politically meaningful, imagination is the power animating it.[99] Arendt placed the imagination at the center of judgment and called it the 'understanding heart.' With the concept of exemplarity in hand, we can see why: the imagination perceives what is (understanding) as it ought to be (the heart). The imagination responds to the exemplarity of appearances by transforming them into possible companions in reflection. If the chambers of the imagination beat by the fullness of examples, then the significance of the imagination in judgment must be profound indeed, since it would then name organ of *amour mundi*, of how we care for the shred world. Before I outline the path that this dissertation will travel, I would therefore like to lay out the contours and stakes of Arendt's view of imagination more clearly. Not only will this heighten our appreciation of what reflective judgment ultimately affords us, but it will also allow us to return to the question of how it redeems the circle of exemplarity in a specifically political sense.

Although the significance of the imagination for ethics and politics has been appreciated for centuries, over the last several decades a growing literature has begun to shed unprecedented light on its

[99] I use *power* here in a deliberately elastic sense. In Kant's *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, *Kraft* can carry the connotation of efficacy or "power" (and, in other contexts, "force"), while Kant also speaks of *Vermögen* as a *faculty/capacity* (e.g., cognitive faculties). My primary meaning is the latter: judgment as a capacity that can be exercised well or badly, cultivated, and oriented. Arendt, by contrast, reserves "power" (*Macht*) for what arises between persons acting in concert, not for an inner mental endowment. The claim I am gesturing toward is therefore relational: the *capacity* for judgment is not self-starting but is *activated and oriented* by exemplary words and deeds that appear in a shared public world. In that respect, Kant's "power" as a capacity depends upon—indeed is awakened by—Arendtian power as concerted action. This is the sense in which I will later describe imagination as a conduit of power-with: it mediates between exemplary action in the world and the reflective animation of our own judging, without collapsing the political meaning of power into mere psychology. (For this reason I am not appealing here to Kant's more dominative register of *Macht* and *Gewalt* in the *Analytic of the Sublime*, which concerns superiority over hindrances and constraint, i.e., forms of power-*over* rather than the enabling "with" at stake in political exemplarity. See: Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, sec. 28.) See footnote 121 below for further comments on Arendt's notion of power.

nuances and possibilities.[100] The turn to imagination in political theory has been driven by a convergence of conditions: the intensification of new media, the resurgence of populist and identarian politics, and the sense that rationalist models of democracy tethered to deliberation and proceduralism fail to capture the full range of how democratic norms are formed, sustained, or eroded. Within this imaginative turn, two dominant tendencies have emerged. One tendency, which I call the social approach, treats the imagination as a pre-reflective horizon of meaning that makes social practices and institutions intelligible from within. Bourdieu's *habitus*, Barthes' "myth," and Castoriadis' "social imaginary significations" are representative of this approach.[101] The other, which I call the sovereigntist approach, treats the imagination as a transcendent horizon of meaning that orients action toward aspirational ideals: as in Lefort's "empty place of power", Kalyvas' extra-juridical eruptions of extraordinary charisma, or Frank's "democratic sublime."[102] Where the social approach concerns already given significations, myths, and practices that constitute the background of our political experiences, the sovereigntist approach concerns ideals, absolutes, or "absent fullnesses" that orient our political projects beyond the world as it is. Although these approaches are far more complex than I can do justice to here, I would like to suggest that the distinction between immanence and transcendence guiding them constrains our ability to bring the kind of democratic imagination operative in reflective judgment into view.

By anchoring meaning within immanent processes of praxis, the social approach protects the imagination from the alienating abstractions of transcendent, bourgeois ideals.[103] Bourdieu's sociology of taste, for instance, rereads Kantian disinterestedness as a sublimated interest of social distinction; Barthes' analyses of myth expose how images "naturalize" historically contingent relations; and Castoriadis's notion of social imaginary significations pre-structures what can appear as meaningful at all. By weighting imagination so heavily toward its immanent conditions of emergence, these accounts risk eclipsing the

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[100] For overviews, see: Amy Kind, *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Imagination* (Routledge, 2016); Chiara Bottici and Benoît Challand, eds., *The Politics of Imagination* (Birkbeck Law Press, 2012); Yves Winter, "What Is an Imaginary?," *Critical Inquiry* 52, no. 2 (2026): 181–203.

[101] Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (Hill and Wang, 2006), 143.; Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Harvard University Press, 1984), 491–94.; Cornelius Castoriadis, *The Castoriadis Reader*, ed. David Ames Curtis (Wiley-Blackwell, 1997), chap. 5. See also: Rene Girard and Robert Doran (editor), *Mimesis and Theory: Essays on Literature and Criticism, 1953-2005*, Cultural Memory in the Present (Stanford University Press, 2008).; Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Duke University Press, 2004).

[102] Andreas Kalyvas, *Democracy and the Politics of the Extraordinary: Max Weber, Carl Schmitt, and Hannah Arendt* (Cambridge University Press, 2008), 6.; Jason Frank, *The Democratic Sublime: On Aesthetics and Popular Assembly* (Oxford University Press, 2021), 14.; Claude Lefort, *The Political Forms of Modern Society: Bureaucracy, Democracy, Totalitarianism* (Wiley-Blackwell, 1986), 302.

[103] These views often stem from Marx's early equation of labour and freedom, Heidegger's notion of being-in-the-world, and Freud's theory of the unconscious. They generally regard Kantian philosophy as alienated. Heidegger, for instance, depicted human existence as 'thrown' into a world not of its own choosing, and thats primordial relation to the world is practical engagement with the network of beings always-already disclosed within it. Beings ordinarily show themselves not in the philosophical or scientific mode of 'presence-to-hand,' as tends to guide Kant's philosophy, but in the engaged mode of 'readiness-to-hand.'

space of democratic agency that arises when plurality, not social belonging, is the ground of politics. Although reflective judgment is similarly opposed to supervenient ideals, it is not for this consigned to immanence. It is the capacity through which background meanings appear as available for reflective discernment, contestation, and renewal. The social approach therefore risks conflating two registers of imagination: the pre-reflective field of myths, symbols, and figures, and the reflective field of exemplary appearances.[104] This conflation reinforces a set of dichotomies — like between real and ideal, particular and universal, operative and inoperative — and resolves them prematurely on the side of the pre-reflective. But reflection does not alienate us from immanence. It transfigures what is already given into a space of worldly concern in which democratic agency becomes possible. When imagination is exercised reflectively, the immanent becomes exemplary.[105]

If the social approach undershoots the democratic imagination by drawing it too tightly into the orbit of immanence, the sovereigntist approach overshoots it by modelling it on experiences of transcendence. Recent versions of this approach invert Plato's and Hobbes' belief that the sovereign must keep its people in awe by locating the source of that awe not in a single ruler but in a popular one. Here the horizon of meaning is not pre-reflective but excessive: an absent fullness that orients political action from beyond. In Lefort's analysis of democracy after the French Revolution, the "empty place of power" functions as a perpetually unoccupiable image of the people, Kalyvas emphasizes charismatic eruptions in which popular sovereignty interrupts normalized legality, and Frank describes revolutionary assemblies as staging a "democratic sublime" in which the people appear as an inexhaustible, never fully representable power. These views sever imagination from everyday practices to secure the renewal of popular unity, yet in doing so risk displacing reflective freedom into a register of awe and subservience. The same clefts structuring the social imaginary – real/ideal, particular/universal, operative/inoperative – reappear here, but with the idealized pole exalted rather than subordinated. Manifestations of popular will depend on an imagination radiating an aura of transcendence, unifying citizens through affects such as charisma or

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[104] This conflation is perhaps best represented by Pierre Bourdieu and Cornelius Castoriadis. For Bourdieu, reflection itself is a bourgeois ideal, and for Castroriadis it is available only to those cultures stemming from the 'germ' of Greek democracy.

[105] The contrast between the social approach to imagination and Kant is by no means simplistic. Many see their projects as carrying on the Kantian meaning of critique as locating conditions of possibility for our practices. And in some cases, this continuity leads into the very terrain I am exploring. Charles Taylor, for instance, notes that seeing the imagination as a pre-figurative horizon of meaning is indebted in many respects to the Kantian project of seeking transcendental conditions, with the exception that the conditions in this case are imaginal objects like images, symbols, works of art, stories and legends that operate like transcendental schema through which persons implicitly make sense of the world around them. Hence the political recognition of individual and group rights in multicultural societies requires a 'fusion of (imaginary) horizons' through reciprocal interpretive understandings. Taylor describes this fusion in a manner suggestive of reflective judgment: "When we try to work out the 'social imaginary,' we are not dealing with the first-person singular but with the first-person plural: we're trying to get clear what a language could be by which we can express our self-understanding related to that plural self" (Ulf Bohmann and Dario Montero, "History, Critique, Social Change and Democracy: An Interview with Charles Taylor," *Constellations* 21, no. 1 (2014): 5.)

sublimity. Yet as Kant reminds us, the sublime ultimately compels the imagination to surrender its freedom before a "supersensible substrate."[106] Against this, a democratic account treats imaginative excess not as a summons to transcendence but as the very interval in which plurality appears. In this register, the imagination's surplus yields disinterested delight rather than awe, and transcendence is not abolished but once again transfigured in the exemplary—an appearance that orients without overwhelming, that invites reflection without demanding submission.

To be sure, these approaches are not as simple as I have presented them. In its contemporary form, the social approach typically avoids sedimentation by attributing creative powers to the imagination in social praxis, as in Castoriadis's theory of a "radical imagination" capable of creating images *ex nihilo*.[107] And the sovereigntist approach avoids the totalitarian tendencies of classical sovereignty by grounding it in social differentiation.[108] To say that these approaches under- and overshoot the democratic imagination, then, is to describe their starting points and dominant tenors. Crucially, since both are concerned to avoid the pitfalls of their respective poles, they invariably reach into one another. Any account of immanence today requires a recuperation of the transcendent to avoid social sedimentation, and any account of transcendence requires immanence to avoid classical sovereignty. The logic remains the same, but the weights are different. This double reaching may constitute a contemporary iteration of the circle of exemplarity. By remaining within a logic of immanence and transcendence, they circle endlessly around the same polarity without disclosing the plurality that precedes and enjoins both. To see how it does so, let us push this logic a bit further.

The immanence/transcendence polarity mirrors, in a different register, the more general logic of identity and difference that has long dominated Western thought. The prevalence of this logic owes in part to the dominance of the philosophical tradition's prioritization of 'man in the singular,' to speak with Arendt. From Plato's theory of the forms to Kant's moral law, to the taxonomic partitioning of nature into species and genera, to the exchangeability of objects and persons in profit-driven economies, to violence against diverse embodiments that fall outside hegemonic norms, to the evacuation of the domain of the possible by technological appropriation and control—everywhere identity is parasitic on difference. The turn to difference and immanence in the 20th century sought to invert this priority by affirming becoming or alterity against the hegemony of Identity, yet has nevertheless remained caught within the same dialectical bind. The closer one draws to difference, the harder it becomes to explain the stability of democratic practices; the closer one cleaves to identity, the harder it becomes to explain their renewal.

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[106] Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, sec. 5:269.
[107] Castoriadis, *The Castoriadis Reader*, 321.
[108] Lefort, *The Political Forms of Modern Society: Bureaucracy, Democracy, Totalitarianism*, 302.

Arendt did not ignore but transformed the problems motivating the turn to difference in the 20th century. She also thought that the collapse of metaphysical systems has had profound effects on our ability to create durable meanings in our world and assume responsibility for them. She would have agreed with Byung-Chul Han that this is taking on new shapes in the age of mass loneliness, depression, hyper-atomization, automation, and digitization.[109] Where difference collapses into identity, what reigns is not Truth but *indifference*—not a willful denial of reality, but its disregard.[110] And thus may have also agreed with Harry Frankfurt that "the greater enemy to reality" are not lies but "bullshit."[111] Unlike philosophies of difference, however, which seek to recover meaning from exposure to alterity, the flux of becoming, fideistic leaps of faith, or the negativity of creative desire, Arendt's attention to plurality leads us to recover a source of meaning antecedent to the economies of identity and difference and appropriate to the sharedness of the world.

When we say that there is plurality, we mean that there is more than one.[112] There is 'one' and other 'ones.' This implies two things. First, each one is different from the others, for without difference plurality would collapse into sameness (One). Second, that each one is different from other ones also implies that each has an identity, or is the same with respect to itself. Without identity or self-sameness, each one would dissolve into formless differentiation (Many). Identity and difference therefore presuppose one another. But since this mutual presupposition requires that *more than one is already given*, identity and difference in fact presuppose plurality: plurality is logically primary to identity and difference.

Arendt's thought invites us to embrace this priority in an experiential way.[113] Her account of reflective judgment sought to show how appearances are shared between plural perspectives, where the relevant kind of sharing is not an intersection of identities across differences but the articulation of common places (*topoi*) around which plural persons are both related and set apart. One of Arendt's most evocative images for grasping this kind of meaning can be drawn from her claim that judgment "builds the world as a home for mortal beings."[114] If *home* suggests a place of dwelling, and *world* the shared space of

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[109] Arendt was deeply concerned about the threats of atomization brought about by mass culture (Arendt, "The Crisis in Culture"), and understood loneliness as a precondition for the emergence of totalitarianism (Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Harcourt Brace & Company, 1973), chap. 13.)

[110] Byung-Chul Han, *The Expulsion of the Other: Society, Perception and Communication Today*, trans. Wieland Hoban (Polity, 2018).

[111] Harry G. Frankfurt, *On Bullshit* (Princeton University Press, 2009).

[112] From the Latin *pluralis,* 'of or belonging to more (*plus*) than one' ("Plural (Adj.)," *Online Etymology Dictionary*, n.d.).

[113] Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 184–87. Here, Arendt discusses the relation of identity and difference in phenomenological terms, focusing on its presence even in the solitary experience thinking. She argues that the "inherent duality" of thinking, as a soundless dialogue between me and myself, points not to a dialectics of reason turning around identity and difference, but to "the infinite plurality which is the law of the earth" (187). In my view, which will be developed throughout the dissertation, reflective judging not only retains the inherent duality of thinking but expands it to include a plurality of exemplary perspectives that give it traction on the plurality of the world.

[114] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 173.

appearances, then *building* names the activity through which mortals shape that space in a way faithful to its originary sharedness. Exemplarity provides both the material and the form of this building. And it is here, at the point where reflective imagination receives exemplary appearances as invitations to world-building, that judgment reveals its fundamental attunement: building is an activity of responding to the shared world in view of what should endure within it and is thus how we care for that world.

One reason I think that the social and sovereign imaginations cannot register care as a fundamental attunement of democratic life because they remain inattentive to the collapse of their guiding dichotomies (immanence and transcendence, identity and difference). Each tradition perceives a tension between the ordinary and the extraordinary, for instance, but neither grasps how modern conditions of indifference – like mass loneliness, hyper-atomization, automated routines, and the circulation of slogans and stock phrases – erode the very availability of the shared world from which these dichotomies arise. Arendt was acutely alive to this erosion. She called indifference the "by far greatest danger,"[115] and implicitly understood care as the countermovement to its drift. From this perspective, judgment appears a kind of imaginative readiness to be claimed by what appears, remain vulnerable to its significance, and answerable to the fragile world it reveals. *Amour mundi,* then, not as sentiment, duty, or affect, but as an attunement through which we remain responsibly oriented to plurality itself. Absent care, the imagination recedes into reproduction and esteem or swells into charisma and sublimity. Present care, the imagination remains attuned to the *betweenness* of the world, the space where exemplary appearances are welcomed as free-standing sources of public normativity. Care is imagination working in the middle voice. It redeems the circle of exemplarity by receiving examples neither as instruments of social belonging nor icons of transcendence but as appearances entrusted to plurality. *Amor mundi* beats with the exemplary.

As a free-standing source of public normativity, exemplarity makes possible the equal freedom of spectators and actors witness to it. It names a kind of meaning that lies between (not within) a set of longstanding dichotomies: the real and ideal, particular and general, ordinary and extraordinary, heteronomous and autonomous, operative and inoperative, good-for and Good. The interval it occupies is resistant to the standpoint of reason. Insofar as rationality is governed by demands for unity or determinacy, it remains compelled to resolve such polarities either by projecting a higher generality (as in transcendental reason), [116] or by excavating a deeper particularity (as in immanent critique).[117] Exemplarity belongs to neither resolution. Its mode of validity appears only when we respond to exemplary appearances as *self-*

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[115] Hannah Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment* (Schocken, 2003), 144.

[116] Kant and Hegel being classical examples.

[117] As Zizek puts it, "[E]very empirical example undermines theory. There are no full examples. But this does not mean that we should turn the examples against theory. At the same time, there is no exception. There are no examples outside theories. Every example of a theory is an indication of the inner split dynamics of the theory itself, and here dialectics begins" (Slavoj Zizek, "A Conversation with Slavoj Zizek," interview by Bradley Bolman and Tara Raghuveer, February 10, 2012, The Harvard Crimson.) See also: Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (Continuum, 2007).

presenting sources of normativity, as appearances that do not refer beyond themselves but disclose their worth in and through themselves. The democratic imagination thus precedes and animates reason. In reflective judgment, it is not *reasons that move our imagination*, as Alessandro Ferrara argues,[118] but *imagination that moves our reasons.*[119] And the way it is moved is not by the *force* of the exemplary (Ferrara again),[120] but by its world-building *power.*[121]

V. Overview of Chapters

Across *The Human Condition* and *The Life of the Mind*, Arendt sketched a picture of our political capacities in which the freedom of action and the freedom of the mind are mutually sustaining. Action brings a public space into being, yet this actuation presupposes spectators—either actors themselves stepping briefly out of the fray to glimpse the whole in which they participate, or non-acting witnesses who make sense of the unfolding deeds. Arendt was equally attuned, however, to the loss of the public sphere and to the special significance of mental freedom in such moments. When vibrant publics falter, the inner life can preserve their spirit and prepare the ground for their return. We can recall past constellations of action, animate the fragmentary ones flickering around us, and, in darker times, carry the light within ourselves.

This dissertation seeks to honor this insight. It approaches political freedom from the side of the mind rather than from the world. In so doing, it aims to clarify the mental activities that action properly entails. By reconstructing Arendt's writings on judgment around the concept of exemplarity, I wish to show how judgment is both receptive to and anticipatory of action. This double-orientation is neither wholly indeterminate nor wholly determinate but describes a single movement through which the mind responds responsibly to actions as exemplary in view of further exemplary action. The indeterminate-determinateness of reflection allows,[122] on the receptive side, judgment to not only be formed by examples of world-building

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[118] Alessandro Ferrara, "Politics at Its Best: Reasons That Move the Imagination," in *The Politics of the Imagination*, ed. Chiara Bottici and Benoît Challand (Birkbeck Law Press, 2011).

[119] Arendt follows Heidegger in placing the imagination as the 'root' of our mental faculties, including reason.

[120] Ferrara, *The Force of the Example: Explorations in the Paradigm of Judgment*.

[121] Power is a complicated term in Arendt. It can mean something like agency, as in the power to *initiate* something, which she associates with the Greek term *archein*. But it can also mean achievement, which she associates with the Greek *prattein* (Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 222.). As Patchen Markell has put it, power in this latter sense – which he calls 'power-after' – is something like "a bond that holds people in a relation of presence and attention to each other and some aspect of their world" (Patchen Markell, "The Moment Has Passed: Power after Arendt," in *Radical Future Pasts: Untimely Political Theory*, ed. Romand Coles, George Schulman, and Mark Reinhardt (Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2014), 127-28.) In my view, these two senses (beginning and achieving) are mutually supportive in concerted action, understood as power-*with*. Exemplarity weaves *prattein*, the source of endurance (achievement) into *archein*, the source of natal action (beginning). Exemplary actions endure in the imaginations of spectators to inspire an indeterminate array of free actions. This will be developed in the chapters to follow.

[122] Kant speaks of aesthetic concepts as 'indeterminate' in the third *Critique*, and beautiful objects as 'purposeless purposes.' To say a concept is indeterminate is a paradox, since concepts are typically determinative. I address these matters in chapter two.

action in the absence of a vibrant public sphere, for instance, but also to be free to chart a novel path with respect to the meanings they reveal. And on the anticipatory side, it allows that whatever words and deeds judgment inspires not only to remain attributable to the persons enacting them (not their examples), but also to remain open to the unpredictable reception of other judges. It is this double openness that, I think, sustains the life of the mind in both dark and light times. It also describes the outermost contours of Arendt's democratic redemption of the circle of exemplarity.

This dissertation is comprised of three long chapters. In the first, I offer a sustained reading of *The Human Condition* oriented around the question of political measures or standards in politics. The central aim of this chapter is to dislodge the view that Arendt was uniformly hostile to the use of standards in politics. Since *The Human Condition* is widely taken to present her fullest criticisms of standards, showing her position in that text as in fact more ambivalent than is often supposed will I hope serve to liberate us from thinking too simplistically about this important and divisive question, and also prepare the ground for a positive elaboration of exemplarity as fulfilling this role. To this end, I endeavour to show that Arendt's powerful rejection of instrumental measures not only leaves open the possibility that a non-instrumental kind may nevertheless be vital to political life, but also in fact prepares the ground for its elaboration. I conclude this chapter by attempting to weave the loose threads of *The Human Condition* into its compendium, *The Life of the Mind*, and present exemplarity as the point where they are woven back together.

Having dissolved the picture that Arendt was uniformly hostile to standards in politics, I then move in the second chapter to a detailed response to the question of how exemplarity can serve as standards in judgment in a way that supports freedom, equality, and plurality. This chapter deals with the objective axis of exemplarity, which I term 'exemplary givenness.' By objectivity, I do not mean detached neutrality but the way actions appear to the imagination of spectators as original examples to be followed. I focus on the originating moment of reflection – those instances when an action or event sets our minds into 'free play'– to make sense of how actions and events can disrupt our ordinary senses of the world and draw us into judgement. My analysis unfolds through three dimensions of objectivity: the 'indeterminate-determinate' character of exemplary givenness, the 'primitive' or 'politically originary' normativity it carries, and its relation to linguistic creativity. Exemplary appearances, I argue, are world-opening *res publica* that appear as they 'ought' to be in an originary and non-rule based way, and that it is in response to this originary 'ought' that the minds of spectators are set free into the world-building activities of perspective-taking and linguistic creativity.

The third chapter carries on the task of showing how examples can be standards of democratic judgment by moving into the subjective axis of exemplarity. This transition is necessary, for *that* an example is given as a possible guide for judging does not yet tell us *why* one should choose it to serve as

one, nor *how* one may be guided by it if they do. Arendt was clear that actions and events not only open the world anew, but also invite us to make choices or selections regarding what is revealed through them. While our *responsiveness* to actions as exemplary is one important feature of the freedom of judgment, it is not yet sufficient to establish our *responsibility* for the world they make visible. Through a close reading of Arendt's claim that 'our decisions of right and wrong depend on our choices of exemplary company,' I thus strive to clarify how responsibility for the world emerges through this responsiveness. To this end, I develop a concept of *political heautonomy*, which mediates between the passive responsiveness of heteronomy and the authoritative responsibility of autonomy. I argue that heautonomy entails a reconciliation of the mimetic aspect of judging (its responsiveness to exemplary claims to endure through representation) and the discerning aspect of judging (its responsibility for choosing which examples should serve as guides). It is through this reconciliation, I suggest, that heautonomy can satisfy both moral and ethical intuitions: the freedom of heautonomy, I argue, actuates normatively elevated versions of the axes of judgment itself – exemplarity (objective), personhood (subjective), and worldliness (intersubjective) – that reciprocally serve to orient our selection of exemplars in the direction of freedom and equality. And the *way* these axes are actuated in judgment is through what I call its *ethics of congeniality*, which reconciles relationality with originality. This chapter thus culminates in a phenomenological description of how the very activity of judging leads us to choose examples that harmonize with the personhood of persons and worldliness of the world.

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I would like to conclude my introduction with a few remarks on my method and its place within the project as a whole. Until now, I have described my approach as reconstructive, and accurately so since my aim is to develop an account of reflective judgment by freely arranging Arendt's appeals to exemplarity in relation to her wider writings. Yet this description of my method can be refined further, for as I also noted, this dissertation is itself an exercise in reflective judgment. What I mean by this, and why it matters, can best be shown by way of contrast.

In an article critical of Arendt's aestheticization of political judgment, Seyla Benhabib remarked that she would be 'thinking with and against Arendt.'[123] I take this now-popular phrase as roughly descriptive of my own approach. But only to a point, and the differences matter. Like Benhabib, I understand this project as *thinking* with Arendt, but only if "thinking" here means *thinking the particular*—

[123] Seyla Benhabib, "Judgment and the Moral Foundations of Politics in Arendt's Thought," *Political Theory* 16, no. 1 (1988): 31.

that is, judging. This carries two important consequences. First, if this dissertation is an exercise of thinking in the reflective sense of judging, then any impression that I am attempting to fix judgment into a definitive form is mistaken. Whatever conclusions I may appear to draw, or whatever strong tones I may occasionally strike, these should be understood as moments of clarity that, in principle, remain open to revision and retuning. Second, because the particular under reflection here is judgment itself, the movement of this dissertation is necessarily reflexive or openly circular. It is an exercise in judging judgment, not by standing above it, but by breathing life into it through its own language. The by-product is nothing more and nothing less than a new example that you, the reader, are free to take up, interpret, and follow as you wish and in your own way.

It is not only thinking that must be clarified for Benhabib's method to align with my own, however. In my view, the phrase *with and against* is redundant: the *withness* of judgment already implies a qualified *againstness*, which Arendt calls *separateness*. Whereas *againstness* positions interlocutors in opposition, *separateness* names the mutual distance that makes relation possible without collapsing into either enmity or unanimity. What I take myself to be doing, then, is reading Arendt *with* Arendt in the richest sense of that term by making her words a medium for engaging not with Arendt herself, but with the worldly matters her words seek to illuminate. These matters are shared between her and me, between you and I. Reading Arendt invites neither acolytes nor denouncers, but free judges moved to take up anew the threads of the world woven not only through her writing but also the writing of all those who have also reflected upon the issues manifest within them—or at least as many as possible. Although Arendt of course remains responsible for her writings, neither she nor I stand alone in shaping them. They are the by-products of reflective dialogue: hers with a vast plurality of voices stretching across philosophical and political history; mine with a different, smaller, yet overlapping plurality of my own, including hers. If there is a sense in which I wish to embrace the rich simplicity of the *with*, then, it is because I see in it the ethics of congeniality that I believe makes judgment a world-sustaining activity. Judging with Arendt requires treating her as free and equal, which in turn requires treating ourselves as free and equal. This relational attunement tempers any temptation to abandon dialogue in favor of opposition, which is a stance warranted only in the regrettable cases of evil. My aim has not been to seek out opposition but to pursue opportunities for clarity, inspiration, and encouragement. In so doing, I believe I have not lost myself in the process but rather gained the plurality-affirming dimensions of self that the very activity of judging fosters. As I hope becomes clear, the inspiration afforded by this dialogue has opened pathways of reflection that Arendt did not, and may have not, explored.

So long as we are alive, the *withness* of judgment remains open-ended. I will forget about Arendt, as I have done many times over the course of this dissertation. Yet since I began, she has never vanished from my mind entirely. Perhaps it would be appropriate, then, to modify Benhabib's phrase once again.

What I have done across these pages is judge (judgment) *with and with Arendt*. By doubling the *with*, I mean to pronounce the moments of hiatus, wandering, and returning that are also part of the course of judgment. Arendt has not been my only conversation partner. I have, time and time again, turned my attention elsewhere. When I have turned my gaze back in her direction, I have done so with new perspectives, new experiences, and new questions for us to dine upon—fresh food for judgment. The freedom of the mind in judgment moves as if along an open spiral of departure and return, weaving itself towards, away, and back towards the exemplary voices that populate its inner region and held together by the gravity of the common world. No voice has the final word, yet all deserve a hearing.

There are, therefore, always more *withs* to be added. The fabric of the human condition stretches infinitely into past and future, and the range of perspectives that have sought to render it is ever expanding. This dissertation necessarily leaves much out, including much of direct relevance. I cannot say how long that list would be, but here I wish to name the most conspicuous omission. Alongside the objective and subjective axes of exemplarity lies a third: the intersubjective axis. Had time permitted, I would have explored more fully the double openness of judgment—its responsiveness to, and anticipation of, exemplary action—from the vantage of the space between actual persons. Such a perspective would likely have led me to clarify the role of exemplarity in the *power-with* relation of concerted action, the formation of solidarities that preserve plurality, and the forms of public speech most conducive to fostering concertedness among diversely situated persons. It would also have brought further into view the by-products of exemplary action: the common-places in which such actions are made durable as touchstones for our imaginations—written accounts, monuments, archives, photographs, and so on. In short, moving into the intersubjective axis would have drawn us more decisively out of the mental realm of judgment and into the world of action, completing the perspectival arc I have sought to trace between the other two.

I have taken liberties throughout this dissertation. I have sought to cultivate my reconstruction of judgment through close readings of Arendt's writings but have also taken these as steppingstones for the free development of the insights that seem to animate them. I have not crossed every *t* nor dotted every *i,* of course—nor have I wished to. But between my letters has been the spirit of her writings as I have glimpsed it. Although I am uncertain whether Arendt would have followed every move I have made, my judgment is that she should have.

Taken together, then, the mutually supporting axes of exemplarity form a political phenomenology of reflective judgment that portrays the life of the mind as care for the world. Although partial, I hope this study traces enough of the arc around these axes to reveal how the circle of exemplarity can indeed be redeemed democratically: exemplary appearances spark our judgments; our judgments keep the spirit of exemplars alive as guides for world-oriented reflection; and the actions those reflections encourage serve to renew the world by offering original examples for others to ponder and follow in their own way. The

circle of exemplarity is a circle of freedom and responsibility. From its resonant chamber, we may faintly hear: *Be the change you wish to see in the world.* To which we might respond: *Yes… and how?*

CHAPTER ONE

POLITICS WITHOUT MEASURE?

> *We need not choose here between Plato and Protagoras, or decide whether a god or man should be the measure of all things; what is certain is that the measure can be neither the driving necessity of biological life and labor nor the utilitarian instrumentalism of fabrication and usage.*[1]

This is how Hannah Arendt ends the fourth chapter, 'Work,' of *The Human Condition.* The suspenseful 'we need not choose here…' is like many of her other transition sentences throughout that text, where one section concludes by exposing a pivotal question that is then addressed, usually implicitly, in the subsequent section. This is the case, for example, between the sections (22 – 23) immediately preceding the chapter transition in question, where Arendt says at the end of section 22 that Plato's reply to Protagoras – that a god, not man,[2] is the measure of all things – "would be an empty, moralizing gesture if it were really true […] that instrumentality […] rules the realm of the finished world as exclusively as it rules the activity through which the world and all things it contains comes into being."[3] Arendt's subsequent discussion of works of art in section 23 then becomes an argument for why Plato's retort against Protagoras is *not* an empty, moralizing gesture: works of art, indeed finished things in general, "transcend" the instrumental activity of fabrication through which they come to completion and, in so doing, stabilize the world as a meaningful "home for mortal men."[4] And the ability of works of art to transcend instrumentality depends, she says, on their "adequacy or inadequacy to what they should look like," that is, their adequacy or inadequacy, "in Platonic language," to the "*eidos* or idea […] that preceded their coming into the world and that survives their potential destruction."[5]

Arendt's defence of the non-instrumentality of finished things in section 23 makes her concluding claim in the final sentence of that section and the chapter on work, cited in my epigraph, somewhat odd. If it is not 'man' but 'ideas' that are the measure of all things, as she had just argued with the help of Plato, why

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[1] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 174.

[2] Arendt uses 'man' and 'men' as universals for persons. In what follows, I have maintained Arendt's usage in summaries and paraphrasing for consistency. For a discussion of Arendt and feminism, see: Bonnie Honig, ed. *Feminist Interpretations of Hannah Arendt* (State College: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995).

[3] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 167.

[4] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 173.

[5] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 173.

does she go on to say, 'We need not choose here between Plato and Protagoras,' instead of 'Plato was right'? Why does she opt for *displacing* the question of appropriate measure instead of answering it directly? Presumably, part of the answer has to do with the fact that while Plato seems to have gained the upper hand at this point of the text, Arendt still has much more to say about the precise character of his alternative and its appropriateness for the *vita activa*. From this perspective, we may read Arendt's displacement of the question of measure as traversing the boundary between the chapters on work and action and pointing us into the orbit of her famous section 31 in the chapter on action where she argues that Plato inaugurated the violent tradition of political philosophy by transposing the framework of *homo faber* into a higher realm of being, one where transcendent Ideas accessible only to philosopher-kings provide measure for all things, including the "raw material" of human beings.[6] On this reading, Arendt's displacement of the question of measure at the end of chapter four would come to a conclusive close with her forceful criticism of Plato near the end of chapter five, leaving us with the impression that, in relation to the realm of the *vita activa*, the question of measure is ultimately illegitimate.

Commentators that see in Arendt's writings an endorsement of radical novelty have long read her in this way. Action, as the capacity to begin anew in concert, is unstandardized and unstandardizable. It cannot be measured, only endured and redeemed, and *The Human Condition* is held up as unambiguously affirming a resolutely anti-idealistic vision of politics. Dana Villa, for instance, interprets action and judgment, the two most political of human capacities for Arendt, as "coming into their own [...] precisely when there are no bannisters to lean on."[7] And Linda Zerilli similarly sees the demand for normative standards in judgment as occluding the non-foundationalist politics that Arendt's approach properly entails.[8] However, even with Arendt's forceful criticism of Platonism in place, we are still left to make sense of the fact that the final clause of the concluding sentence of chapter four – 'what is certain is that the measure can be neither the driving necessity of biological life nor the utilitarian instrumentality of fabrication and usage' – poses a potentially pivotal complication to this reading: Arendt here affirms the legitimacy of the question of measure outside her criticism of instrumentality, which though refers here to Protagoras nevertheless comes, eventually, to include Plato as well. From this perspective, Arendt's criticism of Plato in section 31 may not in fact undermine the meaningfulness of the question of measure in its entirety, but rather only serve to complete the critical discussion of *instrumental* measures in politics prepared for in the fourth chapter while leaving open just what type of measure is, on her own terms, appropriate for natal appearances in a world constituted by plurality.

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[6] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 227.

[7] Dana Richard Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger: The Fate of the Political* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 165.

[8] Linda M.G. Zerilli, "The Force of the Example: Explorations in the Paradigm of Judgment," *Perspectives on Politics* 8, no. 2 (2010), 656.

What I aim to show in this chapter is that, despite her forceful criticisms of instrumental measures in politics, Arendt's response to the question of measure is in fact more ambiguous than has often been supposed. And productively so. In my view, there is indeed a positive sense of measure that corresponds to the *vita activa* and the conditions of plurality and natality; one which is both apparent on the surface as well as beneath the text; and that is eventually brought to light more explicitly in Arendt's later writings, especially those on judgment. Although she does not directly articulate it in *The Human Condition*, the kind of measure appropriate to the *vita activa*, I argue, are examples: 'mental representations' or 'visions' of outstanding persons and events that provide non-determinative guidance for judging the 'worth' of particulars in the present. It is from the perspective of exemplarity that Arendt's response to the choice between Protagoras and Plato proves to be something of a mediation. The exemplary may indeed be 'good for' something, so long as what it is good for is not the satisfaction of wants and needs but the guiding inspiration of world-oriented judging and acting. And while the exemplary may indeed be revealed to 'the inner eye,' it is not for this reducible to or derivative of Ideas. It is not speculative reason to which we owe the givenness of examples, but the imagination's glimpsing of a practical meaning or 'spirit' from within apparent particulars through reflection. As mediating between Protagoras and Plato, the exemplary thus achieve something of the normative priority, coherence, and durability needed to satisfy a notion of measures or standards while avoiding the kind of dogmatic hardening that Arendt attributed to Archimedean rules, principles, or laws.

That Arendt's turn to exemplarity was intended to satisfy a conception of measures appropriate to plurality and natality bears on a host of important questions that have encircled not only her writings but political and moral thought more generally. What sort of orientation to the past is conducive to pluralism, freedom, and equality? How do we responsibly inherit that which we do not, at least in the first instance, choose? Is judgment as an exercise of public freedom compatible with judgment as an exercise of autonomy? If judging politically is the means by which persons build a world in common together, as Arendt's more insightful commentators maintain, can this capacity really be imagined without some conception of standards guiding or orienting the building process? Or might the question of standards in judgment rather invite a consideration of the nature of the 'places' (*Ort*) on which and democratically oriented persons stand (*Stehen*) and from which they may embark on new beginnings together?

While a body of literature addressing the relevance of exemplarity to related questions has begun to take shape over the last few decades,[9] the relevance of Arendt's contribution has generally gone missed.[10] Where Arendt's views on exemplarity have been considered, commentators have provided only brief and schematic summaries.[11] Although it is not the aim of this chapter to wade into interpretative debates concerning Arendt's theory of judgment or its place in democratic theory more generally, I take the exegetical argument that it presents – that the problem of standards lies at the very heart of Arendt's unwritten theory judgment – as preparatory for a reconstruction of that theory in the chapters to follow.

I. From Work to Action

That the final sentence of the chapter on work operates as both a conclusion to the preceding chapter and a preface to the next is suggestive of what Patchen Markell has called the 'non-territorial' dimension of *The Human Condition*.[12] As Markell demonstrates, the chapter on work represents something of a keystone for upholding the conceptual architecture of the text, both separating (or 'territorially' defining) its own phenomenal domain against the others, while also over-reaching (or 'de-territorializing') those boundaries,

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[9] In Law, see: Amalia Amaya, "Exemplarism and Judicial Virtue," *Law & Literature* 25, no. 3 (2013).; Maksymilian Del Mar, "Exemplarity and Narrativity in the Common Law Tradition," *Law & Literature* 25, no. 3 (2013). In Rhetoric, see: John Arthos, "Where There Are No Rules or Systems to Guide Us: Argument From Example in a Hermeneutic Rhetoric," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 89, no. 4 (2003).; Alexander Gelley, ed. *Unruly Examples: On the Rhetoric of Exemplarity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995).; Samuel McCormick, "Argument By Comparison: An Ancient Typology," *Rhetorica* 32, no. 2 (2014). In Political Theory, see: Alessandro Ferrara, "Exemplarity in the Public Realm," *Law & Literature* 30, no. 3 (2018).; Alessandro Ferrara, "Debating Exemplarity: The "Communis" in Sensus Communis," *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 45, no. 2 (2019).; Melissa Lane, "Constraint, Freedom, and Exemplar: History and Theory Without Teleology," in *Political Philosophy Versus History? Contextualism and Real Politics in Contemporary Political Thought*, ed. Marc Stears, and Johnathan Floyd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).; Lois McNay, "The Politics of Exemplarity: Ferrara on the Disclosure of New Political Worlds," *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 45, no. 2 (2018). Aletta Norval, "A Democratic Politics of Acknowledgment: Political Judgment, Imagination, and Exemplarity," *Diacritics* 38, no. 4 (2008). In Ethics and Moral Philosophy, see: Rebecca Langlands, *Exemplary Ethics in Ancient Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018). Irene E. Harvey, *Labyrinths of Exemplarity: At the Limits of Deconstruction* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2002).; Onora O'Neill, "The Power of Example," *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 61, no. 235 (1986).; Linda Trinkaus Zagzebski, *Exemplarist Moral Theory* (Oxford University Press, 2017).

[10] Arendt's name does not appear, for example, in the only two edited collections dedicated to exemplarity: Michele Lowrie, *Exemplarity and Singularity: Thinking Through Particulars in Philosophy, Literature, and Law* (London: Routledge, 2017).; Gelley, *Unruly Examples: On the Rhetoric of Exemplarity*. Nor does 'example' or 'exemplarity' appear in the indexes of the three companions to Arendt's thought: Peter Baehr, and Philip Walsh, eds. *The Anthem Companion to Hannah Arendt* (London: Anthem, 2017).; Peter Gratton, and Yasmin Sari, eds. *The Bloomsbury Companion to Arendt* (London: Bloomsbury, 2021).; Dana Villa, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Hannah Arendt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

[11] See: Ronald Beiner, "Hannah Arendt on Judging," in *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, ed. Ronald Beiner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).; Alessandro Ferrara, "Judgment, Identity and Authenticity: A Reconstruction of Hannah Arendt's Interpretation of Kant," *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 24, no. 2/3 (1998).; Maurizio Passerin D'Entrèves, "Arendt's Theory of Judgment," in *The Cambridge Companion to Hannah Arendt*, ed. Dana Villa (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).; Jonathan P. Schwartz, *Arendt's Judgment: Freedom, Responsibility, Citizenship* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), Chapter Five.

[12] Patchen Markell, "Arendt's Work: On the Architecture of 'the Human Condition'," *College Literature* 38, no. 1 (2011).

either in a mode of encroachment or support. The territorial argument is presented in plain view: in relation to labor, work arises for purposes antithetical to the cyclicality and consumptiveness of the labor process. It produces durable use-objects that stabilize the world and provide temporal continuity against the natural rhythms of biological life.[13] And with respect to action, the means-ends cognitive process required by the activity of fabrication is antithetical to the unpredictability of action. In a world constituted by a pluralistic 'web of relations,' the results of any action will always exceed whatever ends the actors might have intended.[14]

But work also over-reaches these distinctions in both directions. With respect to labour, Arendt argues that although work arises to provide a durable "human artifice" against the cyclicality of labor and consumption, that durability is nevertheless threatened by the fact that every finished object, every 'end' to the activity of making, becomes a means to some further end through its very use and thus, when combined with the market and technological innovation, threatens to collapse the world-stabilizing activity of work back into the cyclicality it was meant to overcome. In the modern age, work thus comes to be "performed in the mode of labouring," and its products "consumed as though they were consumer goods."[15] And with respect to action, Arendt argues that certain kinds of works, which Arendt identifies initially as works of art but broadens to include "all finished things in general," need not become means to further ends (be they the uses for which the object was produced or the end of subsistence for the producers themselves), but rather, in their very "uselessness," achieve "permanence" and provide boundaries of meaning and stability for the public sphere in which action takes place.[16]

The fact that Arendt opens the category of works of art to include 'all things in general' means that the kinds of works supportive and necessary for action will include public artifacts of all kinds, like monuments, texts, paintings, railways, or written laws. But it also means that far from being indifferent to works, action is also meaningfully responsive to the myriad of artifacts that constitute the 'human artifice' and the public realm, thus providing this otherwise notoriously 'thin' or 'empty' concept with the 'content' it needs to be intelligible.[17] As Markell reads it, action can thus be seen as responding to the already existing human artifice and seeking to redraw its boundaries to make it look otherwise: "the instrumental purpose of a course of activity […] is never *merely* instrumental, but implicates larger questions about, as Arendt would later say, 'how the world is to look' and 'what kinds of things are to appear in it.'" On this reading, a supportive relationship forms in both directions: actors require "the intermediary, stabilizing and

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[13] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 143.
[14] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 232-33.
[15] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 232.
[16] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 173-74.
[17] Markell, "Arendt's Work: On the Architecture of 'the Human Condition'," 35.

solidifying influence of things" to have anything to respond to at all,[18] and their own actions are indeed responsive to the shape of the world as given by appearing things.[19]

Because we are concerned with whether or not the question of measure left hanging at the end of the chapter of work can be picked up in, and supportive of, the chapters on the *vita activa*, the transition from the first two of these purposes to third deserves a bit more attention. Specifically, we need to know the context in which the question of measure appears and what grounds we have for searching for its response in the subsequent chapters.

Markell identifies four features that constitute the work of *homo faber* in Arendt's account: the durability of the objects it creates;[20] the violence involved in the worker's activity of reification;[21] the importance of the 'model,' whether a mental image or a literal blueprint, that "guides work of fabrication";[22] and the instrumental character of work, which is "entirely determined by the category of means and end."[23] Arendt's attempt to rescue work from the labor process in the final section on works of art does not, however, amount to abandoning the fundamental features of work (nor does it deny the practical necessity of utility in the domain of production), but rather involves an attempt to rethink those features anew in world-building articulations. Building upon Markell's account, we find the section on works of art also contains modifications of each of the features just described: works of art are not just "durable" but achieve "permanence" and "immortality";[24] the violence required to "transform" raw material into finished products becomes a poetic "transfiguration" of nature through artistic creation, in which for instance "the course of nature which wills that all fire burn to ashes is reverted and even dust can burst into flames";[25] models are no longer mental or physical schematics for producing and re-producing use-objects ad infinitum, but are imagistic "standards" for judging the beauty of things;[26] and the means-end cognitive process involved in instrumental work is situated underneath, or is made subservient to, the activity of thinking, which provides "inspiration" for the creation of artworks.[27] Although works of art require means-ends cognition (since they unavoidably involve a productive process), their fabrication is no longer merely instrumental because the finished thing is rather a disclosure of the 'useless' 'process' of thought itself.[28]

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[18] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 182.
[19] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 192.
[20] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 139.
[21] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 139-40.
[22] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 140ff.
[23] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 143.
[24] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 168.
[25] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 168.
[26] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 168.
[27] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 168.
[28] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 171.

That Arendt did not abandon but rescued *homo faber* in the section (23) on works of art provides some weight to the suspicion that the question of measure is indeed legitimate outside her criticisms of instrumentality, now understood in the limited sense 'of fabrication and usage.' The kind of measure available to Arendt may then resemble what she meant by beauty as a standard for producing and judging art, since it is here that she identifies a positive sense of measure irreducible to means and ends determination.

There are, however, good reasons to be *prima facie* skeptical regarding a congruence between standards of art and standards of action, for the two activities are distinct in many ways: all fabrication is oriented towards the production of tangible things, whereas the words and deeds of actors are intangible; the 'who' of an artist is always in "competition" with their completed things' independent existence in public, whereas the 'who' of an actor is always coincident with the public action itself;[29] the activity of making occurs in isolation, whereas acting occurs directly between "men *qua* men";[30] and makers are related to one another through a "purposeful combination of skills and activities," whereas acting involves direct "relations between unique persons."[31] But there are also good reasons to suppose that features of the description of the work of art nevertheless overreach these boundaries, not only in terms of the stabilizing effects of actual works on the public sphere, as described, but also in terms of the continuity of the conceptual architecture that Arendt introduces to describe appearances *qua* public appearances from the section on works of art onwards. If the section on works of art introduces a *literal* relationship between the activity of making and the stabilizing effect provided by *actual* finished things on the public space of appearances, it also introduces a *metaphorical* or figurative framework for apprehending the space of appearances as a place of spectators and actors. From this perspective, Arendt's joinery between work and action reveals an analogical continuation of what we might call the positive, world-building features of appearing things discovered through her discussion of the plastic arts into the *vita activa* by way of their metaphorical continuities with the performing arts, drama and theatre in particular. Where the plastic artist produces a tangible work to be witnessed by a judging public independently of their intentions, so too do actors act before a public of spectators who judge those actions on the basis of their appearance. And where works of art achieve permanence and immortality by 'shining light' or disclosing meaning in the space of appearances, so too do actions achieve permanence and immortality by enacting stories for the 'chorus' of spectators who, by retelling them, reveal their meaning and bestow their stories to posterity. If the section on works of art presents a simultaneous incorporation and modification of the fundamental features of instrumental work in the service of saving *homo faber* from its denigration into cyclical labor, then the

[29] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 211.
[30] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 213.
[31] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 213.

chapters on the *vita activa* also present, on this reading, an incorporation and modification of the features of the appearance of works of art in the service of saving public appearances as such from their exclusive ties with *homo faber*.

II. Gauging Greatness

Just as Arendt kept the reversal of the world-alienating modalities of instrumental work into world-building modalities of artistic work implicit in her section (23) on works of art, she similarly does not, in the chapters on the *vita activa* (5 and 6), make an explicit point of tethering her discussion back to those positive world-building features. The continuity that tends to stand out, on the contrary, is the critical discussion of the world-alienating features of the figure of *homo faber* as it improperly appears in the public realm (sec. 29 – 31), this time from the heightened perspective gained by her positive, if 'thin', description of action as the capacity to begin anew in concert with others. In this sense, the fifth chapter on action has a primarily territorial tone. However, if we hold on to the idea that the world-building features may find a place in the chapters on action, a few toeholds for developing Arendt's positive response to the question of appropriate measure do indeed appear.

A first step towards developing this positive response is to clarify the shift in terrain from the thing-character of work towards the more expansive domain of appearances in the *vita activa*, and in so doing propose a revision to the phrasing of the question of measure as pertaining to "all things" to accommodate the scope of Arendt's phenomenological ontology. Arendt's conception of reality is unique in that it avoids activities achieved in solitude, like the clear and distinct perception of cognitions, the determinative application of transcendental categories to sense-data, the solitary observation of empirical facts, or even the contemplative intuition of phenomenological essences. Rather, it depends on the sharing of phenomena between a plurality of perspectives — others in whose presence we are assured that what we perceive is as we perceive it. "For us," Arendt writes, "appearance […] constitutes reality. […] The presence of others who see what we see and hear what we hear assures us of the reality of the world and ourselves" (Arendt, 2018b: 50); reality "entirely depends upon human plurality, upon the constant presence of others who can see and hear and therefore testify to its existence."[32] Being and appearing coincide in the space between (*inter-esse*) perspectives. Without such a sharing or publicity, all phenomena (of the passions, the mind, of discrete perception) "lead only an uncertain, shadowy existence."[33] If the question of measure is to apply to the world of words and deeds, then it should not just refer to all publicly appearing *things*, but to public appearances as such, inclusive of words and deeds.

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[32] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 95.
[33] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 50.

The most direct articulation of the kind of measure appropriate to the *vita activa* in *The Human Condition* comes at the end of Arendt's discussion of power in the chapter on action. There, she writes that "The only criteria of action is greatness," because "it is in [the nature of action] to break through the commonly accepted and reach into the extraordinary, where whatever is true in common and everyday life no longer applies because everything that exists is unique and *sui generis.*"[34] As is typical with Arendt's discussion of other kinds of standards throughout *The Human Condition*, the standard of greatness arises from within a phenomenological consideration of the activity itself. In this formulation, the defining quality of action is its natal capacity of inaugurating a new beginning through the power gained by actors acting in concert. However, the natality of action directly depends on a condition of plurality, since it is by virtue of different perspectives witnessing the same action that the reality of the "new" can be confirmed at all. Without a plurality to witness and tell the story of an action, that action would remain in the shadowy realm of subjective perception, and the sense of realness would go missed. Following Kant, Arendt calls the capacity required for establishing the reality of novel appearances *sensus communis*, "the one sense that fits into reality as a whole our five strictly individual senses."[35] As Arendt puts it, common sense 'gauges' the reality of what appears by 'fitting' otherwise subjective and incommunicable sensations into a "non-subjective, 'objectively' common world that we may share and evaluate together with others."[36] Greatness is therefore a worldly criterion for action in the sense that it defines the revelation of an act in the space of appearances to a plurality of spectators who *gauge* its reality by common sense, and it is from this primary phenomenal inter-relationship that great acts then gain historical and communal durability through the telling of stories by spectators and their reifications by artists.

It is against Arendt's view of greatness as the proper criterion for action and the role of common sense for discerning it that we can appreciate just what she saw as problematic in the traditional use of measures and standards for understanding politics in political philosophy. As they were understood by the tradition, measures are, firstly, external to the *vita activa*. In order to locate them, the mind must turn elsewhere than the common world of shared appearances, like a transcendent realm of ideas or an immanent world of subjective processes. Second, they are determinative of action. They provide a political community with strictly determined rules and roles, and thereby undermine natal action as novel appearing. Measuring, in this sense, is to apply a fixed measure, like a universally standardized ruler or scale, to the apparent reality of the world. It is to rule *over* appearances. Third, they imply a hierarchy between rulers and ruled, or between those who are in possession of the means of measuring and those that are not. The criterion for

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[34] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 205.

[35] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 208.

[36] This characterization is from an essay written shortly after *The Human Condition*, 'Culture and Politics' (Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future: Six Exercises in Political Thought* (New York: Penguin, 2006), 181.)

this capability in Plato was self-rule: the philosopher-king could command the city only if their soul commanded their body.[37] Action, on the other hand, is a capacity that arises wherever "men come together," in principle available to everyone who appears in public.

It would seem, then, that greatness as gauged through common sense escapes each of these traditional political philosophical understandings of standards or measures. But it does so by largely voiding the terrain in which they were deemed useful. Arendt gives no indication that greatness has any orienting function or carries something like a form or schema for judging how the world or the things in it should look; some mental representation, image or shape seen by the inner eye in relation to which one judges whether something is great. From this perspective, the criterion of greatness as alternative to political philosophical measures seems to remove the idea of measure of any guiding content in favour of a retroactive or redemptive acknowledgment of novelty as such. One does not judge whether a given action fulfills some standard of greatness, but is rather startled into acknowledging and narrating the greatness on display. Judging loses all evaluative qualities and becomes pure description.

But is the redemptive acknowledgement and narration of greatness the entirety of Arendt's response to the question of measure? Or might greatness as phenomenological criterion simply outline a one-sided and general picture that calls to be balanced and filled in with more detail? Might this be another case of Arendt working in two directions? (1) against the tradition of political philosophy by territorially emphasizing the *boundary* between the world-alienating, Ideal sense of measure found in the instrumental worldview of *homo faber* and the *sui generis* appearance of public words and deeds; (2) *and* towards a non-territorial view of the *vita activa* inclusive of a non-ideal, or less than Ideal, kind of measure supportive of political judgment and world-building action? As we will see, this question will draw us outside the text of *The Human Condition*, but not before we locate a few places where Arendt herself prepares such a departure within it.

III. Traces of Measure in the *Vita Activa*

> *The reification and materialization without which no thought can become tangible is always paid for, and that the price is life itself: it is always the 'dead letter' in which the 'living spirit' must survive, a deadness from which it can be rescued only when the dead letter comes again into contact with a life willing to resurrect it, although this resurrection of the dead shares with all living things that it, too, will die again…*[38]

[37] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 224.
[38] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 169.

… Mnemosyne is the mother of the muses…[39]

We said that there may be a positive conceptual analogy between the appearance of works of art in the public sphere and the appearance of actors in the public sphere. With the former, Arendt said that thinking 'inspired' the production of a work of art, and judgments concerning those works required a standard of beauty that both precedes and survives it. Arendt is unclear if there is any relation between the inspiration provided by thought, the process of cognition required in fabrication, and the standard by which spectators judge, and it is this lack of clarity that presents perhaps the central difficulty in imagining how standards and measures can resist Arendt's criticisms of mere instrumentality.

Consider, for example, Arendt's description of the contrast between Plato's philosophical and his political thought. In his philosophical thought, as represented in *The Symposium* and *Phaedrus*, ideas are understood as *ekphanestaton*, as "what shines forth most" and therefore "as variations of the beautiful."[40] In his political thought, as represented in *The Statesman* and *The Republic*, "ideas are transformed into standards, measurements, and rules of behaviour, all of which are variations of the idea of the 'good' in the Greek sense of the word, that is, of the 'good for' or fitness."[41] The transformation from the beautiful to the good, or the turning from the apprehension of *ekphanestaton* outside the cave to their application as *eidos* within the cave, corresponds to a change in the meaning of ideas from open objects of wonder to determinative instruments for rule.[42] That they could be so transformed implies that they must bear some internal relation to one another, just as the inspiration of thought must bear some internal relation to the 'end' of cognition and production in the fabrication of works of art. Somehow, in both cases, the activity of thought yields an inspiring image that positively guides a productive process.

However, the model of artwork as it was articulated in section 24 implies more than the exclusively instrumental model of *homo faber*, which Arendt identifies as structuring Plato's turn to the good over the beautiful. With the latter, the transformation seems to imply a total turn or about-face. Ideas are *either* useless (beautiful) objects of contemplation *or* useful standards for determining what something is good for. With respect to art, however, a mediating possibility is implied. While thinking similarly begins the process of production through 'inspiration' (like wonder or *thaumazein* in philosophical contemplation),

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[39] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 169.
[40] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 225.
[41] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 225-26.
[42] Arendt was indebted to Heidegger's 'Plato's Doctrine of Truth' for this transformation in the cave allegory (see: Miguel Abensour, and Martin Breaugh, "Against the Sovereignty of Philosophy Over Politics: Arendt's Reading of Plato's Cave Allegory," *Social Research* 74, no. 4 (2007).) Arendt did not follow Heidegger in characterizing that transformation as "coming pass because the subjective act of vision" of the philosopher "takes precedence over objective truth (*aletheia*)," which Heidegger interprets as *Unverbergonheit* or disclosedness. Rather, she intimates a *political* reading of *ekphanestaton* by, first, following Jacques Taminaux's characterization of the beautiful as "the unity of all transcendentals united" (*unum, alter, ens, and bonum*), and second, by situating the beautiful as dependent on communicability and the *sensus communis* (Arendt, *Between Past and Future: Six Exercises in Political Thought*, 284.

that inspiration does not dissolve into instrumentality through production but is rather carried through into the thing produced, in which it becomes visible and real (if non-identical to the inspiring thought). In this way, thoughts need not remain entirely internal to the mind, nor are its results doomed to instrumentality, for both the beginning (thinking) and end (artwork) of the process remain useless. Moreover, whatever connection exists between the inspiring thought and the finished thing, the meaning of the latter will always exceed the former, since meaning is the ultimate prerogative of spectators who 'see the whole'—or at least more of it than the invested partiality of artists and actors.

Taking Arendt's attention to the distinction between *ekphanestaton* and *eidos* and the possibility of a non-instrumental relation between thinking and artwork that follows from it, we may look for further clues as to whether such a non-instrumental relationship might hold for the activities of actors and spectators in the public sphere, one that follows more closely the metaphor of dramatic arts instead of the fabricating arts. We might expect the 'inspiring thoughts' of actors to be transformed into their words and deeds in public or on the stage, the meaning of which is then revealed and evaluated by the judgments of the 'chorus' of spectators, who are themselves guided by something like 'standards of beauty.'

The closest Arendt comes to affirming the first half of this possibility (inspiring thoughts transforming into words and deeds of actors) in *The Human Condition* is in her reference to drama as a form of *mimesis*, where play-acting involves the imitation of action: "The specific revelatory quality of action and speech, the implicit manifestation of the agent and speaker, is so indissolubly tied to the living flux of acting and speaking that it can be represented and 'reified' only through a kind of repetition, imitation or *mimesis*."[43] In theatre, *mimesis* occurs in the writing of the play and the playacting itself. In both cases, imitation is neither a mere repetition of the factuality of a previous action or event, nor is it a semblematic reproduction of an Ideal original (an *anamesis*, as in Plato), but involves a creative re-production of the 'who' of the persons or actors as they appear in the world, either on the page or on the stage.[44] If the writing is any good, play-actors will stand a better chance of disclosing the 'who' of their characters. And if their performance is any good, spectators should feel they understand the meaning of the events through the words and deeds of the play-actors.

Although Arendt's discussion of *mimesis* in the dramatic arts is suggestive of a link to the nature of political action in which the public is analogized as a theatre, she does not directly claim such a link in *The Human Condition*. However, the conceptual structure of this analogy is nevertheless fulfilled in her discussion of political action in *On Revolution*, a text published five years after *The Human Condition*.

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[43] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 187.

[44] Arendt is here drawing from Aristotle, who she uses to advance a conception of acting against the Platonic idea that actions are controlled from behind by an 'invisible hand,' as in puppetry (Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 185.). For Aristotle, while there is an original that play-acting imitates, that imitation is nevertheless creative in its own right (Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 187.).

Here, Arendt describes how, when faced with the awesome task of beginning anew, the American founders were compelled to "ransack the archives of ancient prudence" for guidance:[45] it was "by being nourished by the classics and having gone to school in Roman antiquity," Arendt wrote, that the founders came to "*consciously imitate* the Roman example and emulate the Roman spirit," and thus able to think of themselves as founders at all, that is, as responsible for and capable of inaugurating a new order from within the historical caesura opened up by the revolution without the aid of some "transcendent, trans-mundane source."[46] Arendt's discussion of imitation thus makes another appearance in the context of what, for her, is a paradigmatic (though imperfect) instance of revolution as such. And it does so alongside three other concepts that seem to bear significance to its meaning: example, emulation and spirit. Her discussion thus warrants a more detailed consideration.

According to Arendt, that the American revolutionaries had "attuned themselves to the spirit of ancient prudence" was nowhere better on display as in their decisions, (1) to "shift the location of authority from the (Roman) Senate to the judiciary branch," since what this demonstrated was their deep understanding of the Roman conceptual distinction between power (*potestas*), which occurs between actors and would be institutionalized in the legislative and executive branches, and authority (*auctoritas*) as 'founding, augmenting and conserving,' and as would be institutionalized in the American courts;[47] and (2), the spirit of ancient prudence was also on display in the founders reinterpretation of the purpose of the senate as a "purifier" of opinion, not as a house of lords (England), an advisory chamber (Rome), or purifier of the interests of the multitude (the role of the legislative chamber).[48] In this sense, the 'spirit' of the Roman example was emulated in a way that gained from both its institutional and conceptual 'content,' as it were, as well as its 'formal' greatness as an instance of political action disclosive of public freedom. To borrow from the language of the epigraph to this section, the central conceptual distinctions that animated the institutional structuring of the Roman world were 'resurrected' such that replicating the 'letter' of those institutions was less important than embracing their 'spirit,' thus allowing for a free (though not arbitrary) "innovation [of institutions] on the American theatre."[49] And this because, according to Arendt, the American founders knew that "the thread of continuity which bound Occidental politics back to the foundation of the eternal city […] was broken and could not be renewed."[50] Since there was no chain of causality that could secure the present in the past, there could be no question of "founding *Rome* anew," only how to "found a *new* Rome."

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[45] Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Penguin Books, 1990), 191.
[46] Arendt, *On Revolution*, 195-96.
[47] Arendt, *On Revolution*, 191-92.
[48] Arendt, *On Revolution*, 218.
[49] Arendt, *On Revolution*, 191.
[50] Arendt, *On Revolution*, 204.

Completing the analogy, then, we might say that just as in theatre, political action involves a free imitation of action, here understood as emulation.[51] In both cases, imitation depends on the availability of certain reifications, like the written play or documented speeches in archives. But instead of reifying and redeeming those actions in an actual theatre (per the model of non-instrumental works of art), or replicating them 'by the letter' (per the 'blueprint' instrumentality of *homo faber*), it 'resurrects' their 'spirit' in the service of building lasting political institutions responsive to the "enlarged horizons of experiences that the event" that the present opens up.[52] It is by attuning to the 'spirit' of the exemplary, as contained within variously durable vessels of culture (e.g. carved stone, painted canvas, or memorized narratives), that the past is able to 'transcend' the causality of history, shed the determinative force of tradition, resist mere imitative replication, and reveal the very freedom and responsibility that resides in the gap of the present *qua* space of beginning. Only examples of free action can do this, since only examples of free action can disclose the exercise of freedom. Insofar as they do disclose that freedom, as the Roman ones did for the American founders, then they may indeed have substantive things to teach, like how to structure political institutions, even if those lessons do not exhaust what is possible.

Although having gone to school in Roman antiquity meant that the Roman example appeared to the minds of the American founders "almost automatically", they nevertheless turned to that example, Arendt writes, "in all deliberate consciousness."[53] In other words, although they were already 'cultured' in antiquity, they still had to judge its worth as guiding example in the present.[54] Insofar as they were required to exercise their capacity for judgment in this way, they were not just actors but also spectators, and the value of the *imitation* of the exemplary as a response to the question of measure in the *vita activa* therefore presupposes a capacity for judging; a capacity, that is, for discerning just what was presupposed in the previous description, namely, what they reveal (their spirit) and how far they can guide us in the present. We may therefore return to the second half of our proposed interpretive analogy between the phenomenal structure of public works of art and public words and deeds (that the meaning of words and deeds are, like works of art, revealed and evaluated by the judgments of the 'chorus' of spectators, who are themselves guided by 'standards' of greatness or beauty, respectively). Let's step back, then, and consider Arendt's

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[51] Arendt's language of emulation and imitation, spirit and letter, is perhaps indebted to Kant's distinction of modes of aesthetic imitation in *The Critique of the Power of Judgment*. Kant understands emulation (*Nachfolge*) as driven by an inspiration to create an original work of art gained from "sympathetic intelligibility" with an exemplary archetype (*Urbild*), and is characteristic of genius. Imitation (*Nachahmung*), on the other hand, is the earnest attempt to replicate an exemplary pattern (*Muster*) and is typical of aesthetic schools (for an expanded discussion of the modes of imitation in Kant, see: Martin Gammon, ""Exemplary Originality": Kant on Genius and Imitation," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 35, no. 4 (1997).) Central to Arendt's reading of Kant's third *Critique*, is that even inspired genial creations depend on communicability and taste. Or, in the political domain: actors cannot embark on new beginnings without making themselves understood as worthy to be followed by others.

[52] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 221.

[53] Arendt, *On Revolution*, 191.

[54] For Arendt's discussion of the relationship between culture and politics, see 1961: 208–222.

elusive references to judgment in *The Human Condition.* Recall, Arendt introduced spectator judgment in section 24 on works of art. The passage, in full, reads:

> The standard by which a thing's excellence is judged is never mere usefulness, as though an ugly table will fulfil the same function as a handsome one, but its adequacy or inadequacy to what it should look like, and this is, in Platonic language, nothing but its adequacy or inadequacy to the *eidos* or idea, the mental image, or rather the image seen by the inner eye, that preceded its coming into the world and survives its potential destruction. In other words, even use objects are judged not only according to the subjective needs of men but by the objective standards of the world where they will find their place, to last, to be seen, and to be used.[55]

If we took this passage as our guide, we would expect the political spectator to not only talk about and tell the story of action, but also judge its worthiness by reference to some lasting 'image' *qua* 'standard' seen by the mind. We would expect judgment to imply a vision of the how the world should look; a 'measuring' of appearances in order to 'build' the world.

Like her mention of the role of *mimesis* in acting, Arendt does not provide much indication as to how we might carry the characteristics of aesthetic judgment into the *vita activa* in *The Human Condition*. The most promising clue comes in the sixth chapter, 'The *Vita Activa* and the Modern Age,' where Arendt undertakes a criticism of modern political-philosophical attempts to "invent the means and instruments" to "make and rule" the world by appealing to what "the art of nature" has purportedly enclosed within man in the singular and that are available through introspection.[56] In the case of Descartes and Hobbes, Arendt writes that "the rules and standards by which to build and judge this most human of human 'works of art' [the world] do not lie outside of men, are not something men have in common in a worldly reality perceived by the senses or mind. They are rather enclosed in the inwardness of man."[57] For Hobbes, they are the passions, for Descartes, the cognitive process. As we can see, Arendt's criticism of standards derived from introspection (an inversion of her criticism of standards derived from transcendent contemplation in Plato) depends on an implicit appeal to a worldly kind of standard consistent with parts of the passage in section 24: (1) standards must be common between spectators; (2) they are perceivable by the senses and mind; (3) that it is in and through public judgment that these standards are properly used; and (4) that judging by standards is aligned with the building of the world, the most 'human works of art.'

The brevity of Arendt's criticism here of course makes her intentions difficult to discern. A cautious interpretation might see it merely as a rehearsal of what she already said of *homo faber* broadly understood, who relies on mental models and actual blueprints, as well as 'objective' standards of beauty, for fashioning use-objects and works of art, respectively. However, this interpretation would ignore the shift in terrain

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[55] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 173.
[56] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 299.
[57] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 299. s

operative in her criticism: she is concerned with political-philosophical attempts to construct a world and not things, and the position from which it is developed is that of the *vita activa* in full view, not merely fabrication, as gained by her elaboration of action in the preceding chapter. Appreciating the distinctiveness of the terrain of the criticism thus allows us to avoid reading this passage as a rehearsal of her earlier criticism of Plato's use of extra-worldly measures in politics in which there was no mention of spectator judgment or its standards in the worldly artistic sense appropriate to the fabricated and dramatic arts, and to the public world of action as we are supposing. Rather, it allows us to read Arendt's criticism of standards derived from introspection as implicitly carrying a positive description of political judgment in a manner consistent with aesthetic judgment. The problem with Descartes and Hobbes (like Plato) is not their appeal to measures as such, but that they appealed to the wrong ones. Measuring the world by cognitions and passions can only ever build machines and monsters.

My proposal, then, is that despite the brevity of the passage we should read it in a strong sense as a place in which the displaced question of measure at the end of chapter four of *The Human Condition* comes, however briefly, to land. But only for a moment. No sooner do we catch a glimpse of the nature of these standards than we are led away from them. But while Arendt affords these only slight toeholds in that text, we should nevertheless risk putting our weight on them for the sturdier ones they ultimately give access to. On the strongest reading, then, the passage is all of: an acknowledgement that there is a place for standards within the highest realm of *The Human Condition*'s architecture, the *Vita Activa*; as a positive, albeit brief, description of its features; and a further deferral or displacement of their elaboration. The passage thus points backwards to the question of measure left open at the end of chapter four as well as to Arendt's 'thin' description of greatness as the sole criterion for action in chapter five, while also pointing forwards, beyond the text itself, into her later writings on judgment, especially to the unfinished third volume of *The Life of the Mind* which was be dedicated to this, "the most political of our mental faculties."[58] The question of measure threads its way across the chapter joint between work and action and ultimately suturing the extra-textual divide between the *Vita Activa* and the *Vita Contemplativa*.

IV. The Place of Measure in the *Vita Contemplativa*

Although Arendt did not live to write the final volume of *The Life of the Mind*, which was to be dedicated to judgment, she had explored its political importance well before then. In lectures and essays written from the mid 1950's onwards, Arendt increasingly recognized in Immanuel Kant's notion of aesthetic or

[58] Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind* (London: Harcourt, 1977), 192.

reflective judgment a model of judgment amenable to the *vita activa.*[59] Arguably her clearest articulation of this capacity is found in her lectures on Kant's political philosophy in the late 1960s, and it is here that we find among her most direct statements concerning the importance of standards in judgment and her proposal for how best to address it. The proper kinds of standards for judgment, she says, are examples: particulars that "in their very particularity reveal a generality that otherwise cannot be defined."[60] Before sketching just how examples can sustain a conception of standards suited to building a world, "the most human of works of art" and "home for mortal men,"[61] I would like to briefly consider how the core questions towards which *The Life of the Mind* is directed can be seen as gathering around, structurally speaking, this elusive aspect of Arendt's later writings.

Just as Arendt constructed the divisions between 'Labour,' 'Work' and 'Action' in *The Human Condition* in the countervailing yet mutually sustaining directions of separation and relatedness, so too does she construct the divisions of *The Life of the Mind* between 'Thinking,' 'Willing,' and 'Judging'. And just as a central aim of *The Human Condition* was to wrest the interpretation of the active faculties from their denigration by philosophers, so too did Arendt aim to dismantle the privilege bestowed on thinking and, to a lesser extent, willing, by the history of philosophy in *The Life of the Mind*. It was judging – this "latecomer" and "most political" of our mental abilities[62] – that Arendt thought would redeem thinking and willing in their worldly modalities. Given the absence of the final volume on judging, which adds special difficulties to the already imposing task of interpreting Arendt's complexly interweaving paths of thought, the shape of this redemption has, however, remained relatively undefined. Where interpreters succeed in overcoming the supposition that the mental abilities are wholly divided from one another, reconstructive efforts have often been truncated in their ability to make sense of just how judging can not only redeem the other two, but also how it can respond to the core questions animating the preceding two volumes: (1) Can "the activity of thinking as such […] be among the conditions that make men abstain from evil-doing or even actually 'condition' them against it'? (2) How can the activity of willing, as the capacity to "bring about something new and hence 'change the world,' function in the world of appearances?"[63]

The specificity of Arendt's response to these questions in her reflections on judgment will be taken up in fuller fashion in the following chapters. For now, I wish to simply provide textual evidence *that* she positioned judgment as responsive to them. Perhaps the most promising place from which to do so is in the final section of the first volume of *The Life of the Mind,* originally entitled 'Transition' but renamed

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[59] David Marshall, "The Origin and Character of Hannah Arendt's Theoryof Judgment," *Political Theory* 38, no. 3 (2010).

[60] Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 77.

[61] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 173.

[62] Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 111.; Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 192.

[63] Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, Volume Two. 7.

'Postscriptum' and condensed from ten pages to four by Arendt's friend and then literary executor Mary McCarthy in the 1977 Harcourt edition. This section begins with a brief overview of the mental faculties and ends with Arendt's famous claim that a consideration of the "*modus operandi*" of judgment "would be of relevance to a whole set of questions by which modern thought is haunted, especially to the problem of theory and practice and to all attempts to arrive at a halfway plausible theory of ethics."[64] There are two points of interpretation that I would like to draw attention to. First, Arendt's suggestion that judging is relevant both to ethics and the relationship between theory and practice clearly implies that it is intended to fulfil the shortcomings of thinking and willing with regards to the orienting questions of the first two volumes, for a plausible theory of ethics obviously bears on the question of evil-doing, and the relationship between theory and practice obviously bears on the ability to begin anew. And second, Arendt's intended response to these questions hinged rather directly upon her response to the problem of standards in judging, thus positioning her appeals to examples at the center of her intended response to her centrally motivating questions. This can be further appreciated by noticing that the material concerning judgment in 'Transition' so nearly matches the final three pages of *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* that we are led to believe Arendt repurposed and expanded the former in her writing of the latter. What is most relevant here is the fact that the overlapping material both pose the problem of standards, which Arendt calls in the latter the "chief difficulty" in judging: since the evaluation of particulars as right or wrong, beautiful or ugly, requires some "generality" independent from yet related to them, and since in aesthetic judgment no determinative generality is previously given, "the chief difficulty" is how to "mysteriously combine the general and the particular" where "only the particular is given for which the general must be found."[65] In these cases, she writes, "the standard [for judgment] cannot be borrowed from the particular, and yet cannot be derived from outside it."[66] It is at this point that the argument in the 'Transition' abruptly gives way to the deferring claim that a consideration of the *modus operandi* of judging is of relevance to the two key questions that haunt modern thought, whereas in the *Lectures* Arendt forges ahead to the claim that "the by far most valuable solution" to the chief difficulty in judging is contained in Kant's notion of "exemplary validity."[67] It is examples, "particulars that reveal a generality that otherwise could not be defined," that supply our sense of beauty and rightness in the absence of determinative rules.[68]

To the extent that this point of textual continuity provides reliable evidence for a central path coursing through and uniting the three volumes of *The Life of the Mind*, it would imply that exemplarity

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[64] Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 216.; Jerome Kohn, ed. *Thinking Without a Bannister: Essays in Understanding 1953-1975* (New York: Schocken, 2018), 523.

[65] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 76.

[66] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 76.

[67] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 76.

[68] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 77.

not only constitutes Arendt's considered response to the problem of measures or standards opened up in the joint between work and action in *The Human Condition,* but also that it gathers together and promises a resolution to the core problems concerning the problems of evil and freedom animating *The Life of the Mind*. A picture takes shape: exemplarity would define the connective tissue between the *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa*, the form in which actions appear to spectators in light of which spectators respond in judging—the spirit of the world animating the heart of the mind. From this perspective, unfolding judgment in its own *modus operandi* would have gathered and oriented thinking and willing in those of their modalities appropriate to the world as a space of appearances and, in so doing, would have recalibrated their sense in a manner unrecognizable to the history of philosophy and metaphysics. Judging would describe the mental activity by which the place from which one begins anew is cultivated and inspired by "thinking the particular" and "thinking in examples."[69]

Since the interpretive reliability of this piece of textual evidence and the coherence of the suppositions that follow from it will require a much more sustained reconstruction of the inter-relationship of the mental faculties in light of exemplarity as the response to the question of standards, I propose for now to simply sketch out some of its contours in an effort to appreciate just how this elusive feature of Arendt's writings on judgment, which almost everywhere defines their culminating precipice, can indeed bear the full weight of all she seems to place upon it in *The Human Condition.*

IV. Exemplary Measures and the Space of Appearances

Although Arendt did not live to complete the final volume of *The Life of the Mind* (1975), which was to be dedicated to judgment, she had explored its political importance well before then. In lectures and essays starting from the mid 1950's onwards, around the time of writing *The Human Condition* (1958), she recognized in Immanuel Kant's notion of reflective judgment, as developed in his third *Critique*, a practice of judgment amenable to the *vita activa*.[70] Her most sustained consideration of this practice is found in her

[69] Hannah Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment* (New York: Schocken, 2003), 146.

[70] David Marshall, "The Origin and Character of Hannah Arendt's Theory of Judgment," *Political Theory* 38, no. 3 (2010).

lectures on Kant in the late 1960s,[71] and it is here that we find among her only explicit articulations of the importance of standards in judgment as well as a proposal for how best to understand them.[72]

Deepening what has been said in the previous section (as well as my introduction), Arendt writes near the end of the *Lectures* that every judgment requires some "generality" to serve as a "*tertium comparationis"* or "*tertia quid*" in relation to which we can judge the "value" or "worth" of new particulars.[73] Without a generality to serve as 'third comparative' or 'third thing,' we would be unable to evaluate particulars as beautiful or ugly or as right or wrong.[74] In determinative judgments – the form of judgment proper to theoretical and moral concerns – the third comparative is supplied by *a priori* rules, concepts or laws. But since aesthetic judgments are occasioned by the singular occurrence of a beautiful object and occur precisely in the absence of rules, concepts, or laws, "the chief difficulty" (my italics) in reflective judgment is how to "mysteriously combine the general and the particular" where "only the

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[71] This material has been the subject of considerable commentary. See, for instance: Beiner, "Hannah Arendt on Judging."; Ronald Beiner, and Jennifer Nedelsky, eds. *Judgment, Imagination, and Politics: Themes From Kant and Arendt* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001).; Garsten, "The Elusiveness of Arendtian Judgment."; Peter Gilgen, "Plurality Without Harmony: On Hannah Arendt's Kantianism," *The Philosophical Forum* 43, no. 3 (2012).; Jennifer Nedelsky, "Communities of Judgment and Human Rights," *Theoretical Inquiries in Law* 1, no. 2 (2000).; Andrew Norris, "Arendt, Kant, and the Politics of Common Sense," *Polity* 29, no. 2 (1996).; Lara María Pía, "Reflective Judgment as World Disclosure," *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 34, no. 1-2 (2008).; Schwartz, *Arendt's Judgment: Freedom, Responsibility, Citizenship*.; Cecilia Sjöholm, "Arendt on Aesthetic and Political Judgement: Thought as the Pre-Political," in *Critical Theory: Past, Present, Future*, ed. Anders Bartonek, and Sven-Olov Wallenstein (Sodertorn: Sodertorn University Press, 2021).; Veronica Vasterling, "Plural Perspectives and Independence: Political and Moral Judgement in Hannah Arendt," in *The Other: Feminist Reflections in Ethics*, ed. Helen Fielding*, et al.* (London: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2007).; Linda M.G. Zerilli, ""We Feel Our Freedom": Imagination and Judgment in the Thought of Hannah Arendt," *Political Theory* 33, no. 2 (2005)..

[72] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 76-77. See also: Jerome Kohn, ed. *Thinking Without a Bannister: Essays in Understanding 1953-1975* (New York: Schocken, 2018), 523.; Hannah Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment* (New York: Schocken, 2003), 143-46. It is worth remarking that the problem of standards is a common point of debate amongst interpreters of Arendt's writings on judgment. Some find that her turn to Kantian aesthetic judgment undermines any satisfactory response to her putatively moral aim of describing judgment as a capacity to 'tell right from wrong' since it reduces the normativity of political judgment an ambiguous notion of taste (e.g.: Seyla Benhabib, "Judgment and the Moral Foundations of Politics in Arendt's Thought," *Political Theory* 16, no. 1 (1988).; Jurgen Habermas, "Hannah Arendt's Communications Concept of Power," *Social Research* 44, no. 1 (1977).). Others, by contrast, downplay Arendt's putatively moral use of the language of right and wrong to describe the outcome of good judgment in favor of emphasizing how judging politically is at root an exercise of public freedom by which the very space of common concern between persons is opened and sustained, and the boundaries of what counts as political are drawn and redrawn (e.g.: Linda M. G. Zerilli, "The Practice of Judgment: Hannah Arendt's 'Copernican Revolution'," in *Theory After Theory*, ed. Derek Attridge, and Jane Elliot (New York: Routledge, 2011).). Others deploy the language of 'standards' in a broad sense to name aspects of the practice of judging itself, like 'representativity' and 'independence' (Vasterling, "Plural Perspectives and Independence: Political and Moral Judgement in Hannah Arendt.").

[73] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 76.

[74] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 76. Arendt's distinction between *tertia comparationis* and *tertia quid* is significant. The key difference has to do with their relationship to judgment. Arendt understood Kant's regulative ideas of a common compact of humanity and progress towards enlightenment as *tertia comparationis*, and thus as capable of providing an external standard akin to a categorical imperative that could read: "always act on the maxim through which the original compact can be actualized as a general law" (Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 75.). Exempla by contrast cannot be so externalized, for like schemata they are 'tertia quid' that belong to the imagination – "the depths of our souls" (Kant) or "backs of our minds" (Arendt) – not reason.

particular is given for which the general must be found."[75] In these cases, Arendt writes, "the standard cannot be borrowed from the particular, and yet cannot be derived from outside it."[76] The particular before me cannot contain within itself the standards for its own judgment, since that would lead to its passive acceptance. But the standard cannot be derived from outside the particular, either, for to appeal to an external standard would be to reduce our ability to 'gauge' it's very particularity. So, while we are indeed in need of some standard in reflective judgment, it can neither be provided by the particular immediately before us, nor outside the practice of judgment altogether.

As mentioned, Arendt suggests that "the most valuable" solution to the chief difficulty lies in Kant's notion of 'exemplary validity' (*exemplarische Gültigkeit*). Instead of following the letter of Kant's own articulation, however, which concerns the normativity of judgment's outward claim on others (that we ascribe common sense to our own judgment and thus promote it as an "ideal norm" for others to follow),[77] Arendt rather suggests that the normativity of exemplary validity derives in the first instance from a judgment's guiding example.[78] She describes examples as "particulars that in their very particularity reveal the generality that otherwise could not be defined,"[79] and likens them to Kantian schemata insofar as they belong to the imagination, mediate between sensibility and understanding, and make possible both conceptual recognition and communication.[80] Unlike schemata, however, examples do not lie in the mind *a priori*, but are the products of reflective judgments: they are particulars that we "judge to be the best [i.e. most beautiful] […] and thus take as how [similar particulars] should be."[81] Following the etymological connection between the noun 'example' and the Latin verb *eximinere*, Arendt thereby describes such judgments as "singling out" a particular so that it becomes "representative" of similar particulars.[82] Once a

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[75] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 76.

[76] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 76.

[77] "Thus the common sense, of whose judgment I here offer my judgment of taste as an example and on account of which I ascribe exemplary validity to it, is a merely ideal norm, under the presupposition of which one could rightfully make a judgment that agrees with it and the satisfaction in an object that is expressed in it into a rule for everyone" (Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment,* trans. Paul Guyer, and Eric Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 5:239.)

[78] By promoting exempla to the center of her interpretation of exemplary validity, Arendt prioritizes the disclosive-denotive function of exemplary particulars over the communicative-use function of language. As she says in response to a complaint about her own 'idiosyncratic' use of language by C.B. Macpherson: "In my opinion, a word has a much stronger relation to what it denotes or to what it is than the way it is being used between you and me. That is, you look to the communicative value of the word. I look to the disclosing quality. And this disclosing quality, of course, always has an historical background (Kohn, *Thinking Without a Bannister: Essays in Understanding 1953-1975*, 461.) Exemplary particulars are those originally disclosive sources of normativity that, belonging to a common world, sustain points of normative reference between differently situated persons.

[79] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 77.

[80] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 84-85. For critical discussions of Arendt's analogy of exempla with schemata, see: Ferrara, "Judgment, Identity and Authenticity: A Reconstruction of Hannah Arendt's Interpretation of Kant," 120-23.; Susan Meld Shell, *The Politics of Beauty: A Study of Kant's Critique of Taste* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 1-2.; Zerilli, "The Practice of Judgment: Hannah Arendt's 'Copernican Revolution'," 126-30.

[81] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 77.

[82] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 77.

table is singled out, it then remains "in the backs of our minds," "leading" or "guiding" judgments regarding the beauty of other particulars.[83] Elsewhere, Arendt summarily describes the relevant kinds of examples as "persons, dead or alive, real or fictitious, and incidents [or events], past or present."[84]

Since, following Kant, the 'validity' of a reflective judgment depends on persuading or "wooing" the consent of others and not truth criteria, whether an example is valid will depend on the extent to which the community of judging spectators share that example (or ones like it) and, at least to some extent, agree that it is appropriate for evaluating a given action or event. It is for this reason that Arendt says that exemplary standards or measures are of a bounded or "restricted" nature,[85] constituting, as she implies in another essay, the 'taste' of a culture.[86] This of course makes intuitive sense. Political communities can be distinguished by the figures and events that constellate their normative horizons, whether those be founding events like a revolution, the signing of a constitution, or persons responsible for introducing novel institutions and norms. But while Arendt acknowledges that the scope of exemplary persuasion is restricted in this way, we should not read 'restriction' as entailing cognitive or political closure, for as always in Arendt boundaries are permeable. It is more accurate to say that she saw examples as dynamically related to the space of appearances across two general axes. *Vertically*, because (a) the givenness or *thatness* of exemplary objects remains excessive of any single (set of) meaning(s), and thus remains open to new and renewable meanings through reflection from new perspectives ; and (b), because the kind of guidance provided by examples does not determine the present in the manner of an unambiguously applicable blueprint, but pronounces it as a space of possibility in which the relation between the past and future is precisely at stake. And *horizontally*, because the question of whether examples are in fact shared or shared in the same way within or across a community can never be guaranteed in contexts of plurality. While Arendt acknowledged that communities do share normative horizons constellated by examples, she also understood that, given the loss of unambiguously authoritative standards enshrined by a tradition, we are left to choose for ourselves the examples "with whom we wish to spend our lives."[87] Judgment is therefore not only dynamically situated between past and future, but also between the private plurality of examples with whom one chooses to keep as company and the public plurality of peers with whom one shares the actual world. While we may have good reason to think that others *should* share our examples, not only does nothing guarantee this sharing *a priori*, but the presence of the *should* relevant to reflective judging presupposes they don't necessarily. The existence and composition of common sense is thus also always at

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[83] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 77.
[84] Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, 146.
[85] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 84.
[86] Hannah Arendt, "The Crisis in Culture," in *Between Past and Future: Six Exercises in Political Thought* (New York: Penguin, 2006).
[87] Arendt, "The Crisis in Culture."

issue. As such, we remain within the scope of Kant's notion of exemplary validity as the ascription of an "ideal norm" to our judgments, that is, as an example that others should but need not necessarily follow.

As with the chapter division between 'Work' and 'Action' in *The Human Condition*, Arendt does not draw out just how aesthetic judgment fits into the political domain. We know that political judgments do not concern works of art but rather the words and deeds of political actors. And this changes the nature of the claim from one of 'beauty' to what she calls in *The Life of the Mind* 'everyday thought things,' like, courage, liberty, or justice.[88] Arendt does not make this connection explicit, but it follows, and makes good sense of, the nature of political judgments as relying on normative generalities like these: words like courage structure the normative dimension of the everyday language of English speakers, available to and in some way orienting their judgments of events around them. Like the concept of beauty, Arendt understood these concepts as also indeterminate. There is no absolutely antecedent Form or schema that tells us just what courage or justice is. All we have are the revelatory instances given to us by our experiences and cultures of what we have come to call courage. If we were in ancient Greece, Arendt provides, we would have the Homeric example of Achilles for our understanding of courage.[89] Or, if we were students of French history, we would understand by "Bonapartism" the general dictatorial form of government made exemplary by Napoleon Bonaparte.[90] Indeed, "many concepts in the historical and political sciences which are arrived at in this way. Most political virtues and vices are thought of in terms of exemplary individuals."[91] By supplying imaginal meaning, examples render the otherwise "non-appearing measures" (Solon) that we have come to call concepts both apparent and communicable.[92]

In the first volume of *The Life of the Mind*, Arendt describes 'everyday thought-things' like courage or justice used in ordinary speech as lying "totally outside sense experience."[93] Nothing about, for instance, the stance of Achilles, his manner of running, or the shape of his brow, give us, in themselves, the concept of courage. It is through imaginative reflection that we "represent" his actions in a narrative form, weaving their parts together and fulfilling what we, at least if we were Ancient Greeks, may come to understand as containing, "as in a nutshell," the meaning of courage.[94] Our capacity to render action representative or exemplary in this way relies, Arendt implies, on the capacity of the mind for metaphor (or as we will see in the next chapter, a politically suitable version of it): in order for exemplarity to function as the "particular

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[88] Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 97.
[89] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 84.
[90] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 84.
[91] Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, 144.
[92] Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 170.
[93] Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 98.
[94] 'As in a nutshell' is a metaphor Arendt uses in one of her best descriptions of her own thinking process: "I have always believed that, no matter how abstract our theories may sound or how consistent our arguments may appear, there are incidents and stories behind them which, at least for ourselves, contain *as in a nutshell* the full meaning of whatever we have to say" (Kohn, *Thinking Without a Bannister: Essays in Understanding 1953-1975*, 202.)

that in its very particularity provides the generality that otherwise could not be found," the reflective imagination "carries over" (*meta-pharein*) the sensible (the perceivable acts of Achilles) into the non-sensible domain of generality in which the concept or thought-thing, 'courage,' resides.[95] At the end of her *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy,* Arendt emphasizes, though does not explain, the simile in her example of an example: "Achilles is *like* courage."[96]

The exemplarity of the examples that we carry in the backs of our mind therefore represent a unity of the two sides of this metaphoric carrying-over: the exemplarity of Achilles depends on a narrative unity of the sensible, worldly actions attributable to him that, taken together or as a whole, disclose the otherwise non-sensible concept of courage. Exemplary persons and events are disclosive of otherwise empty abstractions and thus endow language with practical meaning. If we combine this basic description with Arendt's discussion of storytelling in *The Human Condition*, we can see how the metaphoric structure of examples is neither simple nor symbolic, as in scales for justice or hand-holding for friendship, but rather often involve complex relations between the parts of an appearing action and their indeterminate wholeness, as in the myriad parts that comprise Achilles' courage in Homer's *The Iliad*, or the many sides of the 'crystal' that came to be called 'totalitarianism.' Yet while the perception of indeterminate wholeness in exemplary particulars occasions the reflective discovery of meaning from the novel juxtaposition of their apparent parts, Arendt resists the notion that wholes can be finally bound or totally circumscribed. We never occupy a perspective by which examples are splayed out schematically such that their aspects are visible all at once. Exemplary appearances are marked by an excess, coincident to their very givenness as public appearances, that renders them available to renewed acts of reflection and discoveries of meaning.

We may now return to the four features of worldly measures implicit in Arendt's criticism of extra-worldly measures in Plato, Descartes, and Hobbes, discussed in the previous section. Examples, we can now see, fit with each:

1. *Examples are common between spectators*. Exemplary measures are embedded as stories and images in the language political communities use to understand and evaluate actions and events in the present. Where speakers or writers use examples, they appeal outside themselves toward a shared perception. This is what is meant by the appropriate measures having 'objective reality,' as Arendt suggests. And it is because examples are shared in this way that political communities can be distinguished by the array of persons and events that constitute their points of common reference, their political 'taste,' as it were, even if there are differences within those communities and overlap across them. This sharedness can also be expressed in public

[95] Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 98-110.
[96] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 77.

artifactual representations of exemplary persons and events, as in monuments, paintings and plaques.

2. *Examples require public judgment.* Although exemplary measures are shared in some sense, given Arendt's emphasis on Kant's notion of *sensus communis* as a distinctive sense exercised through judgment and not a mere set of common beliefs or values, the commonality of the exemplary in contexts of plurality must always be at issue. Exemplary measures do not enjoy the non-communicative authority of philosophical principles but require, for their very reality, expression in public through speech and assent by others. It is only through public judgment, then, that examples acquire not certainty, but durability.
3. *Examples are perceivable by the senses and mind.* As metaphoric disclosures of concepts, examples are imaginal objects of perception that combine the sensible and the conceptual (like, though by no means identical to, Kantian schema). They carry the 'intuitive' content that our abstract normative language requires to remain politically meaningful.
4. *Examples provide measure for how the world, the most 'human of human works of art,' should look*. When exemplarily informed visions of how the world should look are shared, world-building through action in concert can occur. As in the American revolutionaries shared taste for Roman institutions, examples provide a kind of normativity necessary for orienting acting in concert towards novel, creative acts of institution. Insofar as the exemplary is properly political and thus disclosive of public freedom, they will guide world-building towards classically republican, or what we now call democratic, institutions.

CONCLUSION

We do not confront the new from nowhere. But while it is difficult to find anyone denying a fact as obvious as this, it is also difficult to find any clear elaboration in the literature of just what constitutes the nature of positionality in Arendt's thought as it relates to judgment. In this chapter, I have tried to show that the position of Arendtian actors and spectators is constituted by exemplars, and that these can indeed provide a kind of 'measure,' 'guide,' or 'standard' appropriate to the world as a space of natality and plurality, provided that such measuring does not resolve to a demand for precision or correctness but involves the more haphazard enterprise of gauging and estimating how the world should look with others in the enlarged horizons of the present.

With respect to the question of appropriate measure as posed at the end of the fourth chapter of *The Human Condition*, we can now hazard a summation. Arendt's response to the choice between Protagoras and Plato, between man or a god as the measure of all things, would be a mediation. She shows how the

appropriate measures for the apparent world of the *vita activa* transcend the instrumentality implied in the Protagorean position insofar as exemplary actions can become representative images that outlast their particular historical instantiations. Properly political examples carry the 'spirit' of worldly action, not the wants and needs of men. Yet, although examples are representative images 'seen by the inner eye,' we do not acquire them by abstracting into a speculative realm of Ideas, but by bringing to language novel actions and events through the reflective judgment. It is through the kind of insight achieved by the reflective imagination – of seeing an action *as* courageous, *as* just – that the normative concepts of our everyday language "hold the limit of all things," without those limits hardening into dogmatic walls.[97] Exemplary meaning is therefore conceptually elastic while positively orienting. It encourages new action while giving it partial direction. Adapting Arendt's favored line from Rene Char, exemplarity is the form in which the past "comes to us by no will-and-testimony,"[98] for which we are responsible and from which we are free to begin, again and again.

Yet considerably more still needs to be clarified with regards to the nature and role of examples in Arendt's unfinished account of judgment. In what follows, I take the features of worldly measures described above as the platform from which to deepen our understanding of the nature of examples, their role judging, and their place within the overall architecture of Arendt's thought. I do so by exploring two axes of exemplarity in judgment: the objective and subjective axes. While this chapter has begun to outline the contours of these axes, their remains considerably more elaboration needed to enhance their coherence. Let us begin with the objective axis.

[97] Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 171.
[98] Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 12.

CHAPTER TWO

EXEMPLARY *RES PUBLICA*

Some discrepancy between objective elements and free human action, on one hand, and the event — in its majestic irrevocability, originality, and abundance of meaning — on the other, is always present and permeates the whole of human reality.[1]

The mindset of [*this*] *administration is alien to me. Whatever it is, it's not coming from the public interest being the primary objective. For any complex problem, including how to develop a scientific ecosystem, you need a process where many, many voices can be heard.*[2]

One of the puzzles in Hannah Arendt's late appeal to examples as appropriate standards for judgment concerns the nature of their givenness.[3] Consider, for instance, her claim that examples are *tertia quid* necessary for "determining the worth of particulars."[4] In contrast to other *tertia*, like schemata (*a priori* shapes to which all particulars must conform) or abstractions (aggregates of particulars stripped of their secondary qualities), examples are "particulars that one judges to be the best possible and take [...] as the example of how [all similar particulars] should be."[5] The trouble is that this explanation is clearly circular. If exemplarity is intended to explain how one can judge the worth of particulars, then it must in some sense be independent of, or fixed with respect to, the activity of judgement itself. Examples can lead or guide judgment only if they are not themselves the subjects *of* judgement. But Arendt suggests that they *are* the subjects of judgment, for that is how we acquire them— through selection or choice. Examples therefore appear to be at once grounding of, and grounded by, judgment.

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[1] Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind* (London: Harcourt, 1977), 166.

[2] Terrence Tao, a Fields Medal–winning mathematician currently at UCLA, in response to the Trump administration's cuts to research funding (Stephanie Sy, "Top Researchers Consider Leaving U.S. amid Funding Cuts: 'The Science World Is Ending,'" PBS News, October 29, 2025.). In the background of this chapter is a continuation of my engagement with Plato in the last. The penultimate wrung of Plato's ladder of wisdom is knowledge of mathematical forms. Mathematics, then, is presented as a discipline for knowledge of the One to rule the Many. Yet here is Tao, one of the most brilliant mathematical minds alive today, pointing in the opposite direction. Although there are of course stories of lone mathematical geniuses working in the wilderness, they are outliers. Tao, by contrast, is exemplary of the collaborative spirit with which most math gets done (see: Gareth Cook, "The Singular Mind of Terry Tao," Magazine, *The New York Times*, July 24, 2015.)

[3] Arendt uses "guides," "guideposts," "leads," and "standards" for the role of examples in judgment ('Some Questions of Moral Philosophy,' in *Responsibility and Judgment*. New York: Schocken, 2003, 144; Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 76.)

[4] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 77.

[5] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 77.

There is reason to worry whether this circle is vicious, for circularity in the grounds of judgment threatens arbitrariness just where solidity seems required.[6] It has been to avoid arbitrariness that rationalist philosophers have sought contextually transcendental rules, principles, and laws as standards for judgment.[7] But there is also good reason to dismiss the worry of circularity as overly Archimedean, as expressing a longing for extra-worldly principles from which to "unhinge the world" and order appearances.[8] It has been to avoid Archimedean externalism that some democratic theorists have dismissed an account of standards as helpful for understanding what political judgment as an exercise of public freedom is all about.[9] Whatever their merits, however, Arendt's appeal to examples cannot be easily placed among these positions, for she seems to have understood examples as fulfilling something of the role of standards while avoiding the latter's determinative meaning and instrumental use. A central question concerning the viability of Arendt's appeal to examples therefore concerns how they can satisfy conditions expected of standards, like normative stability and guidance, while avoiding the anti-democratic constraints that follow from Archimedean externalism.

Three possible paths to addressing this question immediately suggest themselves. First, if as Arendt says examples are chosen or selected by judgment, then we might look to the intersubjective process of communicative assent that she associates with judgment as generative of a distinctly public form of exemplarist normativity.[10] This path would yield a broadly political view in which what matters is finding public agreement about norms and principles. Another path would be to locate the source of exemplarist normativity not in intersubjective communication but in subjective decision—the moment when reflection about an example (somehow) turns into a decision to act.[11] This approach, which has been attributed to quasi-Nietzschean strain in Arendt's thought,[12] would appear to arise to avoid heteronomy in judgment and establish the vertiginous degree of personal responsibility that she thought necessary to avoid ideological conformity. Still another approach, however, would be to consider the putatively objective nature of

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[6] Arendt recognizes the logical impossibility implied here: "If judgment, 'the faculty of *thinking* the particular,' has nothing to rely on but other particulars 'for which the general must be found,' then it lacks all standards or criteria by which to judge. I cannot judge one particular by another particular […] In order to determine its worth or value, I need something related to the two particulars but distinct from both" (Jerome Kohn, ed. *Thinking Without a Bannister: Essays in Understanding 1953-1975* (New York: Schocken, 2018), 523.)

[7] E.g., Jurgen Habermas, "Hannah Arendt's Communications Concept of Power," *Social Research* 44, no. 1 (1977).; Seyla Benhabib, "Judgment and the Moral Foundations of Politics in Arendt's Thought," *Political Theory* 16, no. 1 (1988).

[8] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 262.

[9] E.g., Dana Richard Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger: The Fate of the Political* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 165.; Linda M. G. Zerilli, *A Democratic Theory of Judgment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016).

[10] See: Alessandro Ferrara, *The Force of the Example: Explorations in the Paradigm of Judgment* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), chapter three.; Alessandro Ferrara, "Exemplarity in the Public Realm," *Law & Literature* 30, no. 3 (2018).

[11] For discussion, see: Andreas Kalyvas, "From the Act to the Decision: Hannah Arendt and the Question of Decisionism," Political Theory 32, no. 3 (2004): 320–46.

[12] Brian Garsten, "The Elusiveness of Arendtian Judgment," *Social Research* 74, no. 4 (2007), 1087-97.

exemplary persons, actions and events as recommending themselves as possible standards or guides for judgment. This approach, which also has textual support but has received less attention in the literature,[13] would focus on examples as sources of normativity in their own right, at least partially freestanding from communicative assent and the individual will.

My aim in this chapter is to pursue three aspects of this latter approach in relative isolation from the subjective and intersubjective dimensions: the nature of exemplary givenness, the normativity that follows from it, and its relation to language. Although the designation 'objective' will require qualification, what I intend to indicate with it is just the sense that for Arendt exemplary appearances are themselves disclosive of meaning in an original way. Arendt defined examples as "particulars that in their very particularity reveal a generality that otherwise cannot be defined."[14] I would like to develop an expanded definition: examples are particulars that in their very particularity appear as they ought to be in the region of the world in which they do appear to diversely situated spectators. By *appear* I mean a mode of phenomenal givenness distinctive to exemplarity in which meaning is revealed through aspectual correspondences by an always limited plurality of perspectives. By *ought* I mean an emergent, action-oriented form of normativity prior to conceptual rule-formation that coincides with the emergence of such correspondences.[15] And by *region of the world*, I mean the spatial, temporal, and interpersonal "web of relations" in which an exemplary person or event takes shape and in relation to which its meaningfulness for a spectating plurality is cohered. We might liken the exemplary to a singular crystal that refractively illuminates the contours of an otherwise darkened world for spectators' orientation and standing.[16] In this sense, exemplarity offers not an Archimedean point but a 'standing place' (*Stehen, Ort*) to which spectators may turn, and from which they may depart, again and again.[17]

Focusing upon the objectivity of exemplary givenness is not therefore at the expense of an integrated account of judgment in which each axis rests on equal footing but is rather the first step in its

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[13] Ferrara, *The Force of the Example: Explorations in the Paradigm of Judgment*, chapter two.; Alessandro Ferrara, "Judgment, Identity and Authenticity: A Reconstruction of Hannah Arendt's Interpretation of Kant," *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 24, no. 2/3 (1998).

[14] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 77.

[15] The idea that examples conjoin the *is* and *ought* is common in philosophical discussions of exemplarity. Cf.: Linda Trinkaus Zagzebski, *Exemplarist Moral Theory* (Oxford University Press, 2017).; Ferrara, *The Force of the Example: Explorations in the Paradigm of Judgment*.; Hannah Ginsborg, "Aesthetic Judgment and Perceptual Normativity," *Inquiry* 49, no. 5 (2006).

[16] I am here adapting what Arendt said of the illuminating quality of 'good biography' in *Men in Dark Times*: 'It as though the colorless light of historical time were forced through and refracted by the prism of a great character so that in the resulting prism a complete unity of life and world is achieved' (Hannah Arendt, *Men in Dark Times* (New York: Harvest, 1983), 33.

[17] In what follows, I make occasional use of the interplay between "object" (*Gegenstand*), "region" (*Gegend*), and "again" (Old English *ongean*/*agegn*), through their shared derivation from Proto-Germanic *gagin*, meaning "against" or "opposite" (See Friedrich Kluge, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache*, 25th ed. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011), s.v. "gegen"; *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "again"; and Guus Kroonen, *Etymological Dictionary of Proto-Germanic* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), s.v. "gagin-").

development. Yet my choice to begin with the objective is not for this arbitrary. Exemplary givenness describes the medium of contact between judgment and appearances, the initiating moment of the mind's inheritance of a shared world. To witness an exemplary action is to feel the grain of the world shift. One might be part of a crowd that falls silent as a lone figure steps forward, or read of an unexpected act of courage that reframes an entire conflict. In either case, the event takes on a vivid shape – it happened, and in a certain way – but its meaning remains in suspension, awaiting the work of judgment. This blend of the fixed and the open is what jolts the mind into what Kant called free play, where the example invites us to orient ourselves anew in a shared world. These are not invitations to mimicry but provocations to re-see what is possible, as if a hidden hinge – the hinge of action itself – had turned so that the scene before us appears newly lit. In this felt interplay of determinacy and openness lies the experiential core of exemplary givenness that the following chapter seeks to clarify. For if the greatest political crisis today is the loss of our sense of belonging to a shared world, and if such belonging is sustained through the sharedness of appearances, then the objective dimension of publicity is a political question of the first order. Exemplarity names the *toward-which* and *through-which* of judgment's subjective (reflective) and intersubjective (communicative) activities: the *matter* through which the mind orients towards and departs from the shared world.

This chapter develops that claim by connecting with existing literature on spectatorship, disclosure, and the normativity of judgment while departing from it in two ways.[18] First, it uses the conceptual resources Arendt gains through exemplarity to reconcile her account of judgment as a redemptive activity oriented to discerning meaning from the past with her account of judgment as an action-guiding capacity capable of telling right from wrong. My aim is not to supply external criteria of right and wrong but to show how redeemed persons or events can, as exemplary, become action-guiding sources of normativity at all. Second, I position the original normativity of exemplary disclosure as oppositional to world-closing indifference. In this way, I not only take a step toward addressing the elusive "half-way plausible theory of ethics" and dissolving the "modern problem of theory and praxis" that Arendt suggested her account of judgment would provide, but also recast that theory as an originary political ethics responsive to the loss of worldliness characteristic of indifference to meaning.

I proceed in the following four steps. In the first section, I discuss one of Arendt's most revealing descriptions of her own method of thinking to locate Heideggerian influences in her reading of Kant. My

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[18] See: Benhabib, "Judgment and the Moral Foundations of Politics in Arendt's Thought"; Seyla Benhabib, "Hannah Arendt and the Redemptive Power of Narrative," *Social Research* 57, no. 1 (1990). Annabel Herzog, "Illuminating Inheritance: Benjamin's Influence on Arendt's Political Storytelling," *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 26, no. 5 (2000); Annabel Herzog, "The Poetic Nature of Political Disclosure: Hannah Arendt's Storytelling," *Clio* 30, no. 2 (2001).; David Luban, "Explaining Dark Times: Hannah Arendt's Theory of Theory," *Social Research* 50, no. 1 (1983). Lara María Pía, "Reflective Judgment as World Disclosure," *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 34, no. 1-2 (2008).

aim here is to describe the activity of reflective judgment as responsive to exemplary appearances as disclosive events against the backdrop of indifference. In the second section, I suggest a broadly objective reading of Kantian reflective judgment as necessary to make sense of exemplarity, and in the third introduce the imagination as responsive to exemplarity as a primitive form of normativity. In the fourth and final section, I summarize how exemplary appearances are consistent with plurality as world-opening *res publica* that make an original claim on the minds of spectators as to how the world should look.

I. 'THINKING THE PARTICULAR'

Arendt described the disclosive power action as beginning a process of thinking that she would come to call, with Kant, "thinking the particular" or reflective judgment. In the preface to *Men in Dark Times*, she wrote that "even in the darkest times we have the right to expect some illumination," and found that expectation satisfied in the lives of the persons whose biographies she drew therein.[19] And in a rare self-reflective preamble to her speech 'Action and the Pursuit of Happiness,' she eloquently described the source and movement of this kind of thinking:

> I have always believed that, no matter how abstract our theories may sound or how consistent our arguments may appear, there are incidents and stories behind them which, at least for ourselves, contain as in a nutshell the full meaning of whatever we have to say. Thought itself – to the extent that it is more than a technical, logical operation which electronic machines may be better equipped to perform than the human brain — arises out of the actuality of incidents, and incidents of living experience must remain the guideposts by which it takes as bearing if it is not to lose itself in the heights to which thinking soars, or in the depths to which it must descend. In other words, the curve which the activity of thought describes must be bound to incident as the circle remains bound to its focus; and the only gain one might legitimately expect from this most mysterious of human activities is neither definitions nor theories, but rather the slow plodding discovery and, perhaps, the mapping survey of the region which some incident had completely illuminated for a fleeting second.[20]

Arendt is here presenting in condensed form a core concern of her later work: how the mind and world relate to one another in a fundamental way. It is a picture steadfastly opposed to all manner of scientific thinking like inferring, deducing, or calculating. The importance she assigns to "actual incidents of living experience" as occasioning, grounding, and guiding the thinking process marks a foundational commitment in this project, which carries through in her appreciation of reflective judgment as concerning 'particulars

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[19] Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*, ix.
[20] Kohn, Thinking Without a Bannister: Essays in Understanding 1953-1975, 201-02.

in their very particularity.' Although she does not here mention several important aspects of judgment, I wish to suggest that the central idea of this passage can nevertheless be taken as a compelling entry-point for approaching those aspects for, as I intend to show, it is by keeping in view the occasioning and grounding role of personally experienced incidents that we can make sense of the nature of examples as world-opening kinds of standards.[21]

Before considering Arendt's reading of Kantian judgment, however, it is worth unpacking two metaphors in the passage above as they will help situate the following discussion on the right terrain. First, Arendt's use of visual metaphors of "light" and "illumination" to describe the thinking process may appear odd to a reader of her later work, for as she argues in *The Life of the Mind*, the history of philosophy has relied on metaphors of vision to establish spectatorial distance, unidirectionality of perspective, and contemporaneity of the visual manifold necessary for its conception of Truth.[22] If we were to treat Arendt's avowed efforts at "dismantling of metaphysics" in that text as yielding a resolutely anti-metaphysical stance, we might thus be led to read this invocation of visual metaphor as a mistake, the correction for which would be supplied by the triumph of judgment over thinking, taste over vision.[23] A considered view, however, reveals a more complex relationship than this territorial one allows.[24] Arendt consistently uses the term 'thinking' in her general description of judging as "thinking the particular," for example, as well as in descriptions of some of its aspects, like "thinking from other perspectives," "thinking for oneself," or "thinking in examples," each of which explicitly or implicitly invoke vision: in judging, she says, we "see from all sides." An approach that respects the distinctiveness and entanglement of Arendt's conceptual distinctions allows us not only to make sense of descriptions like these, but also to interpret the passage above as both drawing forward that aspect of judging in which a post-metaphysical and political thinking is involved, and as an oblique demonstration of their entanglement. As we will see in the next chapter, judging involves a process through which the visible and invisible are related to one another in an originary way. While the notion of exemplarity will qualify how we are to understand the relation between these two realms, suffice it to acknowledge for now that far from supplanting vision, a conception of judging redemptive of thinking permits not only the exercise of that which is intended by visual metaphors, *viz*. insight into the meaning of what appears, but also the use of such metaphors within a description of an

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[21] E.g.: Hannah Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment* (New York: Schocken, 2003), 143-46.; Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future: Six Exercises in Political Thought* (New York: Penguin, 2006), 222.

[22] Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 110-12.

[23] Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 212.

[24] The language of "territorialism" comes from: Patchen Markell, "Arendt's Work: On the Architecture of 'the Human Condition'," *College Literature* 38, no. 1 (2011).

activity that is nevertheless best understood in the language of taste. What is at issue is not whether vision and thinking belong to judging, but how they are redeemed by it.[25]

The second metaphor worth unpacking is the topographical "region." Arendt uses *region* in *The Life of the Mind* as a general descriptor for the area in which thinking takes place – be it worldly (the ascending rows of the Olympian theatre; the Parisian crowds during the French Revolution) or mental (the inner region of the mind into which the philosopher retreats and dwells)[26] – but nowhere subjects the term to explicit scrutiny. Her choice, however, would have been highly deliberate. She undoubtedly knew very well that the German *Gegend* ("region") is etymologically related to the philosophically more common *Gegenstand* ("object") through the root *Gegen*, meaning 'against or opposed;' and also that *Gegend* itself had been raised to philosophical reflection by her former teacher Heidegger in both his early and later writings to name a stretch or expanse that lies before or around.[27] While a full development of Arendt's use of the term is beyond my purposes here, a brief comparative sketch with Heidegger will help to make its contours and significance more apparent.

Let us mark four continuities. First, for both Heidegger and Arendt, *region* carries a spatial sense: regions are not formally circumscribed spaces but webs of intra-worldly beings that show up or 'take place' within them. To sky-regions under which living beings dwell belong celestial bodies and weather,[28] and to public regions in which matters of common concern appear (e.g., legislatures, church basements, city streets) belong the words and deeds of acting persons.[29] Second, Arendt's use of "incident" and "fleeting second" to describe the temporality of regionhood recalls Heidegger's *Ereignis* (event) and *Augenblick* (moment). These are not discrete segments of linear time but the happening of insight into the belonging-together of what appears within the region in which it does appear. Third, the incident or event through which a regional web of relations is revealed describes an experience of meaning that locates us in the world *as* a world, like turning on a flashlight in a dark room or stumbling into a forest clearing (*Lichtung*) to suddenly see where we are and what surrounds us.[30] And fourth, while both understood such disclosure as distinctly human, they also saw it as deeply under threat in the modern age.

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[25] I return to this point in the third chapter. For the claim that judging redeems thinking (and willing), see: Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 89-90.; Melvyn A. Hill, ed. *Hannah Arendt: The Recovery of the Public World* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979), 245.

[26] Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 96-98.

[27] Arendt's copy of *Sein und Zeit* includes marginal lining alongside a passage in *Being and Time* where Heidegger defines 'region' as the "whereto" of the "possible belonging somewhere of useful things, which is circumspectly held in view in advance and in heedful dealings" (Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (SUNY Press, 2010), 100.). Heidegger's treatment of 'region' in his later writings his Cf. Martin Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 30.; Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, 255.

[28] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (SUNY Press, 2010), 100.

[29] Arendt writes that action establish "a space between the participants which can find its proper location almost any time and anywhere" (Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 198).

[30] For an exceptionally clear description of the experience of ontological events, see: Dustin Zielke, "The Modifier Within: Bruno Latour's Actant and Martin Heidegger's Thing Theory," *Human Studies* (2022).

Yet the differences are equally important. Arendt's use does not refer to the "region of all regions" in which Being comes to presence in occurrent beings,[31] but to a public (Ö*ffentlichkeit*) in which world-revealing incidents are shared between (*inter-esse*) a plurality of spectating persons.[32] Where Heidegger's pursuit of the meaning of Being led him to understand *res publica* – "that which concerns everybody and is therefore deliberated in public"[33] – as presupposing "the reality of the *res*" and thus as ontologically derivative (for surely there are beings that are not public), Arendt is rather led to endorse precisely that conjunction: the reality of the *res* owes precisely to its enduring as a point of convergence between differently situated perspectives over time. The Latin *pluralis* means "of or belonging to more than one."[34] That to which 'more than one belongs' is the fact of appearing itself: that by which we are moved or displaced from our ordinary moorings such that the question of belonging can arise at all.

Yet both thinkers also discerned a common danger. The very conditions that allow regional illumination to occur can be nullified when indifference, sameness, or instrumentalism close the world upon itself. The darkness of modernity for both Heidegger and Arendt emanates from the collapse of meaning into the same: the flattening of particularity, the substitution of function for meaning, the eclipse of reflection by pre-ordained purpose.

In his early writings, Heidegger understood this indifference (*Gleichgültigkeit*) as characteristic of what he called our inauthentic mode of everyday existence, in which beings appear of more or less equal significance and time as a mere repetition of the same. "The enormity of that indifference," he wrote, "is that such understanding fails to hear the Being of beings and is able to acquaint itself only with beings."[35] From this everyday indifference, where actuality stands higher than possibility, emerges boredom as the "fundamental attunement of the age" and, eventually, an "epoch of enframing" in which Being itself is cast into oblivion by the all-consuming forces of technology.[36] For Arendt, the threat of indifference appears most clearly in her account of the rise of "the social," in which the space of appearances is subsumed by the administrative state as it manages the ever-changing wants and needs of a massified and increasingly lonely society.[37] Since in such a society "everything [permitted to appear] must fulfill some need," there

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[31] Martin Heidegger, *Country Path Conversations* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 73. Arendt's copy of *Gelassenheit* contains underlining and marginalia throughout.

[32] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 52. For the notion that publicity is actuated plurality, see: Sophie Loidolt, *Phenomenology of Plurality: Hannah Arendt on Political Intersubjectivity* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 98-99.

[33] Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: Harper Collins, 2001), 172.

[34] "Plural (Adj.)." *Online Etymology Dictionary* accessed June 30, 2022, https://www.etymonline.com/word/plural.

[35] Martin Heidegger, *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics,* trans. William McNeill, and Nicholas Walker (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 356.

[36] Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays,* trans. William Lovitt (New York: Garland Publishing, 1977).

[37] Arendt's sympathies with Heidegger on this point are displayed in the introduction to *Men in Dark Times,* where she writes that Heidegger's "perverse sounding" phrase "'the light of the public obscures everything' went to the very heart

remains, Arendt writes, an "indifferen[ce] to the thingness of objects"[38] — a deficit of attention to the meaning of appearances, of *amour mundi*. And this withering of particulars into an indifferent sameness corresponds to what she called "morally and even politically speaking by far the greatest danger," namely, "the unwillingness or inability to choose one's company [of examples]."[39] The collapse of particularity is a collapse of the very availability of the only viable source of guidance after the collapse of tradition.

It is against this backdrop of darkness that Arendt's language of illumination takes on its full power. As she wrote to Karl Jaspers in 1957, the beautiful is "the quintessence of the worldliness of the world […] for every single human being."[40] And quoting Jacques Maritain's rendering of Plato's *to ekphanestaton* (outstanding/radiant) in the categories of medieval philosophy, she also called the beautiful "the radiance of all transcendentals united."[41] Arendt's "regionally illuminative incidents," then, might be understood as *beautiful* in precisely this sense: radiant (*ekphanestaton*) events that, in their very particularity (*unum*), appear as they ought (*bonum*) to be (*ens*) in the open (Ö*ffentlichkeit*) region (*alter/Gegend*) in which they do appear to diversely situated perspectives (*pluralis*). To say that such incidents "appear as they ought to be" is, of course, a description of the exemplary. And since publics for Arendt are properly spaces of concerted action, we need not hesitate in embracing the exemplary as a substitute for the beautiful. One branch of the word's etymology, after all, is *exemplum, which not only* referred to an inspiring model or instructive story, but also, like Heidegger's *Lichtung*, to a forest clearing.[42] Exemplary illumination, then, not as the denial of darkness but its transformation into public radiance. It shines not like an indiscriminate blanket of sunlight but as a singular ray alighting the plurality of faces in the surrounding world angled to receive it. Radiance happens through, not beyond, finitude; light emerges through darkness, and shadows pronounced by lightness.

As much as the collapse of tradition introduced for both Heidegger and Arendt unprecedented dangers, it also opened unprecedented opportunities. Only with the waning authority of metaphysics can

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of existing conditions" (ix). One might look to her description of the rise of the social, found in the second chapter of *The Human Condition*, as a description of how this obscurantism and indifference take root, and to her review of Dostoyevsky's *The Possessed,* which charts the effect of the collapse of belief in the soul as generating indifference and boredom. The "topos" that generates indifference, she writes in the latter, "is not the world but some ultimate concern" (Kohn, *Thinking Without a Bannister: Essays in Understanding 1953-1975*, 360-67.)

[38] Arendt, Between Past and Future: Six Exercises in Political Thought, 208.

[39] Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, 146.

[40] Lotte Kohler, and Hans Saner, eds. *Hannah Arendt / Karl Jaspers Correspondence, 1926-1969* (New York: Harcourt, 1992), 320.

[41] Jacques Maritain, *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 162. Cited by Arendt in (Arendt, *Between Past and Future: Six Exercises in Political Thought*, 284. Arendt appreciated this aspect of Maritain's theory of the beautiful without committing to his Christian utopianism. See 'The Concern for Politics in Recent European Philosophical Thought' Hannah Arendt, *Essays in Understanding, 1930-1954: Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1994), 428-47.

[42] Domino Du Cange, *Glossarium: Mediae Et Infamae Latinitatis* (Niort: Fabre, L., 1884), 357. For a helpful discussion of the etymology, see John D. Lyons, *Exemplum: The Rhetoric of Example in Early Modern France and Italy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), Introduction.

appearances begin to show themselves in their phenomenal fullness to the free kind of thinking that both sought to articulate. Where Heidegger, still positionally embedded in the metaphysical tradition he sought to overcome, was led to describe that thinking as solitary meditation on the riddle of Being and to locate its saving power as a "preparing readiness for the appearance of a new god," Arendt, stepping through philosophy into political theory, characterized it instead as the ability "to see things from all sides," and, citing Pavel Kahout, suggested that "what the world today stands in greatest need of is [not a new god but] a new example, if the next thousand years are not to become an era of super-civilized monkeys."[43] The "appearance of a new example," we might therefore say, is that which punctures the neutralizing veil of indifference by revealing a region of the world as a shared space of possible action for which spectators are responsible and within which they may act and strike modest roots. A space, that is, of *amour mundi*.

Although the influence of Heidegger on Arendt is clear in her use of the topological metaphor of "region" to qualify the quality and scope of vision proper to the kind of thinking responsive to illuminative incidents, it was in Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment* that she found a more satisfying articulation of how the exemplary and plurality belong together. The difference turns on the relation between *Gegend* and *Gegenstand*, region and object. Heidegger had carefully shown that the "againstness" (*Gegen*) of *Gegenstand* was gradually collapsed in modern thought into representational mastery. What once designated a dynamic 'standing against' within a regional expanse of relationally interwoven beings became a static object of cognition, an *Objekt* to be contained and controlled by subjects. Arendt, who knew this history intimately, inherited Heidegger's concern that the apparent resistance of the world to the mind had been neutralized. Like Heidegger, her concern was to redeem the original sense of objectivity as belonging to a wider relational world.[44] Yet since for her meaning is always shared (or at least shareable), what was at stake in the relation between object and region is the endurance of a common world that can sustain plurality.

The task for us is to see how, through Kant, Arendt makes that plurality intelligible through reflective judgment as the faculty through which the particular becomes luminous within its region. We are led to wonder just how Kant's account of aesthetic judgment and Arendt's reading of it retains the priority here given to the exemplary as that which occasions judgment, and judging, so occasioned, might resemble the 'discovering,' 'surveying' and 'mapping' she attributes to it in the passage that began this section. And this not simply to reconcile these two great influences in Arendt's thought, but rather and more importantly to make good on her insights that it is that which appears between spectators that (1) provides durability to

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[43] Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (Orlando: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1970), 83.

[44] Where Heidegger says that "'the meaning of Being' says the same as 'the truth of Being,'" Arendt says: "the need of reason [or need of thinking] is not inspired by the quest for truth but the quest for meaning. And truth and meaning are not the same. The basic fallacy, taking precedence over all other metaphysical fallacies, is to interpret meaning on the model of truth" (Hannah Arendt, *Denktagebuch: 1950 Bis 1973* (Piper, 2003), 15.)

the world;[45] (2) occasions spectators to appear to one another as free and equal persons endowed with meaningful perspectives;[46] (3) solicits on them a claim to follow or refuse its example;[47] and (4), that the 'full meaning' or 'essence' of normative concepts are contained, 'as in a nutshell,' within such appearances. Examples – whether Greta Thunberg's "our house is on fire," the defiance of Ukrainian soldiers to a Russian warship on Snake Island, or countless other acts of ordinary courage – arrive unbidden. We stumble into their clearings, and in doing so are presented with something to choose, indeed with the very fact of having to choose at all.[48]

II. OBJECTS

For Kant, it is the appearance of beautiful objects that occasions reflective judgments. Apart from this occasioning role, however, an elaboration of their characteristics tends to recede from Kant's attention, for as he says on the first page of the 'Analytic of the Beautiful' and repeats in variation throughout the third *Critique*, the "determining ground" of aesthetic judgments is a subjective feeling that "designates nothing in the object."[49] This feeling is generated by the "free play" or "reciprocal animation" of the cognitive faculties, "the imagination in its freedom and the understanding in its lawfulness," and is called "disinterested delight."[50] Insofar as this feeling is generated from a formal relation between the faculties and not a cognitive or affective interest in the object, it can provide, Kant says, a subjective principle for the virtual extension of the claim of beauty to all judging subjects despite empirical differences in their interests and standpoints. All that is needed for judgments of beauty to legitimately claim the universality they evidently do – *x is beautiful* – is this sharing, or the "presupposition of a common sense."[51]

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[45] Hannah Arendt, *The Promise of Politics* (New York: Schocken, 2005), 106-07.

[46] Arendt, *The Promise of Politics*, 106-07.

[47] Hannah Arendt, *Denktagebuch: 1950 Bis 1973* (Munich: Piper, 2003), 644.

[48] There is a connection between the line I am pursuing here and the civic humanist understanding of *exemplum* as "testimony." As Ernesto Grassi, a former student of Heidegger, reads Guarino Veronese, an example offers a "moment of learning" in which we are "witness to an event." "Examples," he says, "are not isolated and abstract 'images' or 'ideas,' but insights into the successful or failed response to an appeal which demands to be fulfilled here and now. […] He who educates by examples as testimonies is, at the same time, obliged to respond in his own life to the demands which confront him." Examples "present [themselves] of [their] own accord," not by evidence of "last principles," as in traditional philosophy, but the "*perceptibility of the single case*, through which we immediately discover whether the bearing of witness has responded to – or missed – the appeal of the non-deducible and unfathomable. It is this 'evidence' which evokes admiration. […] There are [thus] two elements in the example: the '*contemplatio*' and the '*admiratio*'" (Ernesto Grassi, *Renaissance Humanism: Studies in Philosophy and Poetics* (New York: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1988), 53.; for an alternative discussion of the emergent quality of exemplary actions, see: Maurizio Ferraris, "7 March 1943. Exemplary Action," *Law & Literature* 30, no. 3 (2018)). This chapter is primarily concerned with the evidential side of element of the example, the *contemplatio*. The next will be concerned with the side of *admiratio*.

[49] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment,* trans. Paul Guyer, and Eric Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 5:203-204.

[50] Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 5:287.

[51] Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 5:239.

Arendt's reading of Kant in the *Lectures* does not seem to trouble the apparently firm distinction he draws between objects and the (intersubjectivity-yielding) subjective principle on which judgments of beauty are grounded. Indeed, she follows that distinction to emphasize the importance of reflecting on one's pleasure from a general standpoint by thinking from (actual) other perspectives to ensure that it is indeed devoid of private interest. For her, the "operation of reflection" by which we strive for impartiality is "the real activity of judging something," and the key to unlocking how reflective judgments are genuinely political.[52] Thinking from other perspectives comes to articulate a fundamental operation of human plurality, the exercise of which opens the space between persons as one towards which they are freely and meaningfully directed, and in which they strive to persuade each-other of how the world should look as opposed to compelling by truth-claims or renouncing the shared world altogether by relapsing to mere preference.

The political consequences of the separation of the object from the grounds of judgment are profound. As Linda Zerilli has argued, it constitutes something like a Copernican revolution in how to think of politics in general, where what counts *as* political no longer appears as preceding the process of judging but is rather constituted by it.[53] The objects of politics are not externalities that lie in wait for competent judges to assess them but "come into view" by enlarging one's mentality and adopting a public orientation to the space of common concern that we share with others.[54] Judging politically can therefore be seen as a world-opening and world-building exercise of freedom by which the boundaries of the political are drawn and redrawn.

It may be tempting, however, to overcorrect for the anti-democratic threats posed by externalism and objectivism by avoiding any articulation of the objects proper to reflection, since this would seem to risk introducing just the kinds of constraints that Arendt's revolutionary move was meant to avoid. While Zerilli admits, for instance, that reflective objects are "not nothing," her emphasis on the enlarged mentality as "mediating" their appearance tends to foreclose sustained consideration of their role in the reflection process.[55] Although it seems right to say that both the (intersubjectivity generating) self-referentiality of reflective judgments (that derive from a subjective feeling) and the visibility of objects are, for instance, mediated by the communal orientation provided by the *sensus communis* and given substantive scope by the enlarged mentality, there are nevertheless good grounds for inverting the source of mediation from the enlarged mentality to reflective objects themselves so as to bring into view the nature of those objects as

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[52] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 68.

[53] Linda M. G. Zerilli, "The Practice of Judgment: Hannah Arendt's 'Copernican Revolution'," in *Theory After Theory*, ed. Derek Attridge, and Jane Elliot (New York: Routledge, 2011).

[54] Cf.: Zerilli, *A Democratic Theory of Judgment*, 8.; Linda M. G. Zerilli, "Toward a Democratic Theory of Judgment," in *Judgment and Action: Fragments Toward a History*, ed. Vivasvan Soni, and Thomas Pfau (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2018), 207.

[55] Zerilli, "Toward a Democratic Theory of Judgment," 207.

giving themselves or *appearing as* candidates for, and worthy of, world-oriented judgment.[56] And it is possible to do so while avoiding the kind of externalism and objectivism that Zerilli with Arendt rightfully worry undermines the process. Required here is not the development of extra-reflective criteria for determining objects as political (or just, or courageous, etc.), which would raise the specter of rational verification, but rather a description of how they appear for and through judgment as *potentially* political, that is, as subject to a process of thinking from other perspectives by which their possible communicability and exemplary durability is reflectively constructed, though far from guaranteed. It would be to describe the nature of reflective objects from within the revolutionary terrain opened up by Arendt's turn to reflective judgment in a way that makes good on her descriptions that thinking is 'bound to incidents as a circle is bound to its focus,' or that incidents are "guideposts" for reflection, while also contributing to the larger task of accounting for how reflective objects not only occasion but persist through and succeed the process of judging such that they can ultimately contribute to the human artifice and guide judging and acting as stories;[57] how, that is, that they come to "matter to us," as Zerilli once put it.[58]

We may pursue this task by first distinguishing the kinds of objects that call to be separated from reflective judgment and those that do not. Kant generally reserved the term *Objekt* for an object in the ordinary sense of an extra-mental entity towards which a subject (*Subjekt*) is oriented in judging. But he also used the term *Gegenstand* for representations in general, including inner or mental entities, in a way that marks, according to Gunter Zoller, their "formal or existential dependence on the mode through which [they are] entertained by the mind and its various capacities."[59] Since aesthetic objects are in the first instance extra-mental entities, they are objects in the first sense of *Objekt*. But since the *way* they appear as *Gegenstand* is initially indeterminate, the mode by which they are entertained by the mind is not that of cognition but of reflection (Kant marks this distinction in the second quote below). What is crucial, then, is not whether an object is external or objective *in general*, but how their qualities are manifest in their unique mode of givenness to the mind.

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[56] For instance, a claim like "It is judgment […] that creates meaning and with it the space in which objects of the common world can appear, not the other way around" seems to undermine the meaning-giving role of objects in judgment (Zerilli, "Toward a Democratic Theory of Judgment," 207.). Avoiding objective determinism need not lead to a truncation of the complexly intentional act of judgment, which includes a creative responsiveness to the region that exemplary appearances open. I later show that Arendt does not, as Zerilli claims, miss the importance of the productive imagination so much as pursue the original belonging-together of the reproductive with the productive in the imagination's world-oriented responsiveness to the exemplary.

[57] Recall my discussion in I.v. of the omitted section 'What are we doing when we think?' in Arendt's original outline for *The Life of the Mind*.

[58] Linda M.G. Zerilli, "The Force of the Example: Explorations in the Paradigm of Judgment," *Perspectives on Politics* 8, no. 2 (2010), 657. Indeed, it is important to understand just what this 'mattering' entails, for things can matter in different ways. Idolatry and tokenism are two ways that imaginal objects can matter, for instance.

[59] Julian Wuerth, *The Cambridge Kant Lexicon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 311.

Arendt calls the operation by which an aesthetic object is initially given the "operation of the imagination."[60] Here, the imagination "apprehends" the object, removes it from direct sensible perception, makes it available to both the pleasures and displeasures of taste, and to the perspective-taking operation of reflection.[61] The apprehended object plays an intermediary, indeed pivotal, role within the overall process of reflective judgment: on the one hand, it *designates* the external object ('*that* painting is beautiful'),[62] and on the other hand presents an indeterminate *form* as the 'foci' for the 'encircling' operation of reflection, to borrow language from above. Kant signals this role across the following remarks:

> To say, This flower is beautiful, is tantamount to a mere repetition of the flower's own claim [*Anspruch*] on everyone's liking.[63]
>
> For the judgment of taste consists precisely in the fact that it calls a thing beautiful only in accordance with that *quality in it* by means of which it corresponds with our *way of receiving it*.[64] (My italics)
>
> [In judgments of taste] purposiveness has its ground in the object [*Objekt*] and its shape [*Gestalt*], even if it does not indicate the relation of the object [*Gegenstand*] to others in accordance with concepts […], but rather concerns merely *the apprehension of this form* insofar *as it shows itself* in the mind to be suitable to the faculty both of concepts and of the presentation of them (which is one and the same as that of apprehension [by the imagination]).[65] (My italics)

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[60] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 168.

[61] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 168.

[62] Kant uses the term "designates" (*bezeichnen*) for the relation between apprehended representations and external sensed objects (*Objekt*), though does not explain what he means (Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason,* trans. Paul Guyer, and Allen Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), A190/B235.) By drawing attention to a designative element in apprehension, I intend to suggest a point of contact between Kantian reflective judgment and what has seemed for some theorists of exemplarity a necessary indexicality in their perception. Linda Zagzebski, for instance, has argued *via* direct reference semantics that exemplary persons are neither inferred nor deduced but directly identified through an act of emotive pointing achieved by admiration: courage is like *that* (Zagzebski, *Exemplarist Moral Theory*, chapter two.; see also: Enrico Terone, "Be Like This. Norms, Examples, Documents and Indexicals From a Neo-Aristotelian Perspective," *Law & Literature* 30, no. 3 (2018).) The idea is also available, however, to the hermeneutic-ontological perspective of the early Heidegger, who writes in *Being and Time* that statements (predicative judgments) are 'primordially' a "pointing out" that "have in view the entity itself [as seen from itself] and not a mere representation of it" (Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 156.). An Arendtian approach indeed requires something of this 'pointing out' if examples are to refer to a mind-independent or worldly entities belonging to more than one (*pluralis*) and not collapse to subjective or intersubjective idealism, or in-group/out-group politics. She testifies to the importance of reference in linguistic meaning in several places, for example in *On Violence*, where she writes: "To use [power, strength, force, authority and violence] as synonyms not only indicates a certain deafness to linguistic meanings, which would be serious enough, but it has also resulted in a kind of blindness to the realities they correspond to" (Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1970), 48.). As we will see in the final section, the indexicality proper to reflective judgment resists relapsing to a determinative view of predication insofar as the object to which representations refer remains excessive of predication. As a modality of the beautiful, the exemplary objects remain imaginative 'topoi' towards-which perspectivally circumspective reflection remains openly oriented. I return to this in the final section of this chapter.

[63] Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 5:281-282.

[64] Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 5:281-282.

[65] Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 5:279.

The pursuit of the status of objects in reflective judgment thus principally concerns the nature of the imagination as an apprehending capacity responsive to the claim made on it (us) by the purposive form (or shape) of aesthetic objects. That aesthetic objects make such a claim is consistent with both Arendt's portrayal of incidents as world-illuminating foci for reflective judgment and the need to avoid extra-reflective criteria for what counts as political. The form of an aesthetic object is indeterminate. Its appearance interrupts cognition, which reduces particulars to instantiations of universals or to mere repetition, and calls us instead to the linguistically and normatively creative act of reflection.[66]

What follows, then, is not a departure from the object but a deepening of its mode of givenness. To clarify the political meaning of reflective judgment, we must describe how the imagination receives the claims that exemplary appearances make upon us; how, that is, the mind's freedom to "encircle" an incident corresponds to the object's own freedom to appear. For Arendt, the encounter between the imagination's movement and the object's radiance marks the birth of reflection as a political act. It is here that the "focus" of the circle becomes active: the imagination does not simply mirror appearances but mediates their passage from the visible to the judgeable, from the singular to the shareable. The next section therefore turns to the imagination itself as the faculty through which appearances gain form, meaning, and exemplary power.

III. IMAGINATION

Arendt, like Heidegger, thought that Kant's greatest discovery was the role of the imagination in cognition, albeit for different reasons.[67] Also like Heidegger, however, she did not think that Kant fully articulated that discovery — or at least that considerable reconstructive effort was needed to bring out it. The core

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[66] Arendt's appropriation of Kant's reflective judgment concerns what the latter called "adherent beauty," beauties that imply culturation. These are distinct from "free beauties," which concern objects of nature and thus do not require cultural learning.

[67] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 80.

In *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* (1929), Heidegger argues that the A edition of the first *Critique* intends towards, but does not fully realize, an existential analytic of the being for whom Being is an issue, thus notoriously asserting Kant's own concerns as consistent with his own in *Being and Time* (Martin Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics,* trans. James S. Churchill (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962). Kant's "ground-laying" of the subjectivity of the subject uncovers, if ultimately covers over, the original time-forming role of the transcendental imagination, which for Heidegger yields the original *ekstases* of Dasein and thus the ontological difference, and makes possible objective knowledge (which Kant prioritizes in the B edition). Arendt similarly thinks that Kant's claim in the 'A' edition that the imagination is the seat of synthesis in general is where his great discovery is found*,* but by: (a) taking the problem of judgment as the centre of his critical enterprise, (b) taking his view of reflective judgment in the third *Critique* as his direct confrontation with that problem, and (c) viewing reflective judgment as the mental capacity that realizes human sociality as plurality, Arendt dissociates the imagination from temporal synthesis and finds its more "comprehensive" function in the ability "to make present what is absent:" "The imagination," she says, "does not need to be led by temporal association [contra Heidegger], it can make present at will what it chooses" (Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 80.) This move positions the imagination as a source of reflective agency over the associative presentations of memory, and thus distances the imagination from an existentially authentic return to historical thrownness (*Geworfenheit*) and the a-social elitism and nativism that can, and did, accompany that view.

puzzle within this discovery revolves around what Arendt called the "chief difficulty" in reflective judgment, namely, how absent an already given concept or rule particulars themselves can reveal concepts or rules, or, to use a term better suited to Arendt's description of the beautiful as "the quintessence of the world in which all transcendentals are united": *meaning*.[68] According to Arendt's literary executor and friend Jerome Kohn, the unfinished third volume of the *Life of the Mind* would have focused on this question, and in so doing not only promote the power of the imagination to the center of our "most political of mental faculties," but also fulfill what she saw as a surprising lacuna in the extant literature on Kant at the time.[69]

The best indication of the direction Arendt would have taken in the third volume is thus contained in her short seminar presentation, 'Imagination,' that picks up where the *Lectures* left off by considering in greater detail the nature and role of examples as products of the imagination and Kant's "by far most valuable" response to the chief difficulty.[70] The presentation begins with a brief survey of the general function of the imagination from Parmenides through Plato to Kant as something like ontological insight — "by looking at appearances, [the imagination] becomes aware of, gets a glimpse of, something that does not appear. This is something is being as such"[71] — followed by an extended analogy of examples with Kantian schemata. Just as schemata provide general shapes for the recognition and communication of particulars in determinative judgments, Arendt writes, so too do examples for reflective judgments. Both are imaginal *tertia quid,* 'third things,' needed to unite concepts with intuitions.[72] An elaboration of the two parts of Arendt's presentation and their connection with one another remained underexplored, however, and thus so too her full response to the chief difficulty. Hence, it falls to reconstruction to show how they might fit together.

The most promising place from which to consider how the imagination reveals generalities from particulars is contained in Kant's somewhat perplexing claim in the third *Critique* that "the freedom of the imagination consists precisely in the fact that it schematizes without a concept."[73] This claim is perplexing since schematization as it is described in the first *Critique* is precisely linked to concepts in cognition. As Samantha Matherne defines it, a schema is "a holistic representation of a concept made sensible, i.e., a

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

[69] As recounted by Kohn in a footnote to the seminar presentation 'Imagination,' Arendt wrote in 1970 that "there is something missing in the whole corpus of Kant scholarship, a sustained study of the imagination — reproductive as well as productive — throughout his critical philosophy" (Kohn, *Thinking Without a Bannister: Essays in Understanding 1953-1975*, 387.)

[70] The other response supplied by Kant are his regulative ideas of a common compact of humanity and its progress towards enlightenment, which Arendt calls *tertia comparationis* and contrasts with exemplary *tertia quid*. Unlike *tertia quid*, which belong to the imagination (are impressed in the "backs of our minds"), the latter risk becoming externalized in the form of maxim-like rules (Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 75.)

[71] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 80-85.

[72] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 80.

[73] Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 5:287. Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 84.

representation of how the various marks of a concept manifest in a unified way" in something like spatial-temporal outlines, gestalts, or silhouettes.[74] To schematize is to produce generic sensible schemata from conceptual rules so that they can be applied to particular intuitions in cognition. Yet, as Arendt notes, in the case of reflective judgment the relationship between the imagination and the understanding is reversed: "In the *Critique of Pure Reason* imagination is at the service of the intellect; in the *Critique of Judgment* the intellect is 'at the service of imagination.'"[75] Although she does not say so explicitly, it is owing to this reversal that Kant can supply an answer to the oft-noted difficulty of how empirical concepts are discovered or acquired. If schematization is *always* that of already given concepts, then the passage between the understanding and sensibility through the imagination could only ever go in that one direction, locking cognition into already acquired concepts. But we *do* generate new concepts from novel intuitions, as in the science of nature ('H_20'), aesthetics ('impressionism'), morality ('banality of evil'), law ('crimes against humanity'), and politics ('totalitarianism'). Kant was of course aware of this and took its grounding as part of his aims in the third *Critique*.[76] And the ability to "come to terms with" novel appearances was undoubtedly a core feature of what Arendt found so attractive in that text.[77] The imagination's capacity to schematize without a concept thus promises a way out of the impasse of concept discovery or acquisition, and thus a compelling avenue for addressing Arendt's chief difficulty (how particulars reveal generalities) from within the architecture of Kant's thought.

The view that I would like to develop in the next three sections is that Arendt would have understood the notion of schematizing without a concept as a process by which novel particulars exemplify new concepts, and thus new ways of seeing and orienting oneself in the world. Although the product of this process is not a schema but a potentially action-guiding example, "schematization" remains an appropriate descriptor insofar as in it the imagination makes sensible (or schematizes) not concepts but the lawfulness of the understanding in general through the singular form of the apprehended object. It is because the form of the object harmonizes with the laws of the understanding in general that it appears as exemplary in the originary disclosive sense I have supposed, *viz.* as presenting itself as an original model to follow. Moreover, insofar as schematizing without a concept indeed represents the most direct interpretive approach to Arendt's chief difficulty, then the perspective-taking operation of reflection that she called 'the real activity of judging' can be seen as in the service of a now broader operation of the imagination that

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[74] Consider, for example, the schema for a dog. "While the concept 'dog' indicates that dogs have various properties, like being furry, four-legged, an animal, etc., the schema represents how those various properties appear together as a whole in perception" (Samantha Matherne, "Kant and the Art of Schematism," *Kantian Review* 19, no. 2 (2014), 188.)

[75] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 84.

[76] See: Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 20:202.

[77] Arendt draws attention to the distinction between determining judgments as "subsuming under a concept" and reflective judgments as "deriving the rule from a particular" or "bringing to a concept" (Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 83.)

encompasses the judging process as such. In short, by perspectivally surveying exemplary objects, reflection expands the range of vantage-points by which its contours or marks are made visible, thereby making possible the spontaneous discovery of conceptual arrangements befitting, or narratively mapping, those contours as they reciprocally relate to one another within the object as a whole in a way others can understand.[78] Hence when Kant says, and Arendt repeats, that the "faculty of the imagination makes present to the mind what is absent to sense perception,"[79] they are referring not to the mere recollection of past images (memory), but to an originally productive activity by which communally-oriented meaning is discovered and made intelligible through the apprehended object as it is surveyed (or adumbrated, to speak with Husserl) by the activity of thinking from other perspectives. In so doing, the imagination glimpses the invisible in the visible, creating a bridge between the sensible and intellectual within the apprehended object itself. Whatever concepts are discovered by this insight then become candidates for personal and collective understanding and orientation. Should they take root in common vocabulary, they remain but indications of the interminable possibility of rethinking whatever exemplary "essence" they originally endeavoured to map or describe.

IV. Schematizing Without a Concept

If imagination names the faculty through which the world first begins to speak before it is conceptually ordered, then schematization describes the process by which that speech becomes intelligible. The transition from imagination to schematization is not a change of topic but an intensification of one: it traces how the mind's freedom responds to, and gradually stabilizes, the claims made upon it by exemplary appearances. Kant's remark that "the freedom of the imagination consists precisely in the fact that it schematizes without a concept" marks the most precise philosophical articulation of what Arendt had called the "chief difficulty" of reflective judgment, how particulars themselves can reveal generalities without recourse to pre-given rules. For Arendt, this is the point where the imagination's receptivity to the world becomes world-building: where an incident or example begins to disclose its lawfulness, not as a rule imposed from without, but as a form radiating from within. To follow this movement is to see how what appears becomes available to others, and how meaning, like light in a clearing, begins to take shape through shared attention. In this section, I explore Kant's notion of "schematizing without a concept" as the key to understanding this responsiveness of imagination to exemplary form, and hence to the heartbeat of judgment itself.

The idea that reflective judgments are responsive to a claim made by the form of the object corroborates in a loose sense Arendt's description that thinking is occasioned and responds to a region-

[78] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 74.
[79] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 86.

illuminating incident. This responsiveness signals, on the one hand, the basic priority of the event of appearance as that which begins and guides the thinking process. On the other hand, it also signals what it appears *as*, or its phenomenal form. Kant calls the form of the object (*Gegenstand*) a gestalt or abstract shape, and a region (*Gegend*) is a space shaped by boundaries. So too is a crystal, to add one of Arendt's favoured early metaphors ("elements become origins if and when they suddenly crystallize into a fixed and definite form").[80] The 'essence' of what appears presents itself in this shape, and it is from it the object is made, if not to stand as a universally defined concept, at least potentially to endure. How?

According to Keren Gorodeisky, Kant's notion of schematizing without a concept can be best understood in terms of a beautiful objects' singularity and wholeness, or thatness and whatness.[81] To say that an aesthetic object's form is holistic is to say that it is given immediately as a whole, and that it is in light of the whole that its features or parts appear as singularly unified and necessary. Kant says, for instance, that the manifold of intuition occurs in reflection "all at once (*en masse*),"[82] and that the "power of the imagination provides for the understanding a whole from the manifold of the object."[83] The apprehension of wholeness is both experientially primary to parthood (we apprehend beautiful objects as wholes first) as well as logically primary to parthood (the whole illuminates the parts, not the other way around). This is the opposite of what happens in theoretical or cognitive judgments, where the imagination moves "compositionally" from parts to wholes by picking out empirical properties already schematized by concepts and unifying them under more general concepts. In this latter case, parts are generic empirical properties that "not only can be legitimately attributed to this object," but also "to all other objects of the same kind independently of their relation to other properties in the object and to the object under consideration."[84] With beautiful objects, by contrast, parts are "reciprocally unified" in the singularity of their wholeness and thus transcend however they may otherwise be compositionally related under existing concepts. Arendt's description of political events clearly affirms this indeterminate holism: "every event in human history reveals an unexpected landscape of human deeds, sufferings, and possibilities which together transcend the sum total of all willed intentions and the significance of all origins;"[85] the spectator "sees the whole that gives meaning to the particulars."[86] Just as the reflection of white sunlight on the apartment floor in Adolf Menzel's painting *Das Balkonzimmer* is irreducible to both the artist's brush-strokes and to the

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[80] Arendt, Essays in Understanding, 1930-1954: Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism, 325.

[81] Keren Gorodeisky, "Schematizing Without a Concept? Imagine That!," *Proceedings of the European Society for Aesthetics* 2 (2010).

[82] Gorodeisky, "Schematizing Without a Concept? Imagine That!", 187.; Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology From a Pragmatic Point of View,* trans. Robert Louden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 9:145.

[83] Gorodeisky, "Schematizing Without a Concept? Imagine That!", 187.; Immanuel Kant, *Lectures on Metaphysics,* trans. Karl Ameriks, and Steve Naragon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 29:1012.

[84] Gorodeisky, "Schematizing Without a Concept? Imagine That!", 184.

[85] Arendt, Essays in Understanding, 1930-1954: Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism, 320.

[86] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 68.

generic concept 'white rhombus,' to borrow Gorodeisky's example,[87] so too, for instance, is the meaning of the Declaration of Independence irreducible to both the pen strokes of the American founders and the generic concept of 'political founding.' It is not just any white that appears reflected on the floor, but *that* singularly beautiful white. To change it would be to change the painting entirely.

That the reciprocal animation between the imagination in its freedom and the understanding in its lawfulness is grounded in the apprehension of the form of the object implies that the subjective feeling of disinterested delight arises when the apprehended object agrees with the general laws of the understanding even in the absence of a concept that cognitively concretizes those laws as determinative rules. In 'schematizing without a concept,' the imagination enjoins intuitions with lawfulness in general in its aesthetic apprehension of the indeterminate form of the object. As Gorodeisky puts it, the imagination "allows the mind to judge even what cannot be judged through concepts as exhibiting a special kind of necessary unity that does not only meet the transcendental condition on the mind to experience the world as lawfully unified but is also responsive to the special kind of value of beauty."[88] Thus can schematizing without a concept begin to answer Arendt's chief difficulty as to how particulars reveal generalities insofar as it describes the basic mechanism by which lawfulness, and thus generalizability, appears through the apprehension of beautiful particulars as indeterminate wholes.

It is worth dwelling for a moment on the schematization of lawfulness within apprehended particulars because it is here that the originary normativity carried by exemplarity begins to take shape. One helpful presentation of what this involves is provided by Hannah Ginsborg, who argues, in one formulation, that "the point of our reflective judgments is to say that the thing itself exemplifies – or indeed constitutes – the standard for how it (and others of its kind) ought to be."[89] Since the harmony of the cognitive faculties occasioned by the form of a beautiful object does not presuppose the congruence of a determinate feature of the object with a cognitive activity that responds to it (as when we recognize an object as red or consider an act under the laws of practical reason), the normativity of the 'ought' proper to exemplary particulars derives from our taking the imaginative activity as such to be proper to the object as such. Ginsborg thus calls exemplary normativity "primitive," and provides the example of a child who sorts cubes from pyramids without understanding the concepts 'cube' and 'pyramid' to illustrate the point: the child "freely" perceives that objects with this shape belong together, whereas those with that shape belong together.[90]

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[87] See Appendix Two for an image of *Das Balkonzimmer*.

[88] Gorodeisky, "Schematizing Without a Concept? Imagine That!", 189-90.

[89] Hannah Ginsborg, *The Normativity of Nature: Essays on Kant's Critique of Judgment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 72.

[90] Ginsborg, "Aesthetic Judgment and Perceptual Normativity," 419-20.

Their capacity to "go on" sorting despite the absence of concepts evidences how reflective judgment is a basic position from which we learn or discover for ourselves concepts for objects like *that*.[91]

Arendt's turn to judgment requires both the concept discovery that Ginsborg finds in the primitive normativity of reflective judgment and Gorodeisky's consideration of the form of aesthetic objects as grounding and guiding it.[92] As Arendt says in an early essay, the "original intuition" of an event elicits a "blind and uncontrolled reaction strong enough to coin a new word," and it is just our reflective response to this reaction that allows us to "take our bearings in the world."[93] But 'taking bearing in the world' is not obviously the same as sorting three-dimensional objects, and finding concepts suited to region-illuminating events is not obviously the same as coining a new concept for perceivable empirical objects. To see how they differ will require filling gaps in the process not addressed by either Gorodeisky or Ginsborg. One such gap lies between the primitive normativity of exemplary appearances and worldliness. It is unclear, for instance, whether a child sorting cubes without concepts does so as a kind exploratory game from which she derives a strictly cognitive pleasure or if she does so because she thinks the world *should* look that way in a thicker sense than merely discovering it *can*. While there may be a form of normativity implied in the (more or less personal) exploration of aesthetic possibilities, since the kind of normativity that Arendt with Kant believed belonged to the beautiful must be distinguished as far as possible from the merely agreeable, we should, for clarity purposes, look to cases where exemplarist normativity is more clearly public. Other gaps concern the movement of language: between the primitive normativity carried by the apprehension of singular wholeness and the 'new words' that that apprehension inclines us to "coin," and between the words so coined and their agreement or assent by other spectators. In what follows, we will approach the first gap (practical and political normativity) by way of the second (in the movement of language). I would like to suggest that "coming to terms with" a particular *mediates* the initiating and originary normativity carried by the exemplary object's indeterminate form and the communicative normativity of judgment's outward claim on others.

Although it is not my primary concern in this chapter, it is worth briefly mentioning that Arendt's characterization of the communicative normativity of reflective judgments, which Kant called "exemplary validity," presents a puzzle that only the mediating role of the imagination as responsive to the exemplary seems able to resolve. Kant described "exemplary validity" as the "ascription" that others should follow

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[91] Ginsborg, "Aesthetic Judgment and Perceptual Normativity," 420.

[92] As Samantha Matherne points out, and notwithstanding the quote in the previous paragraph, Ginsborg generally limits the ground of reflective judgment to its self-referential aspect in which the freedom of the imagination is taken to exemplify rules independently of both "the spatial-temporal form of the object" and the activity of perspective-taking, as I have been suggesting are both important parts of Arendt's reading of Kant (Samantha Matherne, "Book Review: *The Normativity of Nature: Essays on Kant's "Critique of Judgment"*," *The Philosophical Review* 126, no. 2 (2017), 283-84.) Gorodeisky's account also omits perspective-taking.

[93] Arendt, Essays in Understanding, 1930-1954: Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism, 320,327.

my judgment as an "ideal norm."[94] He makes no mention of the validity of a judgment being dependent on the communal sharing of actual examples. Arendt, by contrast, does:

> When judging, one says spontaneously, without derivation from general rules, 'This man has courage.' If one were a Greek, one would have 'in the depths of one's mind' the example of Achilles. […] The validity of [an] example will be restricted to those who possess the particular experience of [that example], either as [its] contemporaries or as heirs to [its] particular historical tradition.[95]

This passage carries two possibly damaging implications. The first is of political and cultural closure, and the second is of a possible misrepresentation of Kant. To avoid both, we need a clearer sense of what an example is and where it comes from. With respect to the first implication, and as we will explore in more detail later (section VI), 'restriction' need not entail conservative boundary drawing. Restrictions are neither impassable walls nor statically formed. As Arendt knew so well, borders ought to remain open. And in this case, they are passable by *learning*. With respect to the second implication concerning Kant, we need only remind ourselves that Arendt did not confine herself to the letter of a text but sought to glimpse its spirit, as it were. We should therefore suppose with generosity that she indeed glimpsed *some* connection between the normativity of judgment's outward claim on others and the normativity carried by actual examples, even if that connection remained unarticulated.[96]

For now, let us return to the suggestion that "coming to terms with" an originary intuition plays a mediating role in the overall process of judgment. Arendt is clear that judgment "*refuses to relinquish the original* [indeterminate] *intuition*" that begins the process of reflection (original italics).[97] The question, then, concerns how reflection not only responds to that original intuition but also prepares it for communicability. There are two entangled paths leading from this question. The first concerns the discovery of words as disclosive of the objects to which they denote or name. In this case, the emphasis is on the relationship between words and objects. The second path concerns the relation of words to others. "One can communicate only if one is able to think from another's standpoint,"[98] Arendt writes. Since Arendt herself assigns priority to the first over the second,[99] I set aside the latter in the next section to focus on the

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[94] Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 5:239.

[95] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 84.

[96] Pursuing this connection would require, among other things, developing an Arendtian interpretation of the relationship between what Kant called free and adherent judgments of beauty (Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 5:229-231.) Cf. Susan Meld Shell, *The Politics of Beauty: A Study of Kant's Critique of Taste* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022).

[97] Arendt, Essays in Understanding, 1930-1954: Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism, 325.

[98] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 74.

[99] In a conference on her work in 1972, Arendt responded to C.B. Macpherson's complaint about her idiosyncratic use of language by saying: "In my opinion, a word has a much stronger relation to what it denotes or to what it is than the way it is being used between you and me. That is, you look to the communicative value of the word. I look to the disclosing

discovery of words from the apprehension of objects. This in view, recall, of making sense of the 'chief difficulty' in judgment concerning how particulars reveal generalities, but also towards establishing a connection between the foregoing discussion of wholes and their parts, or regions and their elements, with Arendt's discussion of metaphor as the vehicle for concept discovery in *The Life of the Mind*. This will allow, in the final section, to return to the question of how the perspective-taking operation of reflection arises out of and is sympathetic with the givenness of exemplary objects themselves.

V. WORDS OF THE WORLD

> *How marvellous that men can perform courageous or just deeds even though they do not know, can give no account of, what courage and justice are.* [100]
>
> *Achilles is* like *courage.* [101]

Arendt's aim in the sections concerning metaphor in the first volume of *The Life of the Mind* (twelve and thirteen) is at least twofold. On the one hand, she endeavours to "dismantle" the pretense of metaphysical thinking to grasp that which lies behind or outside of appearances to control or regulate them from without. Yet on the other hand, and in so doing, she also aims to turn the mental capacities on which metaphysical thinking depends from their speculative orientation towards the world as a space of appearances shared by a plurality of persons. The latter aim is only dimly apparent, but apparent it very much is, and affords one passageway between the otherwise territorially bounded first volume, 'Thinking,' and the unwritten third volume, 'Judging.' In the final sentence of her discussion of judging in *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy,* for instance, Arendt emphasizes, though does not explain, the simile in her example of an example: "Achilles is *like* courage."[102]

The source of both speculative thinking and 'thinking the particular,' Arendt therefore implies, is related to our capacity for metaphor. In both cases, what she has in mind are not horizontal metaphors by which one meaning is identified with another, as in 'Juliet is the sun,' nor synecdoche metaphors in which a part stands in for a whole, as when Rahel Varnhagen's loss of a common world is revealed by her unused

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quality. And this disclosing quality, of course, always has an historical background" (Kohn, *Thinking Without a Bannister: Essays in Understanding 1953-1975*, 461.)

[100] Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind* (London: Harcourt, 1977), 166.

[101] Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 166.

[102] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 77. Arendt generally uses metaphor and simile interchangeably. The latter, we may assume, simply makes linguistically explicit the former.

tea set.[103] It is rather the ability to 'carry-over' (*meta-pharein*) the sensible into the intellectual, the apparent into the inapparent, or the particular into the general.[104] In the case of speculative thinking, which like all thinking requires what Kant called 'hypotyposis,' or the presentation of intuitions for its concepts,[105] this carrying-over takes the form of analogy, as in A is to B as C is to D: blueprints are to fabricated things as forms are to appearances (Plato);[106] a hand-mill is to grain as the despotic state is to its subjects (Kant);[107] the last breath is to the body as the soul is to life.[108] In the Kant's articulation, analogies are constructed by "applying the rule of reflection on an intuition [*e.g.,* the relation of a hand mill to grain] to an entirely different object [state to its subjects]."[109] Where Kant's critical thought appreciates the strictly symbolical relation between the two realms,[110] dogmatic metaphysics of the kind expressed in the Platonic example supposes that some hidden unity inheres across them the principle for which is provided, recursively and absolutely, by the rule in its Idealized form.

By aligning examples with schemata in her seminar on the imagination, however, Arendt makes an important shift *away* from metaphor, with profound consequences for how we understand the language of judgment.[111] Its alignment implies that the kind of 'hypotyposis' proper to the exemplary is not symbolical, but the *presentation of direct intuitive content* for a concept, as schemata do for concepts.[112] When "our

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[103] Hannah Arendt, *Rahel Varnhagen: The Life of a Jewish Woman* (New York: Harcourt and Brace, 1974), 121. I owe this point to: Roga Rotem, "Female Paranoia and the Detail in Naomi Schor, Beauvior, and Arendt," *American Political Science Association Annual Meeting* (2022).

[104] In holding this view, Arendt can be placed among those that understand metaphor as "the primary, original vehicle of meaning," like Nietzsche, the later Wittgenstein, Heidegger, Gadamer, and more recently, Ricoeur, and Lakoff and Johnson (F.R. Ankersmit, and J.J.A. Mooji, eds. *Metaphor and Knowledge* Kluwer, 1993), 2.).

[105] Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 5:351.

[106] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 225.

[107] Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 5:352.

[108] Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 104.

[109] Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 5:352.

[110] For a helpful discussion, see: A.T. Nuyen, "The Kantian Theory of Metaphor," *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 22, no. 2 (1989).

[111] Nir Ervon has persuasively argued, for instance, that Arendt's discussion of metaphor to bind her to the very solitary self her writings were intended to overcome (Evron, "Hannah Arendt, Thinking, Metaphor.") But if her discussion of metaphor is rather *preparatory* for a return of the problem of how particular and general relate in language in her third volume on judgment, then *exemplarity* would present a path into the first-person-plural voice of judgment.

[112] Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 5:352. This passage is interpretatively challenging, both with respect to Kant's intended meaning and Arendt's reading of it. Kant says that all concepts need intuitions to demonstrate their reality. Empirical concepts need examples, pure concepts of the understanding need schemata, and ideas of reason need symbols. Yet, in the *Critique of the Pure Reason*, Kant ascribes schemata to empirical concepts as their appropriate forms of intuition (e.g., the schema of 'dog' or 'table'), not examples, and distinguishes empirical schemata from both transcendental schemata, which belong to the categories of the understanding, and schemata of pure sensible concepts, like 'triangle.' Kant's claim in *CPJ* that pure concepts need schemata is therefore consistent with *CPR*, but his claim that *empirical* concepts need examples is not. If we understand the third *Critique* as dealing at least in part with the question of empirical concept formation, we might treat this ambiguity as signalling some implied but hidden continuity between the exemplary and schematic that allows for a movement from the form of indeterminate wholes as given in reflection to their schematic formalization in the imagination. This would not only provide some backing to Arendt's analogy in her seminar on the imagination, but also position examples as primary to schema in the realm of empirical appearances.

thought responds to our need to … understand what is given in the appearing world," Arendt writes, what is needed are examples, "concepts *drawn* from appearances" (my italics).[113] As with analogical metaphors, we "sensually perceive" the connection between image and concept "in its immediacy."[114] Yet in this case, the "rule" revealed by that connection is not transferred outside the particular, but remains tied to it. Examples, then*, are not metaphors*.[115] They do not *represent something else* but *represent themselves* in a singular conjunction of particular and general. Consider the absurdity of reducing the meaning of totalitarianism as it is drawn across the hundreds of pages of *Origins of Totalitarianism* to the symbol of an all-encompassing automated machine — as tempting, and perhaps useful, as such symbolization may sometimes be.[116] The image of an automated machine may allow our mind to grasp certain important features of totalitarianism, but only states like Nazi Germany or North Korea are *exemplary* of it.[117]

This leads us to a pivotal question: just how are concepts *drawn* from appearances? Although Arendt nowhere explicitly discusses how the imagination draws concepts from experiences, I think that a plausible reconstruction can be developed by way of a short detour into one of her sources, Ernest Fenollosa, who's essay 'The Chinese Written Character' Arendt cites in support of her view that concepts are drawn from appearances.[118] Fenollosa describes how the primitive or originary meaning of a Chinese word is given from the association of images displayed in its written character.[119] The written character for 'East,' for instance, pictographically displays the sun (日) behind a tree (木) as presented to a standing person (人): 東. Fenollosa transposes this pictographic presentation into phonetic language by way of what Ezra Pound,

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Arendt's redescription of this passage in her essay 'Truth and Politics' is revealing in this direction. She replaces Kant's 'empirical concepts' with "practical concepts relating to our conduct" as those concepts properly in need of examples. Arendt's substitution of the empirical for the practical – nowhere found in Kant, but of course deliberate in Arendt – suggests her awareness of the very belonging-together of the *is* and *ought* in exemplary appearances, a belonging-together that serves to mark a *distinction* between the exemplary and the purely schematic: while "the imagination produces [schemata of pure concepts] of its own accord," in the case of aesthetic objects "an altogether different field of the imagination [proper to poetry and history] lies open to our use" (Arendt, *Between Past and Future: Six Exercises in Political Thought*, 252.).

[113] Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 103.

[114] Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections* (New York: Schocken, 2007), 13.

[115] There seems to be some conflation of these terms in the literature. See: Aletta Norval, "A Democratic Politics of Acknowledgment: Political Judgment, Imagination, and Exemplarity," *Diacritics* 38, no. 4 (2008), 70.; Linda M.G. Zerilli, *Feminism and the Abyss of Freedom* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020), 107-14.

[116] There is a vast literature on the nature of symbolism and its relevance to morality and politics. See, for example: Heiner Bielefeldt, *Symbolic Representation in Kant's Practical Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).; Adam Westra, *The Typic in Kant's Critique of Practical Reason: Moral Judgment and Symbolic Representation* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2016).; Paul Ricœur, *The Symbolism of Evil* (New York: Beacon Press, 1967).; David M. Rasmussen, *Symbol and Interpretation* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974).; Ajume H. Wingo, *Veil Politics in Liberal Democratic States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

[117] This raises the question of what we might called *thick* and *thin* descriptions. We might say that *Origins* presents a thick description, whereas the concept 'totalitarianism' presents a thin one.

[118] Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 106.

[119] Ernest Fenollosa, "The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry," in *Instigations of Ezra Pound* (Freeport: Libraries Press Inc., 1920), 376.

his translator, called the "ideogrammic method." Call to your imagination particular instances of the following:

Rose	Iron Rust
Cherry	Robin[120]

Juxtaposed alongside one another successively in the imagination,[121] these particulars present a reciprocal unity the meaning of which may not be immediately apparent but on reflection gives itself readily: 'redness.' According to Fenollosa, and *pace* above, redness is not here derived "additively" (or 'compositionally'), but emerges from the "fundamental relation *between*" the particulars (my italics).[122] Or, to use a term Arendt finds in Walter Benjamin (who himself finds it in Baudelaire), from their *correspondances*.[123]

Let us now turn to Arendt's discussion of what she calls "everyday concepts," like 'justice,' 'piety,' or 'happiness,' by way of the "less difficult" concept 'house' in her chapter on Socrates in *The Life of the Mind*.[124] Before Socrates subjected the former group of concepts to philosophical scrutiny by treating them as nouns requiring necessary and sufficient definitions, they functioned perfectly well, Arendt writes, as adjectives attributable to actions through speech.[125] Greek speakers *perceived* justice in the decision and

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[120] Fenollosa originally provides 'flamingo' here. Pound suggests 'robin' as better suited to English readers (Ezra Pound, *Abc of Reading* (London: Faber & Faber, 1934), 22.)

[121] 'Juxtaposed' is Laszlo K. Géfin's, whose *Ideogram: History of a Poetic Method* presents a very helpful overview of the ideogrammic method and its influence on modernist poetry (Laszlo K. Géfin, *Ideogram: History of a Poetic Method* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982). 'Juxtaposition' is also used by Arendt, however, and indeed in a sympathetic fashion: "In order to create a line of thought we must transform the *juxtaposition* in which experiences are given to us into a *succession* of soundless words – the only medium in which we can think – which means we not only de-sense by de-spatialize the original experience" (Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 202.)

[122] Fenollosa, "The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry," 364. "Primitive metaphors do not spring from arbitrary subjective processes. They are possible only because they follow the objective lines of relations in nature herself. Relations are more real and more important than the things they relate. [This kind of metaphor] is no mere analogy; it is the identity of the structure" (377).

[123] "What fascinated [Benjamin] … was that the spirit and its material manifestation [word and thing, idea and experience] were so intimately connected that it seemed permissible to find everywhere Baudelaire's *correspondances,* which clarified and illuminated one another if they were properly correlated so that they would no longer require any interpretive or explanatory comment" (Benjamin, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, 11.)

[124] Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 170.

[125] Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 170. The primacy of adjectival description over nominal definitions coincides with Arendt's view that appearances are actions: what something *is* what it *does*. Arendt's sources in the pertinent sections in *The Life of the Mind* hold a similar view. Fenollosa, for instance, writes that "In all languages, a noun is originally that which does something'" (373); "thing and action are not formally separated" (371); "A true noun, an isolated thing, does not exist in nature. Things are only […] the meeting points of actions. […] Neither is a pure verb, an abstract motion, possible in nature. The eye sees verb and noun as one: things in motion, motion in things" (364); "everywhere in nature the quality [adjective] is only a power of action regarded as having an abstract inherence [in the acting thing]" (374). Similarly, Bruno Snell writes that "the aim of the question [Who is Socrates?] is not subsumption under a class, as in the case of the concrete nouns, but an appreciation of the uniqueness of a person, as a particular realization of human possibilities. This requires

courage in the deed, and plainly understood one another when they used these words in reference to actions in ordinary speech.[126] Between the philosophical drive to critically examine the meaning of words by demanding constative definitions, which according to Arendt Socrates showed cannot in fact be found, and the functional use of those concepts in conventional speech, Arendt's proxy discussion of 'house' suggests a middle path that retains the possibilities of both reflectively renewing the meaning of everyday concepts while retaining the primacy of perception as guide in that reflection. By "reflectively pondering" actual houses …

Mud hut of a tribe	Country home of a city dweller
Palace of a King	Cottage in the village
Apartment in town	(Moveable tent of a nomad)

… we arrive, by Arendt's estimation, at "housing somebody" or "being dwelt in" (meanings circumscribed, if indefinitely, by the externally limiting case of 'moveable tents') and gain, she says, the ability to "make [our] own [house] look better."[127] Understood definitionally, these meanings are of course vague. But as adjectival descriptions of the activity belonging to this (non-exhaustive) collection of particulars perceptually gathered by 'house,' Arendt implies (1) that the meaning of 'house' is drawn not symbolically

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factual experience, and thus an act of comparison. But the features compared are attitudes, fortunes, attributes: abstract qualities rather than concrete details. The nouns which denote these abstractions are formed primarily from verbs and adjectives*"* (Bruno Snell, *The Discovery of the Mind: The Greek Origins of European Thought,* trans. T.G. Rosenmeyer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953), 191-92.) Or, as Emerson put it: "The etymologist finds the deadest word to have been once a brilliant picture. Language is fossil poetry" (Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The Essential Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. Brooks Atkinson (Random House, 2009), 296.).

[126] Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 170.

[127] Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 170-71. Arendt's discussion here approximates Wittgenstein's notion of "family resemblances: "Consider the proceedings that we call 'games.' I mean board-games, card-games, ballgames, Olympic games, and so on. What is common to them all? — Don't say: There must be something common, or they would not be called 'games' — but look and see whether there is anything common to all. […] The result of this examination is: we see a complicated network of similarities overlapping and crisscrossing: sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of detail" (Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations,* trans. G.E.M Anscombe (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1968), 66.). Yet if Arendt and Wittgenstein seem to overlap here, the overall compatibility of their views requires a more sustained discussion. Arendt took Wittgenstein's aphoristic style as indicative of an unwillingness to "think a matter through," for example — a criticism that seems to bear on at least two other points of divergence. Arendt believed that the meaning of words is revealed through the 'original' experiences frozen within them, which can be revealed through etymology and historical reflection. (It is no coincidence that Arendt's ideogrammic reflection on 'house' produces a meaning consistent with the old English *hus*, which means 'dwelling, shelter, building designed for residence'). And she suggests that the outcome of thinking is not the therapeutic dissolution of philosophical perplexities into ordinary language, but "the construction of ideal-types," or exempla (Arendt, *Denktagebuch: 1950 Bis 1973*, 770-71.; for a discussion of Arendt's critical attitude to Weberian ideal types, see: Peter Baehr, "Personal Dilemma or Intellectual Influence? The Relationship between Hannah Arendt and Max Weber," *Max Weber Studies* 5, no. 1 (2005): 125–30.) When considering these apparent points of divergence, it would of course be worth bearing in mind that Wittgenstein admitted to not being able to write philosophy "in poetic composition" like Plato, which is "what [he] would like to be able to do" (Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value,* trans. Peter Winch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 24e.) And that he expressed admiration for phenomenology, which Arendt, somewhat reluctantly, understood herself as doing. If Wittgenstein's philosophy seems to resolve to the therapeutic—"Don't think but look!"— Arendtian reflective judgment rather says: "Look *and think*!"

but spontaneously ("without further explanation") from their perceived reciprocal relation, and (2) that the meaning so drawn is practically inflected: it emerges as a *way of being* housed that may be, or solicits a claim to be, followed. The general shape or meaning of 'house' is drawn, in other words, as an imitable model from the emergent form of the region indicated by an already available concept.[128]

Returning to those 'more difficult everyday concepts' like courage or justice for which Arendt's (ideogrammic) presentation of 'house' was intended as proxy, the implication here is that it is only by "reflectively pondering" examples of courage or justice that we are able to use those concepts meaningfully in speech and act courageously or justly. Arendt called the imagination the "understanding heart," the "only inner compass we have,"[129] and here we get a sense of what that might mean: the imagination perceives *what is* (understanding) in the horizon of *what ought to be* (the heart).[130]

'Reflectively pondering' is an oblique allusion to reflective judgement. Arendt associated the former with meditation as it was understood in medieval philosophy, which in contrast to contemplation is led by *nous* as opposed to *logos*, by perceptual imagination as opposed to discursive reason.[131] And one meaning of 'to ponder' is "to judge by weighing carefully in the mind."[132] Hence, Arendt's introduction of ponderous reflection in the chapter on Socrates not only represents another passageway between the first and unfinished third volumes of *The Life of the Mind*,[133] but also offers insight into how Arendt might have recast the function of exemplarity in the operation of the imagination within judgment as the linguistically generative apprehension of correspondences on the level of the *experience of meaning.*[134] This recasting

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[128] Arendt seems to have appropriated Kant's nuanced typology of example-following, ranging from subservient 'mannerism' to free and creative 'emulation' (*Nachfolge*), to describe the moral domain after the collapse of tradition (Cf.: Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Penguin Books, 1990), 191-204.) In contrast to determination or rule application, example-following respects (to different degrees) the boundary between thought and action. I discuss this typology in chapter three.

[129] Arendt, Essays in Understanding, 1930-1954: Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism, 322.

[130] Arendt suggests that although Socrates himself may have held this view (the opinion of his then main interpreter, Gregory Vlastos), he did not articulate just how thinking and acting relate to one another. As we will see in the next chapter, Arendt's turn to aesthetic judging involves an explanation of that relation in the form of mimetic orientations to the exemplary.

[131] This is not to say that discursive reason is excluded from judging. It means that discursive reason is in the service of, and guided by, the meaning-making of the imagination. Arendt quotes Wordsworth, that the imagination "is reason in its most exalted mood" (Arendt, *Essays in Understanding, 1930-1954: Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism*, 323.)

[132] "Ponder (V.)." accessed July 9, 2022, https://www.etymonline.com/word/ponder.

[133] The passage in which Arendt introduces ponderous reflection and suggests its action-guiding capacity ends abruptly and is separated from the next by a double paragraph break, a formatting device suggestive of a shift in a path of thought. The ensuing discussion drops the question of how judgments of actions can guide further actions and takes up instead Socrates in his 'Stingray' persona as an entry-point for considering the (negative) moral outcome of thinking as an action-stopping internal dialogue. As her essay 'Some Questions of Moral Philosophy' makes clear, however, Arendt was not satisfied with this strictly negative outcome, and seeks to offer a response to judging as action-guiding in her appeal to the exemplary.

[134] Arendt seems to come close to Gadamer's view of language here. For Gadamer, "the character of language is the event [of] concept formation;" "what originally constituted the basis of the life of language and its logical productivity [is] the spontaneous and inventive seeking out of similarities by means of which it is possible to order things;" "meanings

places doubt on the suitedness of metaphor for understanding the nature of language in reflective judgment: examples are not the products of a carrying-over of the sensible into the intellectual, but an imaginative perception of their immediate belonging-together. When we want to know what a word means, we neither attempt an abstract definition nor look to how it is used, at least not as the end of our pursuits, but look to the exemplary experiences and events to which they refer and from which they emerged.[135]

We saw above that schematizing without a concept, as the imagination's response to exemplary particulars, puts one in a position to find or coin a concept. So far, this has pertained to everyday concepts already available in common language like 'house' or 'justice.' It may therefore seem we would be better served by looking at a case where coinage is more clearly in effect, as in Arendt's discovery of the phrase "banality of evil." While this does indeed seem to present a special case,[136] it is worth pointing out that reflective judgments that disclose the meaning of commonly available concepts like 'house' and 'justice' are closer to coining a new concept than to the application of determinative rules. In an entry to her *Denktagebuch* entitled 'Metaphor and Truth' (1950) for instance, Arendt writes

> nothing reveals the curious ambiguity of language […] clearer than metaphor. I have for example used the metaphor 'my heart opens' my entire life without ever having experienced the physical sensation that goes with it. Only since I've known the physical sensation have I known how often I've lied, the way young men lie unsuspectingly when they say to girls: I love you. – But how had I ever experienced the truth of the physical sensation if language with its metaphor hadn't already given me an inkling of the significance of the process?[137]

That a concept is already in use does not mean that it is understood in a 'full' sense by its users. But it is the ambiguity between inherited words as *metaphorically* indicating a region of experience and their availability to, and reflective fulfilment by, *exemplary* events that Arendt suggests is the general and

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are like a space in which things are related to one another;" "the general concept meant by a word is enriched by any given perception of a thing, so that what emerges is a new, more specific word formation which does more justice to the particularity of the act of perception" (Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method,* trans. Joel Weinsheimer, and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 449.) The section from which these passages are taken is well-underlined in Arendt's copy of *Truth and Method*.

[135] Here I am suggesting that Arendt's view of meaning can be differentiated from both a descriptivist semantic theory, where a concept's meaning is identical to the definitional descriptions associated with it (such that once one has a definition, they can pick out objects that satisfy it), and from a use-theory of meaning, where what a word means is how it used by competent speakers. Arendt's implied criticisms of each depends on her view of reflective judgment as both denotive *and* disclosive of meaning. On the one hand, she takes Socrates and his heirs to have shown that thinking undermines apparent definitional stability. Yet, she does not think that denying descriptivism leads to a functional theory of meaning, since thinking in the reflective modality I am sketching endows language with meaning by pondering the indeterminate wholeness of exemplary meaning.

[136] I pass over comparably straightforward instances where an exemplary concept is coined from a proper name, like 'Bonapartism' or 'Trumpism.'

[137] Arendt, *Denktagebuch: 1950 Bis 1973*, 46.

positive position of judging after the break with tradition.[138] Unmoored from traditional and ideological systems of evaluation, inherited language presents itself freely in "fragments," its words discoverable anew as "rich and strange pearls."[139] To suddenly find the phrase 'my heart opens' fulfilled by a previously unknown feeling is not so different from encountering an exemplary house or act of courage that shifts one's conventional understanding of what it means to be housed or to act courageously. In each case, the coincidence of a new image with an old concept is experienced not in the mode of determination, but in the mode of (re)discovery. To discover the meaning of a word is to find it "dissolved into its original context," that is, into the original experiences from whence it arose, and it is through such (re)discovery that the empty talk of unintended lying and cliché are mitigated, meanings otherwise frozen in inherited words experienced anew, and their boundaries drawn and redrawn.[140]

When seen from this perspective, 'banality of evil' does not, after all, seem altogether different. 'Banality' and 'evil' were hardly new when Arendt dared to join them. But where 'my heart opens' was inherited as a kind of folk wisdom that mapped a distinctive experiential possibility, 'banality of evil' struck Arendt's imagination "willy-nilly" in response to an appearance that seemed to defy conventional understanding.[141] Recalling my earlier discussion of parts and wholes, regions and elements, we might say that a range of appearing parts of Eichmann's public person were reflectively discovered as suited to the everyday concept 'banality,' like his use of clichés or unabashed careerism, whereas another range of parts were reflectively discovered as suited to evil— the monstrosity of his deeds. The satisfaction of the impulse to coin a new word lay in the apprehension that, as appearing in the same whole or person, *this* everyday concept 'must' be *internally* related to *that* everyday concept in a singular and necessary way even when they seem, by dint of conventional meanings, incompatible. Put otherwise, when the freely reflected intuitable 'marks' of the concept 'banality' as apprehended in Eichmann's manner and content of speech were overlain by the freely reflected intuited marks of the concept 'evil' as apprehended by his extensively documented role in orchestrating the holocaust, there spontaneously appeared to Arendt's imagination a

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[138] I use 'metaphorical indication' to suggest a connection between Arendtian inherited concepts and the Husserlian and early Heideggerian notion of formal indication (*Formal Anzeige*) to describe intuitively unfulfilled concepts as yielding an "indeterminately determinate" region for phenomenological exploration (Cf. Martin Heidegger, *Towards the Definition of Philosophy* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2008), 14.). Arendt describes unfulfilled inherited concepts as in a "frozen" state. The view I am suggesting is that the metaphorical experience of their meaning is just to "dissolve" them into their "original context," *viz.* the experiences from whence they emerge (Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 104.). Hence Arendt's appeals to etymology. This idea is also found in Fenellosa: "The whole delicate substance of speech is built upon the substrata of metaphor. […] Abstract terms, pressed by etymology, reveal their ancient roots still embedded in direct action" (Fenollosa, "The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry," 377.)

[139] Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 212.

[140] I take this as providing an internal explanation as to why concepts in reflection can be called "elastic," as Zerilli following Joseph Tinguely does: "A concrete example does not simply give specificity to the general concept but actually expands it. […] Concepts are employed in relation to intuitions and reshaped to take account of the vast variety of empirical experiences that could be counted as falling under the concept" (Zerilli, "Toward a Democratic Theory of Judgment," 202.)

[141] Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 5.

conjunction of common words that, together, mapped the general contours of the region singularly revealed by his appearing in public.[142] In their mutual inflection, 'banality' and 'evil' are hence redrawn: the former sheds its strict association with the amoral, the latter its strict association with ill-will. *Look how these parts hang-together—Banal evil is like that.*[143]

Although the products of Arendt's ponderous reflections on Eichmann – the book that is *Eichmann in Jerusalem* and the notion of banality of evil that circumscribes much of it – did not persuade many of her fellow spectators and remains contested to this day, the concept she drew from his appearance on the world-stage has nevertheless left an enduring imprint on "the backs of the minds" of many who happen across it.[144] And this not only because it makes a reasonable portrait of the reciprocal unity of the parts as they were presented at face value during the trial, as it were, but also because it has persuaded our collective attention to the potential for evil in situations in which the task of judging is so easily deferred into ideology or platitudes. More to my point, however, Arendt's reflections on Eichmann also serve to typify that far end of the spectrum of concept discovery in which an appearance calls forward a novel arrangement of available concepts that together map or "unify" a region that seems to singularly defy precedent. Arendt was skeptical about orienting to current events by appealing to precedent, but she did not for this think the past was absent in judging. After the break with tradition, "language remains," which is it to say that the realm of experiences indicated by inherited words remain open for meaningful rediscovery.[145] Hence, just as the rediscovery of already available everyday concepts cannot be reduced to rule application or repetition of the same, since meaning in each case is revealed anew, nor can the discovery of new concepts be reduced to invention *ex nihilo,* since the creativity of the imagination remains limited by both the indeterminate form or region of a given event and by available words.[146] Whether its product is a journalistic report or a

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[142] While much of the phrasing in this passage borrows from the above discussion of Kant, the 'overlapping' metaphor came to me initially from Jan Zwicky, which she drew from Wittgenstein (Jan Zwicky, *Wisdom & Metaphor* (Kentville: Gaspareau Press, 2008), Left 24.)

[143] I may seem to be begging a question concerning complexity, or at least of reducing it. While my description follows Arendt's own condensation of her report on Eichmann to two dominant contours, there is of course more that can be said not only about Eichmann *in concreto*, as Arendt's densely woven text and the expanding record continues to show, but also, and more theoretically, concerning the relationship between narrative complexity and its condensation into a narrow range of concepts that purport to capture the 'gist' of their meaning, 'as in a nutshell.'

[144] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 83.

[145] Arendt responds with this phrase to a question posed to her by Günter Gauss in his 1964 interview for *Zur Person*: "When you come to Europe, what, in your impression, remains and what is irretrievably lost?" Although directed to her own personal experiences, for reasons mentioned above we can take Arendt's response as intended more generally (Hannah Arendt, *Hannah Arendt: The Last Interview: And Other Conversations* (Brooklyn: Melville House, 2013), 27.)

[146] For Arendt, the productive and reproductive imaginations are entangled: "In the *Critique of Judgment*, Kant sometimes calls [the imagination] 'reproductive' – I represent what I have seen – to distinguish it from the 'productive' faculty – the artistic faculty that produces something it has never seen. But productive imagination [genius] is never entirely productive. It produces, for instance, the centaur out of the given: the horse and the man" (Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 79-80.)

fictional narrative, the imagination in each case is neither purely creative nor repetitive, but both at once. It is re-productive.[147] [148]

VI. EXEMPLARY *RES PUBLICA*

Having addressed (one aspect of) the nature of language in reflective judgment ('coming to terms with'), let us now turn to the second gap identified in Ginsborg and Gorodeisky's aesthetic accounts of 'schematizing without a concept' between practical and political normativity. That the white rhombus of afternoon light in Adolf Menzel's *Das Balkonzimmer* appeared singularly and irreplaceably part of the painting as a whole remained in Gorodeisky's account unmoored from the world in and through which its beauty radiates. While this omission wasn't necessary, since ordinary things like balcony windows or peasant shoes can indeed radiate worlds,[149] it would have been more difficult to sustain had we considered

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[147] If meaningful historical reports are more than the mere conveyance of facts, fictional narratives are less than invention *ex nihilo.* Consider Arendt's interpretation of Kafka, a writer whose inventiveness, and thus productive imagination, can hardly be disputed: it introduced, after all, its own adjective: 'Kafkaesque'. The source of Kafka's inventiveness, Arendt writes, was neither "daydreaming" nor "wishful thinking," but the "free construction" of "models" or "blueprints" from the "raw material" of experience (Arendt, *Essays in Understanding, 1930-1954: Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism*, 77.). His stories are "products of thinking" that, as Arendt cites Kant, "create another nature from out of the material that actual nature gives it" (77). Kafka's short story 'A Common Confusion,' for instance, weaves together "all the essential factors involved in the human failure to carry out an appointment," like overzealousness, misconcentration on details, or the "typical mischievous tricks by which objects and circumstances conspire to make such failures final" (78) As a fictional story, it of course abandons explicit reference to the actual experiences it represents: the event as a whole did not actually happen. But as a story, it satisfies as a meaningful model insofar as it is constructed by the selection and arrangement of the "essential factors" of shared experiences, just as Arendt selected and arranged the essential factors of Eichmann's person in Eichmann in Jerusalem. From this perspective, a view of narrative takes shape: narratives hang upon the revelatory density of exemplary experiences, and it is for this reason that stories for Arendt condense into nutshell incidents that "expose the naked structure of events" (77). Fiction would thus not constitute a separate aesthetic sphere but would remain not only continuous with but also amplifying of the world it emerges from. Thus can "science fiction," as Arendt writes at the beginning of *The Human Condition,* "be a *vehicle* of mass sentiments and desires" (Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2.); and the story of Anton Schmidt, a German soldier who sacrificed his life to help Jewish partisans, appeared in the courtroom of Adolf Eichmann' trial "like a sudden burst of light in the midst of impenetrable, unfathomable darkness": "[t]he lesson of such stories is simple and within everybody's grasp. Politically speaking, it is that under conditions of terror most people will comply, but some people will not, just as the lesson of the countries in which the Final Solution was proposed is that 'it could happen' in most places but it did not happen everywhere. Humanly speaking, no more is required, and no more can reasonably be asked, for this planet to remain a place fit for human habitation" (Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, 230.). I am here speaking of the flash of insight that keeps the fact of freedom alive in the imagination – that, yes, even there, one could *do otherwise.*

[148] A purely *re*productive imagination is one bound to repeat the same, and thus to identity, and thus to the stagnation of Being. A purely productive imagination is one bound to creation *ex nihilo*, thus to differentiation and difference, to change and becoming. If we treat the *re-productive* imagination as an acknowledgment that no creativity for finite humans is without precedent, and therefore as a balancing of its two component parts, then we make a step outside identity/difference polemics discussed in the introduction. But if we try also to think of the re-productive imagination as responding to the space of plurality, we discover there the democratic potentialities of the imagination. The arguments in the next section are designed specially to point in the direction of these potentialities.

[149] The private space illuminated by sunlight in *Das Balkonzimmer* evokes, with a quiet immediacy, a host of thoughts and feelings that reach beyond its time and place: the restorative tranquility and oppressive stillness of home; its exposure to the cycle of the sun and to the public spaces on the street; its mirrored self-awareness and curated preparedness for the world outside. In its stillness, light itself renders the apartment visible, shareable—publicity bathing privacy.

a work more obviously political. John Trumbull's *Declaration of Independence,* for instance, may be beautiful in Gorodeisky's sense, but the scope and tenor of its radiance also owes to the fact that it commemorates the birth of a democratic nation. In its presence, spectators may be drawn into a sense of inheritance and responsibility for the fragile world it depicts. In this section, I would like to explore the publicness of this claim as belonging not only to recognizably political events or works of art, but to the "essence" of exemplarity itself. The normativity of exemplary appearances is primitive not merely because it facilitates practical coping without rules but also,[150] and more fundamentally, because it reveals the sharedness of the world in which such coping has meaning.

In an entry to her *Denktagebuch* entitled 'the plurality of languages', Arendt discusses objects in a way that suggests an original sharedness belonging to their essence:

> By the fact that the object [*Gegenstand*], which is there for the supporting presentation of things, can be called both Tisch and "table," it is indicated that something of the true essence [*Wesen*] of what we have made and named [*benannten*] eludes [*entgeht*] us […]
>
> [The] fluctuating ambiguity [*schwankende Vieldeutigkeit*] of the world and the uncertainty of the human being in it would not exist, of course, if there were not the possibility of the learnability of a foreign language, which proves to us that there are other "counterparts" [*Entsprechungen*] to the common-identical world than ours, or if there were only one language. Hence the nonsense of a world language – against the human condition, the artfully violent unification of the ambiguous.[151]

In one sense, this passage corroborates what has been said thus far. Recall that by apprehending objects (*Gegenstand*) the 'operation of the imagination' designates (*bezeichnen*) their givenness and presents them to reflection as an indeterminate whole. The 'operation of reflection' then responds to this indeterminate whole by perspectivally surveying its reciprocally unified (correspondent)[152] parts through process of naming (*benannten*).[153] But this passage also goes further than what has been said thus far, and in two ways. First, it defines that which is given to the imagination as an 'essence' that both supports and eludes whatever correspondences words serve to map. And second, it suggests that the supporting-eluding quality of essences is not merely compatible with the actual plurality of languages but is a condition of possibility for plurality as such.

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[150] The idea that exemplarity makes practical coping without rules possible dovetails into virtue-ethical accounts of exemplarity. See Appendix I for a comparative discussion of Jonathan Lear's virtue-ethical account.

[151] Arendt, *Denktagebuch: 1950 Bis 1973*, 42.

[152] According to Thomas Wild, a possible translation of 'counterpart' (*Entsprechungen*) in this passage is 'correspondence,' and thus can be read as an allusion to Walter Benjamin's notion of correspondence, which Arendt appreciated. (Thomas Wild, "Arendt's Plurality of Languages." (2015): accessed November, 2022, https://hac.bard.edu/amor-mundi/arendts-plurality-of-languages-2015-01-12). I discuss this further in the next chapter.

[153] *Benannten* refers to the process of naming. *Bezeichnen* refers to the designative function of names.

Let's consider these elements more closely. (1) Essences support the manner of appearing of whatever appears, and thus also the naming of what appears.[154] Just as tables physically support other objects in space, the essence of tables supports the names 'table' and 'Tisch' for objects that do that. By analogy, we might also say that the essence (or 'spirit') of a person supports their appearing as a singular who, thus also their proper name which selects that singularity. (2) Essences also evade or escape (*entgeht*) meaning, not as a thing-in-itself beyond meaning, but as the excess of a particular meaning. Arendt suggests as much in her claims that only "something of the true essence evades," and that there are "other correspondences" beyond a given meaning. The word 'elude' is also revealing, since what eludes is beyond what is captured, not beyond capturability as such. And her protest that a single world language would be "nonsense" only makes sense if the objectivity of objects is not simply excessive of this or that particular meaning, but of any single (set of) meaning(s) whatever, without for that being outside the field of meaning altogether. Given (1) and (2), the essence of objects (3) must also provide both the content of, and common point of reference for, plural meanings such that those meanings are both relatable to one another yet always limited with respect to the totality of object itself. Strictly speaking, we cannot access such a totality (it is the presumption of totalitarianism that we can). The objectivity of objects must therefore lie in excess of *any* perspective we adopt, provided we take 'excess' not in a transcendent sense (as with the sublime) but in a perspectival sense (as with beauty).[155] The relation that obtains between different meanings with common referents is not therefore that of equivalence, as if 'table' and 'Tisch' were of 'equal validity' (*Gleichgültigkeit/indifference*) and could be substituted without remainder. It is rather, Arendt says, that of *learning*. This implies, (4), that words referring to the same object disclose separate meanings that overlap in the object such that to learn a new word that refers to the same thing is to gain insight into a novel correspondence of an otherwise familiar object's reciprocally related parts.[156] We see it like this, and like that.[157]

We can now see why reflective objects yield publicity at the level of their givenness. If their essence simultaneously supports and eludes every perspective, this fluctuation must belong to the way they appear.

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[154] I have here appropriate Arendt's 'support,' which she uses to describe what *tables do*, as a metaphor for what *essences do*.

[155] It is worth noting that perspectival excess may lead to transcendent excess, as when we are led to imagine all possible perspectives in the form of universal humanity—everyone that was, is, and will be. I am indebted to Richard Polt's presentation of Heidegger's notion of Being as unconcealing/concealing for this argument: Richard Polt, "Meaning, Excess, Event," *Gatherings: The Heidegger Circle Annual* 1 (2011): 26–53.

[156] 'Table' comes from the Latin *tabula*, which referred to a board or slab used for inscription or games, while *Tisch* evolved from the Greek *Diskos*, meaning plate (from whence 'desk').

[157] In a manner resembling what Wittgenstein calls aspect dawning (Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E.M Anscombe (Wiley-Blackwell, 1968), 202–7.) The movement of reflection across perspectivally available aspects also explains the curious cohabitation of truth and error in our experience of the beautiful. As Elaine Scarry puts it, "the beautiful person or thing incites in us a longing for truth because it provides by its compelling discernability an introduction (perhaps even our first introduction) to the state of certainty yet itself does not satiate our desire for certainty since beauty, sooner or later, brings us into our own capacity for making errors" (Scarry, *On Beauty and Being Just*, 31.).

Imagination apprehends this ambiguity as an invitation to judgment: something is given, though never all of it. That exemplary objects invite perspectival convergence attests neither to epistemic fixity nor merely to common availability, but to the way their appearance opens to, and makes possible, plural perspectives. Publicity thus arises in the *renewability* of a common appearance, in the fact that it *gives and gives again*. The world thus appears "common-identical" not because it yields an identity that can be possessed by many (appearances do not "belong to more than one" (*pluralis*) in the manner of ownership), but because its appearances give something around which the many become plural. Beneath the common-identity of the world is an originary sharing: a condition of being *ever more than one*. [158]

This is why, I take it, Arendt sometimes chose to represent events like totalitarianism as crystals.[159] Naturally occurring crystals present singular forms the complexity of which seem to defy complete adumbration. What may seem a uniform plane from afar may reveal itself as a lattice of variably intersecting planes when up close. Viewed from one angle, a crystal's outer contours trace a path different than when viewed from another. Yet the crystal metaphor remains limited in an important respect. As stated, it may imply that the meaning of reflective objects is derived from their self-relation, and thus separable from their subterranean environments. But Arendt described sources of meaning as region-illuminating incidents. As I have been suggesting, the objectivity (*Gegenstand*) of an action must be inter-related with the region (*Gegen*) of the world within which it appears because only in this way can it reveal shared meaning and retain itself against both world-mastery and subservience. The meaningfulness of a reflective object, then, cannot come exclusively from the internal coherence of their parts, but from the way that coherence refractively illuminates the surrounding web of relations that make it possible—like beacons of light revealing the contours of a darkened cave in which spectators are trying to find their way.[160] Eichmann's actions not only illuminated *who* he was but also the event that staged him. And we care about the meaning of his appearance not for biographical curiosity but because the regions his actions illuminated remain within the world we ourselves have inherited. This is how there can be a "lesson" of Eichmann at all.[161]

Since Plato, beauty has been understood as an excess, a *thatness* that exceeds conceptual capture while also grounding, guiding, and radiating through it.[162] The exemplary, I have suggested, is the modality

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[158] That the object of reflection yields a plurality of possible meanings helps us to understand the connection Kant and Arendt make between reflection and taste as a "community sense": "taste is the community sense, and sense means here the *effect* of reflection on the mind" (Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 71.) As responsive to reflective objects whose aspects exceed conceptual closure, the operation of reflection invites the community sense. The community sense, in other words, corresponds to the publicity of exemplary appearances.

[159] "Elements become origins if and when they suddenly crystallize into a fixed and definite form" (Arendt, *Essays in Understanding, 1930-1954: Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism*, 325).

[160] Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*, ix.

[161] Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 288.

[162] For general phenomenological discussion, see: Robert Bernasconi, "The Good and the Beautiful," in *Phenomenology in Practice and Theory: Essays for Herbert Spiegelberg* (Martinus Nijhoff, 1987).

of the beautiful fit for the public horizon of action insofar as it represents a conjunction of the *is* and the *ought* in an originary way. We might say, then, that exemplary objects do not just *oscillate* between plural meanings but *radiate the possibility of public meaning as such*. In the presence of the exemplary, we are struck by the object's indeterminate essence bursting through and exceeding its indeterminately unified contours like a star—to quote Rilke.[163] It is this radiance of an object's aspectual excess that promotes appreciation of its availability to different perspectives, and thus also the perspective-taking operation of reflection.[164] It is also because of this radiance that the exemplary is experienced as an encounter, an emergence of the new that makes a claim to endure "in the backs of our minds" as "guideposts" that we may return to, again and again.[165] Thus, while on Arendt's account objects in general are properly *res publica*, we might say that the very publicity of the *res publica* is experientially *actuated* or *opened* when those objects radiate the region in which they take place as originary examples; when they announce, by their very manner of appearing, *this* is how the world *should* look. The normativity of the appearance of the exemplary is thus not merely primitive, but *politically originary*. It makes a claim to endure in the world as an example to be followed not only on spectator's practical coping, but on the space of appearances that it singularly opens and gives it shareable meaning.

This dynamic – where the exemplary neither fixes meaning nor dissolves into formlessness but sustains the movement of perspectives – is precisely what makes it a *res publica*. Its vividness secures it in the public memory; its openness keeps it alive to contestation, reframing, and renewal. Such appearances do not end with the moment of their occurrence but remain as public touchstones, continually summoning us to see with more than our own eyes. Consider the photograph of the lone man halting a column of tanks in Beijing's Tiananmen Square in 1989. At one level, the scene is determinate: a single figure, unarmed,

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[163] Rilke's 'Archaic Torso of Apollo' is difficult to resist here: "Otherwise the stone would stand deformed and curt / under the shoulders' diaphanous plunge, / and would not glisten like some wild beast's fur; / and not burst from all its contours / like a star: for there is no place that does not see you. / You must change your life" (trans. Jan Zwicky). For Arendt, it is not one's life that is solicited to change, but *the world.* See below.

[164] I wish to link this articulation of exempla as *res publica* to link to the civic humanist tradition, as initially suggested in my introduction and in footnote 54 in this chapter. Recall, *exemplum* involved an "act of witnessing" that "demands a response" "here and now." To this we may now add the notion of *paradiastole*, the rhetorical technique of redescription, the possibility of which presupposes the plurality of aspects of any common object. As James Tully condenses the idea, "*Paradiastole* (the possibility and power of redescription) is based on two features of reality. Human knowing is situated, perspectival, and thus partial. Human activity is *aspectival*. Any disclosure of description of it from a situated standpoint reveals some aspects of the activity in question while also concealing other aspects. This is the realism of civic humanism" (Dimitrios Karmis and Jocelyn Maclure, *Civic Freedom in an Age of Diversity: The Public Philosophy of James Tully* (McGill-Queens University Press, 2023), 465.). One might also here acknowledge the link to Wittgenstein's notion of "aspect dawning" and gestalt shifting, of which Tully and Linda Zerilli have both made use (Cf.: Zerilli, *A Democratic Theory of Judgment*, 252-54.)

[165] Arendt uses "guidepost" in a semantic sense in the passage from 'Action and the Pursuit of Happiness' quoted in section one, and in a broadly moral sense in 'Some Questions of Moral Philosophy' (Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, 144.) That the exemplary endures in the backs of our minds is indicated by her citing of Jefferson: a "lively and lasting sense of filial duty is more effectually impressed on a son or daughter by reading *King Lear,* than by all the dry volumes of ethics and divinity that ever were written" (Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, 143.)

intercepting the advance of military force. Yet the image's enduring hold lies in its indeterminacy—in the way it prompts us to imagine the moment from other vantage points. To take it up as exemplary is to circulate among these perspectives: the driver peering from the tank's hatch, the bystanders at the square's edge, the man himself watching the armored line approach. Each shift alters the meaning of the moment, revealing that its exemplary power does not reside in a fixed moral inscription but in the sustained interplay between its clarity and its openness. The photograph thus becomes more than a record of resistance; it is a living appearance in the shared world, one that enjoins our imagination into plurality and keeps the free play of judgment alive across time and distance.

Conclusion

I began by noting that if examples are both grounding of and grounded by judgment, a problem of circularity arises that seems to threaten a regress of grounds. I have traced a path through Arendt's writings to show that exemplary objects interrupt this regress. Their indeterminate givenness provides a shared place that sustains reflection as the primary orientation of its movement. The public worth of such appearances depends not only on their internal coherence but on their regionally *disclosive power*, their ability to cohere correspondences that belong within the region illuminated by an exemplary incident. This disclosure is normative in the originary sense of supplying possibilities of action that spectators may follow, whether or however they do follow. As appearing within the horizon of lawfulness, to speak with Kant, exemplary particulars reveal action-guiding generalities "that otherwise cannot be defined" without losing their particularity. Hence, they resolve the dilemma of circularity not by providing an Archimedean standpoint outside judgment, but by marking the initiating moment of a normative claim on the imagination that reflection may turn and return, again and again. As Arendt puts it, judgment "never tires of vicious circles" because it "trusts that imagination will eventually catch at least a glimpse of the always frightening light of truth."[166]

Puzzles, however, remain. If exemplary givenness represents an 'objective' response to the problem of normative regress in judgment, consideration of still more of its aspects is needed. In the next chapter, I turn to the subjective axis of judgment to address the pivotal question of what we *do* with examples once they are given. It is not enough *that* they are given, nor that we find words to map them. We must somehow respond to that givenness with freedom and responsibility. It is to these questions I now turn.

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[166] Arendt, *Essays in Understanding, 1930-1954: Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism*, 322. I have adapted this quote from Arendt's relatively early 'Understanding and Politics' (1950) to refer to judgment and not, as Arendt originally wrote, "true understanding." This essay is often and rightly taken as an early articulation of her views on judgment.

CHAPTER THREE
THE COMPANY WE CHOOSE

The misery of mortals is their blindness toward their own daimon.[1]

I do believe that thinking has some influence on action, […] because it is the same ego that thinks and the same ego that acts.[2]

Give me a list of names in your life, and I will tell you who you are.[3]

In the previous chapter, I argued that exemplary appearances are world-opening *res publica* that carry an original claim to endure in the public region that they singularly open or illuminate. An articulation of the objectivity of this claim was needed as an initial step towards protecting the standards of judgment from normative regress and establish their roots in the shared world. But Arendt not only associated the exemplary with the reflective perception of meaning, which I traced to *exemplum*, but also with a subjective selection or choice, which she traced to *eximinere* (examples are particulars "that one judges to be the best possible and take [...] as the example of how [all similar particulars] should be"),[4] as well as with a kind of intersubjective validity that she called, with Kant, 'exemplary validity' (the validity of a judgment is "restricted to those who possess the experience" of its guiding examples).[5] We are indeed in need of an elaboration in just these directions, for *that* an appearance is given as a possible guide for judging does not yet tell us *why* one should choose it to serve as one, nor *how* one may be guided by it if they do. Nor does it tell us how they may function in world-building projects between diversely situated persons who may not only carry different examples 'in the backs of their minds,' but also hold different meanings in those they do share.

My aim in this chapter is to explore the first two of these questions in relative isolation from the objective and intersubjective axes of judgment. As with the previous chapter, this isolation is principally methodological. Although the elements that appear through it gravitate toward 'the subjectivity of the

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[1] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 193.
[2] Hannah Arendt, *Thinking Without a Bannister: Essays in Understanding 1953-1975*, ed. Jerome Kohn (Schocken, 2018), 445.
[3] Auden, *Secondary Worlds*, 123.
[4] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 77.
[5] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 84–85.

subject' or 'ego,' to use Arendt's language above, they cannot for this be severed from the objective or intersubjective axes for, as I intend to show, selecting examples as 'best' is but an extension of our responsiveness to exemplary givenness constitutive of personal responsibility, as well an orientation towards, and indeterminate preparation for, acting in the world in possible concert with others. By focusing on Arendt's suggestions that examples serve as post-traditional and self-selected standards for judgment, then, we bring into view a modality of subjectivity, viz., *personhood,* that is essentially mediative of perceived and possible actions, and resides between a fragmented past and unknowable future in the enlarged horizons of the present.

Since a core impetus for Arendt's turn to judgment was to clarify the connection between personhood and responsibility (i.e., a sense of justice; *amour mundi*), the subjective axis of judgment must also define its freedom.[6] Arendt maintained something of the Kantian view that judgment must not only be free in the negative sense of free from coercion or external influence, but also in the positive sense of self-legislation. Yet the concept of autonomy into which these freedoms have often been grouped is overly weighted by a sovereigntist picture of agency that is both phenomenologically misleading and politically dangerous. Misleading, because autonomy has traditionally relied upon unsustainable divisions between the rational from the sensible and self from other, and dangerous because these divisions invite a determinative use of judgment that threatens the dignity of persons in their irreplaceable particularity. I would therefore like to propose an alternative word, which Kant himself also uses, to describe the freedom of reflective judgment, namely, *heautonomy.*[7] The merit of this term stems from the inclusion of the Greek article *he*, which serves to qualify the pronoun *auto* as third-personal reflexive. Although *auto* already implies reflexivity*,* it can and often does serve to emphasize or affirm the self, as in 'I myself think he is wrong.' *Heauto,* by contrast, can *only* be used reflexively, as in 'I see myself.'[8] In the context of the normativity of judgment, heautonomy serves to mark not an affirmation of the self's constitution, then, but the reflexivity or circularity of its constitution. In this way, affirmation becomes opinion. The voice of judgment speaks not for all rational beings, each one sovereign unto itself, but in the perspectivally humble and thus also courageous voice of the 'it seems to me (*dokei moi*). In this sense, the freedom of judgment

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[6] "For behind the unwillingness to judge lurks the suspicion that no one is a free agent, and hence the doubt that anyone is responsible or could be expected to answer for what he has done" (Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, 19.).

[7] Kant's use of this term is ambivalent. In the first introduction to *CPJ* it refers to judgments of taste (concerning the beautiful), but in the second introduction refers to reflective judgments in general (concerning empirical nature). In the body of the text, Kant also uses the standard term autonomy for judgments of taste (sections 31 and 32). For discussion of Kant's use, see: Zhengmi Zhouhuang, "Living Freedom: The Heautonomy of the Judgement of Taste," *Kantian Review* 29, no. 1 (2024): 81–102.; Juliet Floyd, "Heautonomy: Kant on Reflective Judgment and Systematicity," in *Kants Ästhetik · Kant's Aesthetics · L'esthétique de Kant*, ed. Herman Parret (DE GRUYTER, 1998).)

[8] These examples are from Juliet Floyd, "The Fact of Judgement: The Kantian Response to the Humean Condition," in *From Kant to Davidson: Philosophy and the Idea of the Transcendental*, Routledge Studies in Twentieth Century Philosophy (Taylor and Francis, 2003), 32.)

does not depend on self-legislation, nor even does it so much "express a self-conception of ourselves as free," to speak with Juliet Floyd.[9] It rather implies a "conception of ourselves as capable of fitting in, with a certain degree of appropriateness, to the empirical world in which, with other human beings, we forward judgments."[10] A freedom, in other words, to belong to the world of shared appearances.

Approaching the subjective dimension of judgment in this way already positions us within longstanding debates surrounding Arendt's writings, most importantly those concerning the relationship between theory and practice and the 'halfway plausible theory of ethics' that she famously projected into the unwritten third volume of *The Life of the Mind*.[11] The issue of theory and practice manifests most clearly in debates concerning whether Arendt advanced two kinds of judging – one deliberative or action-guiding, one historical or action-redemptive – or whether these refer to two aspects of the same activity. Some commentators have understood Arendt's positioning of judgment within the *vita contemplativa* as abandoning a deliberative conception in favor of, at least in one formulation, "consolidating and maintaining the common world of human affairs," as poets and historians do.[12] Others, however, suggest that deliberation and redemption are but two sides of the same activity. As David Marshall has argued, "In the original rhetorical context of *krinein*, out of which Arendt's account [of judgment] evolved, there was no meaningful distinction to be made between making a judgment and acting upon it."[13] The argument presented in the previous chapter – that the imagination in judgment perceives actions and events as exemplary claims to endure in the common world – already places us in this two-aspect view, since in this case what is redeemed is an action-guiding example. By seeking to clarify the contours of this redemption through an account of the subjective dimension of choice, this chapter thus aims to deepen the coherence and importance of the path already underway.

An approach to judgment that centers exemplarity, moreover, also contributes to debates concerning the halfway plausible theory of ethics. If we can suppose that Arendt's theory of judgment would have clarified how judgment is capable of "telling right from wrong," then the development of a non-Archimedean conception of standards would have had to lie at the center of that theory, for telling right from wrong plainly depends on standards of rightness and wrongness.[14] Just how to handle this question,

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[9] Floyd, "The Fact of Judgement: The Kantian Response to the Humean Condition," 32.)

[10] Floyd, "The Fact of Judgement: The Kantian Response to the Humean Condition," 32.)

[11] Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 216.

[12] Vasterling, "Plural Perspectives and Independence: Political and Moral Judgement in Hannah Arendt," 260. See also: Beiner, "Hannah Arendt on Judging," 101.; Richard J. Bernstein, *Philosophical Profiles: Essays in a Pragmatic Mode*, vol. (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 221–37.; Garsten, "The Elusiveness of Arendtian Judgment."; María Pía, "Reflective Judgment as World Disclosure."

[13] (David Marshall, "The Origin and Character of Hannah Arendt's Theory of Judgment," *Political Theory*, no. 3 (2010): 370. See also: Schwartz, *Arendt's Judgment: Freedom, Responsibility, Citizenship*, 179–84.

[14] See chapter one for discussion of the possibility of a non-Archimedean or non-sovereign conception of measures or standards.

however, has also remained divisive. Where agonist interpreters tend to either downplay or ignore Arendt's putatively moral language to describe the outcome of good judgment in favour of rendering its standards publicly contestable, rationalists by contrast tend to embrace that language but find her turn to aesthetics unable to provide the needed resources to satisfy it.[15] Whether we take Arendt to have been misguided in attributing moral powers to judgment or misguided in turning to aesthetics to account for them seems to require the view, in the words of Ursula Ludz, that the search "for details and proposals of how to attain the political morality" that Arendt set for herself remains "in vain."[16] But Arendt's scattered remarks concerning the role of examples in judgment have yet to be elaborated in this direction, and thus remain as so many signposts toward an originary political ethics that moves between the poles of rationalism and agonism. There are indeed standards of rightness, just not principles of reason. And such standards are indeed publicly contestable, just not without better and worst grounds.

The picture of heautonomy that comes into view will be world-oriented, crisis-recursive, and dynamic. It will describe the normative standpoints of persons as encultured through exposure to, and selective affinity with, exemplary persons and events as a private plurality of 'company' in view of their own or others' potential appearing in the world as persons responsible for their words and deeds.[17] It is because judgment is exemplary-guided and action-oriented that the appearance of persons can be both normatively substantive (perform an exemplary vision for how the world should look) and normatively promotive (encourage others to follow their example). And since concerted action entails that plural actors speak with one another about matters of shared concern by their own lights and in their own voice, lest

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[15] Despite differences, the agonistic view is broadly represented in: Linda M. G. Zerilli, *A Democratic Theory of Judgment* (University of Chicago Press, 2016); Dana Villa, "Arendt, Heidegger, and the Tradition," *Social Research* 74, no. 4 (2007): 983–1002; Bonnie Honig, "Arendt, Identity, and Difference," *Political Theory* 16, no. 1 (1988): 77–98. And the rationalist view in: Benhabib, "Judgment and the Moral Foundations of Politics in Arendt's Thought"; Habermas, "Hannah Arendt's Communications Concept of Power."

[16] Ludz, "Arendt's Observations and Thoughts on Ethical Questions," 803.

[17] For an alternative and highly detailed account of the transition from the objectivity of the world to the subjectivity of action through 'internal conversation' and reflection, see: Margaret S. Archer, *Structure, Agency, and the Internal Conversation* (Cambridge University press, 2003). "Only [by demonstrating the interplay between subjectivity and objectivity in internal dialogue] can we properly examine how all agents attempt subjectively, because reflexively, to establish their own personal *modus vivendi* in objective social circumstances which were not of their making or choosing" (16). As Philip Walsh argues, however, Arendt's account of the reflexivity of thinking is opposed to Archer's presumption that reflexivity must be action-oriented or deliberative, since thinking in Arendt's account is useless (Philip Walsh, *Arendt Contra Sociology: Theory, Society and Its Science*, Classical and Contemporary Social Theory (Routledge, 2016), 71–78.). While Walsh suggests that the third volume of *The Life of the Mind* may have clarified outstanding problems in her discussion of the mental activities, like the connection between thinking and willing and their relationship to acting, he does not pursue judging in this context. This chapter attempts to resolve these questions through judging. It retains Walsh's emphasis on uselessness but without giving up the action-oriented picture. The reflexivity of judging neither leads to the inaction of thinking nor the willful practice of deliberation, but an aesthetic practice of dialogue with exemplars that is indeterminately action inspiring. For an alternative account of internal dialogue along aesthetic lines, see: Wayne C. Booth, *The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction* (University of California Press, 1988).

plurality collapse to identity or dissolve to difference, this picture will naturally prepare for an understanding of plural action.[18]

I proceed in the following six steps. In the first section, I present a close reading of the final passage of 'Some Questions of Moral Philosophy' where Arendt describes examples as a kind of company that we 'choose' or with whom we 'wish to spend our lives.' I present this passage as the best place from which to develop the nascent conception of heautonomy implied in judging, and show how this conception incorporates aspects of the other two mental faculties, thinking and willing. In the second section, I survey different kinds of mimetic influence in view of the general tension between normativity and freedom that judging seeks to reconcile. Arendt was sensitive to a wide range of such influence, I argue, but understood the kind proper to judgment as something like congenial encouragement. In the third section, I transition from the variability of influence to reflective responsibility for that influence by introducing the education of taste. This leads, in the fourth section, to the problem of normative arbitrariness that choosing exemplars seems to invite. Why should we choose the company of Socrates over Eichmann, for instance? I introduce Arendt's response to this problem by turning to one of the only places that she explicitly justifies her choice of an example (Socrates), and in the fifth section develop the structure of this justification to expose the normative conditions orienting such choices. Insofar as our choices are achieved through judging, then they will be properly guided by normatively elevated versions of the reciprocally supportive axes of judging itself: worldhood (intersubjectivity), personhood (subjectivity), and exemplarity (objectivity). Together, these axes provide the (reflexively constituted) 'grounds' on which certain exemplars appear as more worthy of choice over others. In the final section, I return to the notion of congenial encouragement to lay out more clearly what 'keeping company' involves as an ethics, and how this promotes world-building freedom.

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[18] I intend this view to contribute, for example, to those approaches to justice in political theory that place the first-personal perspective of actors at their center. Such approaches understand justice as a practice in which actions are constrained by self-given ideals. As David Owen has helpfully summarized, there are two ways ideals have been understood in this tradition. The first, which is characteristic of Kant's practical philosophy, understands ideals as rules or principles that constrain actions through the maxim-testing exercise of practical reason. The second, which Owen finds in James Tully's public philosophy, understands ideals as exemplars. In this case, "our relationship to the constraint is pictured in terms of a practice through which we realize acting under the constraint, and the ideal is given expression through an exemplar who manifests mastery of this practice;" "Rules or principles tell us that another world is possible, exemplars show us that another world is actual" (David Owen, "On Exemplarity and Public Philosophy," in *Civic Freedom in an Age of Diversity: The Public Philosophy of James Tully.* Kingston, ON: McGill-Queen's Press, 2023. 355). These first-personal and agency-based approaches to justice are further distinguished from the redistributive justice paradigm, which adjudicates the claims of justice from a third-personal perspective, as if an engineering problem. Despite the recent surge of work on exemplarism in political theory, a full working out of the picture of heautonomy it implies has not yet been achieved. I note here that Arendt's distinctive contribution is to open a path to theorizing the first-person-plural perspectives of democratic agents that precedes and modifies both first-personal Kantian approaches and the third-personal redistributive approaches.

I. JUDGING, WILLING, THINKING

In the final passage of Arendt's 1966 lecture course, 'Some Questions of Moral Philosophy,' Arendt turns to judgment as the mental capacity best suited to resolve the antinomy between philosophical theories of morality and ethics, which present the difference between right and wrong as an "absolute distinction," and the deflated meanings of these terms suggested by their etymologies, as manners, customs, or habits.[19] Arendt's motivation seems to be to rescue something of the former despite her suspicion that totalitarianism had proven the latter.[20] Admitting that she cannot "cross all the t's and dot all the i's," we find in this context a dense description of judgment as the "ability to tell right from wrong":

> Our decisions about right and wrong will depend on our choice of company, of those with whom we wish to spend our lives. And this company is chosen by thinking in examples, in examples of persons, dead or alive, real or fictitious, and of examples of incidents, past or present. In the unlikely case that someone should come and tell us that he would prefer Bluebeard for company, and hence take him as an example, the only thing we could do is to make sure that he never comes near us. But the likelihood that someone would come and tell us that he does not mind and that any company will be good enough for him is, I fear, by far greater. Morally and even politically speaking, this indifference, though common enough, is by far the greatest danger. And connected to this, only a bit less dangerous, is another very common modern phenomenon, the widespread tendency to refuse to judge at all.[21]

The importance of this passage for understanding Arendt's theory of judgment is difficult to understate. The lecture course that it culminates is in many ways a highly condensed version of *The Life of the Mind*: it begins with the problems of rootless evil, moves to an exploration of the moral contributions of thinking and willing, and concludes with judgment. The principal significance of this passage lies in the nascent view of heautonomy it outlines as a response to the central questions that occupied her thinking after *Eichmann*, and thus how judging redeems aspects of thinking and willing.[22] In this section, I would like to further support this interpretation by unpacking three key features of this passage.

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[19] Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, 75.

[20] Although "our own experiences seem to affirm that the original names of these matters (*mores* and *ethos*), which imply that they are but manners, customs, and habits, may in a sense be more adequate than philosophers have thought. Still, we were not ready to throw moral philosophy out the window for this reason. For we took the agreement of philosophic and religious thought in this matter to weigh as heavily as the etymological origin of the words and the experiences we have had ourselves" (Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, 75–76.)

[21] Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, 144.

[22] Following Arendt's statements that the mental faculties are 'autonomous,' there is tendency in the literature to see them therefore as mutually exclusive (See: Beiner, "Hannah Arendt on Judging," 127–31). Positioning judging as redemptive of thinking and willing does not deny their respective autonomy but shows how judging incorporates and transforms elements of each in the direction of plurality and worldliness. Judging is redemptive insofar as it solves the paradoxes that appear in each when viewed from a political perspective. Judging 'redeems' the other mental faculties only from this perspective, and it does so without denying that they retain their own coherence, as the religious and philosophical traditions evidence and Arendt takes seriously.

THE REDEMPTION OF WILLING

Arendt describes judgment as 'the ability to tell right from wrong' but opens her explanation of that ability with reference to the will: 'Our *decisions* of right and wrong…' One of the principal challenges in interpreting this passage therefore centers around the question of the will. What sort of will is operative in judgment? In the two lectures preceding, Arendt discusses the philosophical and religious history of the will in view of the question of how we are capable of doing good in a positive sense.[23] This question emerges as a response to the negative results of Socratic thinking, where the dialogical structure of thought was shown to be sufficient for avoiding evil but not for doing good, and applied only to emergencies but not everyday moral choices.[24] Arendt's allusion to the will must therefore be read as a response both to the deficiencies in the moral outcome of Socratic thinking as well as in philosophical and religious treatments of the will.

Beyond the idea that our decisions of right and wrong depend on our choices of exemplary company, however, the passage does not offer much indication as to the conception of the will at play within it. We are led in the right direction, however, by a brief detour into *The Life of the Mind*. In the 'Transition' section originally written to bridge the first and second volumes, for which 'Some Questions' is a preparation, Arendt refers to a notion of the will that is "common sense" to persons "insofar as [they] are acting beings:" that "inner capacity" by which we "decide about […] the shape we wish to show ourselves in the world of appearances."[25] This articulation, in fact, is prefigured even earlier in the first volume:

> In addition to the urge toward self-display by which living things fit themselves into a world of appearances, men also *present* themselves in deed and word and thus indicate how they *wish* to appear, what in their opinion is fit to be seen and what is not. This element of deliberate choice in what to show and what to hide seems specifically human. Up to a point we can choose how to appear to others.[26]

Let us place the conception of the will intimated here in relation to the story presented in 'Some Questions.'

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[23] Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, 110.

[24] There are a few things to note here. First, it is worth pointing out that the motivating problem of the first volume of *The Life of the Mind* leaves open the possibility of thinking's contribution to 'positive' morality: "Can the activity of thinking as such be among the conditions that make men abstain from evil-doing or even actually *condition them against it*?" We will explore the ambiguity in the phrase 'condition against' below. Second, the movement from negative to positive morality not only justifies Arendt's move to the will, but also places *abstention* from evildoing on new footing. Recall from our passage the claim that "the greatest evil, morally and politically speaking" is indifference to one's company of examples, which must be a reflection of not "thinking in examples." Rootless evil is hence given a more nuanced complexion: it is not an absence of thinking but rather an absence thinking-in-examples – or judging – that presents the greatest danger.

[25] Arendt, *Thinking Without a Bannister: Essays in Understanding 1953-1975*, 517.

[26] Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 35. It is worth drawing attention to the limitation "up to a point."

Arendt's central argument in the third and fourth lectures is that the religious and philosophical treatment of the will culminates, in the hands of Nietzsche, with a diminishment of its deliberative function (*liberum arbitrium*) in favor of its instigative function, or ability to prompt action. If the discovery of the will coincided with the experience of impotence in Paul and Augustine's efforts to do good in the Christian sense of selflessness (e.g., "love thy enemy"),[27] it was Nietzsche who discovered resources for overcoming that impotence within the will itself without recourse to something like God's grace: the will wills by affirming its constraints as conditions of its own freedom, and this affirmation, implied in creative action, expresses the superabundance of power dwelling therein. Arendt's principle concern about this view,[28] however, is that it relegates the 'goals and aims' of the will to mere "secondary causes" that, like a "match to the dynamite it ignites," merely serve to occasion the release of the will's power.[29] This, according to Arendt, represents a "serious underestimation" of the importance of goals and aims, and undermines "the morally decisive question of whether the will to do turns in the direction of doing right or doing wrong."[30] A proper estimation of goals and purposes requires a recuperation of the deliberative function of the will, the *liberum arbitrium,* and with it the problem of what constitutes the 'aims' of right and wrong.[31] It is in this light that we should read the passages from *The Life of the Mind* above, in which we can see the outlines of a view of the will that balances the deliberative and instigative functions: like Nietzsche, the freedom of the will is tied up with its exercise through action, or its agency. But the normative source of action derives not from the satisfaction of desire or an affirmation of the superabundant power of the will, but in fitting into a world that calls for action. Arendt's recuperation of the deliberative function of the will transforms

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[27] The will appears where knowledge of the good proves insufficient for doing good, and thus an extra faculty, beyond reason or desire, is required to prompt action with or against the laws of the former or compulsions of the latter. This because the criterion of selflessness, which was introduced by Jesus in his radicalization of self-centered Hebrew moral principles (e.g., from "love thy neighbor as oneself" to "love thy enemy" and "turn the other cheek"), introduced the qualitatively different demand of good acts being free in the sense of spontaneous or beyond self-consciousness ("do not let the left hand know what the right hand is doing"). The criterion of selflessness therefore created a schism in our ability to will since it untethers it from knowledge of what the good is. In this context, although we may want to do good (will a good will), we may find that, in fact, we cannot.

[28] We may count among other points of differentiation implied in Arendt's turn to judgment her performative as opposed to expressivist conception of action; her account of motivation derived from the 'urge to display' or to 'fit' into a world of appearances shared with others as opposed to the experience of power in self-mastery; and the egalitarian as opposed to conflictual character of our inner life. For further discussion of Arendt's relation to Nietzsche, see: Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger: The Fate of the Political*, chap. 3.; Bonnie Honig, "The Politics of Agonism: A Critical Response to 'Beyond Good and Evil: Arendt, Nietzsche, and the Aestheticization of Political Action' by Dana R. Villa," *Political Theory* 21, no. 3 (1993): 528–33.; Seyla Benhabib et al., "5/13 Hannah Arendt," *13/13 Nietzsche*, n.d., https://blogs.law.columbia.edu/nietzsche1313/5-13/.

[29] Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, 135.

[30] Arendt quotes note 360 of *The Gay Science*: we must "distinguish between the cause of acting and the cause of acting in such and such a way, in this particular direction, with this particular aim in mind. The first cause is a quantity of the surplus strength that only waits to be used up no matter in what form or with what content. The second cause [the goal or content], is insignificant compared to this force, often a small incident, that releases this quantity—like a match put to dynamite" (Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, 135.)

[31] Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, 135.

Nietzsche's expressivist conception into a performative conception in which the question of what *should* appear becomes central; where it is not *desire* that motivates but *responsibility.*[32]

One important feature of Arendt's discussion of the deliberative and instigative functions of the will concerns the question of individuation. For thinkers like Paul, Augustine, and Nietzsche, it was in the will that humans differentiate themselves from one another:[33] if the laws of reason are the same for all rational beings, and the compulsions of desire the same for all appetitive beings, then it can only be in what we *choose to do* with the claims of reason and desire that we are distinguished from others of our kind. The difficulty, however, lies in how we are to conceptualize the will as a source of individuation when 'goals and purposes' remain part of its function, for if what we what we will is a purpose, then individuality would be seen as deriving from the purposes we set for ourselves and our relative satisfaction of them, as in the Aristotelian model. Who I am would be contained in the way I achieve my purposes: my being a (good or bad) student, teacher, son, brother, citizen, member of the human the species, child of God, or human being. But for Arendt, whoness cannot be disposed "in the same manner as we dispose of our qualities,"[34] nor can it be attributed to "willful purpose."[35] Thus she finds herself in a paradoxical position: if, on the one hand, Nietzsche could not answer the morally and politically pivotal question of how the will turns to do right or wrong because he underestimated the importance of goals and purposes, and if, on the other hand, our decisions of how we wish to appear cannot be reduced to actualizing goals and purposes, what precisely is the status of these 'secondary causes'? While the fact of the paradox makes clear that we cannot easily attribute individuation to the willful actuation of purposes, it also makes clear these teleological elements are not entirely abandoned, either.[36]

We may dissolve this paradox by placing judgment once again as modifying the relevant feature of the will, in this case individuation. Let us draw upon two further concepts that Arendt uses to describe whoness to help us see what this will entail: *persona* and *daimon.* Persona, Arendt describes at various places, means 'sounding through' (*per-sona*), as an actor speaks through their mask on stage. And *daimon* refers to the inner 'demon' or 'genie' of which we know nothing but

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[32] Judgment in this sense is motivated by world-crises, which is to say, by injustice (things coming out of order, balance, proportionality, or equality). Calls to justice are always possible because human freedom introduces new spheres of justice. Only systems of government or ways of thinking that deny human freedom believe that world-crises can be resolved once and for all, a perfect equilibrium achieved.

[33] Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind* (London: Harcourt, 1977), vol. 2. 7.

[34] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 179.

[35] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 179.

[36] This difficulty is in a sense prefigured by the Christian understanding of good will. The self, expressed in acts of good will, must be free from aims and purposes for otherwise these acts would not be selfless (or fully directed by the good): "let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth" (Matthew 6:3). The ultimate source of good will is not desire but grace.

is singularly our own and that appears to others peering over our shoulders.[37] Supposing, then, that Arendt's description of judging at the end of 'Some Questions' incorporates the principle of individuation traditionally ascribed to the will, we would be permitted to locate the source of individuation in the singular way we arbitrate, or conduct deliberative conversation with, the plurality of exemplary voices with whom we think and keep company.[38] The 'genie' revealed through the masks we inevitably wear would be something like a singular refraction of the 'genies' or 'geniuses' with whom we have come to keep company in the inner regions of our minds.[39] The 'secondary causes' of the will would, in this way, shed their commanding force as competing purposes and give way to the 'purposeless purposes' (Kant) revealed by exemplary appearances.[40] Teleological judgments would yield to person-disclosing judgments of taste in which impartiality or broad-mindedness, as Arendt's redeemed versions of Christian selflessness, is disclosed through words and deeds.

The question of individuation leads into a final feature of the will. If a redeemed modality of the will appears in our deliberative decisions (inspired performances) about how we wish to appear before others as wishful performances of our senses of right and wrong, and if those decisions depend upon thinking in and keeping company with exemplary persons and events, then such decisions would be guided by an awareness our words and deeds as exemplary of how we wish to appear. Arendt affirms as much in a *Denktagebuch* passage written in the same year as 'Some Questions':

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[37] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 179–80. Although the adoption of social roles requires donning different masks, the person 'behind' the mask nevertheless, at least ordinarily, persists across each of these roles and inflects them with individuation. The continuity of the person behind the mask – exploration of which is certainly one intent of *The Life of the Mind* – is essential to the criticism of the view that social roles vindicate judgments, as Eichmann argues. They cannot. We are responsible for the masks we choose to wear. I return to the question of masks in the final section.

[38] In her essay 'Crisis in Culture,' Arendt writes: "By his manner of judging, the person discloses to an extent himself, what kind of person he is," and goes on to write that this 'manner of judging' is a function of taste, of our choices of "company among men, among things, among thoughts, in the present as well as in the past" (Arendt, *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought*, 220–22.) This thought is behind the array of examples that Arendt provides throughout her writings on judgment: "I would rather go astray with Plato that hold correct views with the Pythagoreans" (Cicero); "the victorious cause pleases the Gods, the defeated one pleases Cato" (Cato); "I'd much rather be in Hell with God than in Heaven without him" (Eckhart). I discuss these examples in further detail in the final section of this chapter.

[39] Further discussion of these terms in sections II and V below.

[40] Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of the Power of Judgment*, sec. 5:220.

> Every actor wishes to be followed. Thinking and judging politically is exemplary (Kant) because acting is exemplary. Responsibility essentially means: knowing that one sets an example that others will 'follow;' in this way one changes the world.[41]

With this passage in hand, we can see how Arendt's description of judging as the ability to tell right from wrong entails a conception of the will in which exemplarity functions as both the input and output of our capacity to deliberatively initiate a new series in time through performative action, where the arc from one to the other defines the contours of a conception of personal responsibility oriented toward the exemplarity of our own actions. It is in judging that the will is redeemed in such a way as to respond to the central question animating the second volume of *The Life of the Mind*, namely, how the will, as the capacity to "bring about something new and hence 'change the world,'" "functions in the world of appearances."[42]

THE REDEMPTION OF THINKING

I mentioned that Arendt's transition to the will in 'Some Questions' was motivated by the fact that Socratic thinking could lead to the avoidance of evil but not to doing good in a positive sense and applied to borderline cases not ordinary moral choices. Yet in our leading passage Arendt referred to a kind of thinking – thinking in examples – that yields positive decisions of right and wrong. The reappearance of thinking in the final passage therefore implies that certain of its elements persist across her discussion of the will and find renewed pertinence in judging— a fact, as we will see, with considerable relevance to our understanding of Arendt's response to the leading question of the first volume of *The Life of the* Mind, *viz.*, whether "the activity of thinking as such [could] be among the conditions that make men abstain from evil-

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[41] Arendt, *Denktagebuch: 1950 Bis 1973*, 644. It is worth mentioning here that the claim "every actor wishes to be followed" does not entail an egoistic drive to leadership or authority. "Knowing that one sets an example that others will follow" is an acknowledgment that our actions do influence the course of others' actions—they are called to respond, in whatever ways they do. In her *Zur Person* interview, she responds to Günter Gaus's questions concerning this issue – "Do you want to achieve broad impact with [your] works, or do you believe that such influence is no longer possible in these times—or is this type of broad impact not your main objective?" — in the follow way: "I want to say all of this with the caveat that nobody knows himself, no one should tell his own fortune, that one really shouldn't do what I'm doing with you right now. […] Now, you asked about the effect of my work. This—if I may speak ironically—is a masculine question. Men always want to be tremendously influential; but I see it from outside, so to speak. Do I see myself as influential? No, I want to understand. And if other people understand in the same sense as I have understood, this gives me satisfaction, a sense of being at home" (Günter Gaus, "Conversation with Hannah Arendt," 1964, *Zur Person,* https://germanhistory-intersections.org/en/knowledge-and-education/ghis:document-105.). In the next section, I introduce the concept congeniality which, it seems to me, helps account for the ambiguity (and androgyny) of judgment's orientation to its effect on others: "knowing that one sets an example that others will follow" on my view simply encourages responsibility our actions as relationally embedded and thus influencing others, not ego-satisfaction. I take the relational sense of responsibility implied in congeniality akin to how Victoria Olwell describes the role of genius in 19th century America as in fact inviting women into democratic participation even without formal recognition by liberal models of rational, disembodied autonomy since it included notions of relationality and concern for the common-wealth with which women were deeply familiar (Victoria Olwell, *The Genius of Democracy: Fictions of Gender and Citizenship in the United States, 1860-1945* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011). See also: Julia Kristeva, "Is There a Feminine Genius?," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 112 (2004): 117–28.)

[42] Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind* (Harcourt, 1977), II, 7.

doing or even actually *condition them against it*" (my italics).[43] If Socrates showed for Arendt how the activity of thinking can lead to the abstention from evil-doing, just how it might positively condition us against it has remained elusive. It is by 'thinking in examples' that we find Arendt's considered response to this second side of her leading question, and therefore also to the mystery of how thinking about justice or piety can lead one to act justly or piously, as Socrates himself believed but could not explain.[44]

Let us draw a parallel between the passage from 'Some Questions' and Arendt's famous concluding remarks to her treatment of Socrates in *The Life of the Mind* to draw this out further: "The manifestation of the wind of thought," she famously wrote, "is not knowledge; it is [judgment,] the ability to tell right from wrong, beautiful from ugly."[45] If both the wind of thought and thinking in examples manifest in our ability to tell right from wrong, then we have *prima facie* grounds to suppose that the winds of thought might well be characterized as exemplary appearances. But while plausible, this reading seems to run against the prevailing tenor of Arendt's discussion of Socrates, which suggests that the winds are a power generated entirely by thinking in its dialogical form without any reference to its content. When we think, Arendt contends, we begin a dialogical relationship with ourselves capable of generating the quasi-moral injunction "I cannot:" the wind of thought in this case manifests internally in the disharmony we feel when we imagine sharing the intimacy of our minds with an unfriendly wrongdoer, and externally in the abstention from action.[46] However, the metaphor permits another reading. We may read the winds *of* thought not in the sense of being *produced* by thought but as *belonging* to thought, or as *proper* to it. Conceiving of the relation in this way allows us to suppose the wind bears traces of origins outside the mind without for that undermining the primacy that Arendt assigns to thinking as the faculty that 'self-sets limits' of right and wrong.[47] And it would pick up Arendt's insistence that thinking is always *about* something (as opposed to *of* something), and thus her powerful description of thinking (particulars) as encircling a region illuminated by an incident or event ("like a circle bound to its focus"), discussed in the previous chapter. Earlier in 'Some Questions,' Arendt writes that it is our "thoughts and remembrances" that "root" us and give us

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[43] Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, I, 5.

[44] For preliminary discussion of this point, see II. iv. It is also worth signalling the stakes here: that thinking has a conditioning effect would be of relevance to understanding how we are capable of shaping the world that shapes, or conditions, us. For Arendt's general sense of 'conditioning,' see: *The Human Condition*, 9.

[45] Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 193.

[46] Arendt's use of this image appears in the final sentence of her discussion of the Socratic 'two-in-one,' which makes this reading far more obvious. And abstention from action, Arendt writes, is the outward manifestation of thinking that's apparent only when things are moving quickly, getting swept away.

[47] "If he is a thinking being, rooted in his thoughts and remembrances, there will be limits to what he can permit himself to do, and these limits will not be imposed on him from the outside, but will be self-set. These limits can change considerably and uncomfortably from person to person, from country to country, from century to century; but limitless, extreme evil is possible only where these self-grown roots, which automatically limit the possibilities, are entirely absent. They are absent where men skid only over the surface of events, where they permit themselves to be carried away without ever penetrating into whatever depth they may be capable of" (Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, 101.)

"depth" against the shifting tides of world events,[48] and elsewhere that only goodness can be radical.[49] From this perspective, Arendt's reference to thinking in and keeping company with examples would represent an argumentative move analogous to, indeed interwoven with, her promotion of 'secondary causes' to the center of the will in her recuperation of the *liberum arbitrium*. The wind of thought would represent the matter of thought, what matters to thought, what is thoughtworthy— that towards which thinking keeps its sails trimmed as it orients judgment transversally between past and future.[50]

The significance of the culminating passage of 'Some Questions' with respect to the relationship between thinking and judging might therefore be characterized in terms of its ability to support this ambiguity and both sides of the leading question to the first volume of *The Life of the Mind*. By positioning examples as the matter of thought, it introduces normative content to the otherwise 'empty' formal structure of the Socratic two-in-one.[51] And by characterizing the appropriate relation to that matter as 'thinking in'

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[48] Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, 95. Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, xiii–xiv.)

[49] "The fact is that today I think that evil in every instance is only extreme, never radical: it has no depth, and therefore has nothing demonic about it. Evil can lay to waste the entire world, like a fungus growing rampant on the surface. Only the good is always deep and radical" (Hannah Arendt and Gershom Scholem, *The Correspondence of Hannah Arendt and Gershom Scholem*, ed. Marie Luise Knott and Anthony David (The University of Chicago Press, 2017), 209.); "It is inherent in our entire philosophical tradition that we cannot conceive of a 'radical evil,' and this is true both for Christian theology, which conceded even to the Devil himself a celestial origin, as well as for Kant, the only philosopher who, in the word he coined for it, at least must have suspected the existence of the evil even though he immediately rationalized it in the concept of a 'perverted ill will' that could be explained by comprehensible motives. Therefore, we actually have nothing to fall back on in order to understand a phenomenon that nevertheless confronts us with its overpowering reality and breaks down all standards we know" (Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 459.) I discuss Arendt's conceptions of good and evil from the perspective of exemplarity in the final section.

[50] I am here referring to a line of poetry from Heidegger, "The sail of thinking keeps trimmed hard to the wind of the matter" (Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought* (Harper Collins, 2001), 6.), as well as Arendt's depiction of the trajectory of thinking as transversal to past and future in her discussion of Kafka's 'He' parable (Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 202–13.) The Heidegger analogy is not perfect, of course. Heidegger subtracts the *aboutness* of thinking from its relation to matter. Thinking doesn't think *about* its matter but *thinks matter.* By (re)inserting *aboutness* in thinking, Arendt introduces *distance*, or the *separation of the relation* between thinking and its matter. As we saw in the previous chapter, this distance is not merely negative. It is not characterizable in terms of the frustration of a completely adumbrated or schematized view. It derives rather from a positive *excessiveness* of objects as they exemplarily open to more than one. Thinking's *aboutness* is an affirmation of perspectival excess; it moves *around* the matter by surveying other ways of looking it at, and is therefore not a relapse to the kind of naïve realism that Heidegger was concerned to avoid. Both, of course, see poetics at the heart of thinking, but Arendt's poetics are not, as for Heidegger, available only for 'those to come,' but for the many who presently judge. We find this general point constituting one element of Arendt's criticism of Heidegger – that his thinking was akin to burrowing a hole that only he could dwell in (Arendt, *Thinking Without a Bannister: Essays in Understanding 1953-1975*, 419–31.). Although Arendt herself acknowledges her own failures in engaging with her contemporaries, in contrast to Heidegger she acknowledges the failure as an inconsistency in her own position. See footnote 106 below.

[51] While the purity of Socratic dialogue deters wrongdoing by making us recoil from the prospect of sharing the intimacy of our inner lives—our mental "homes"—with a wrongdoer, it does not fully explain the *sense* of wrongness that animates this aversion. Why do we wish to flee from those parts of ourselves that have done wrong? Why can keeping company with ourselves lead to repression, forgetting, abandonment, or a pursuit of forgiveness? Socrates, I take it, did not answer the underlying question of where our sense of wrongness comes from. His account of meaningfulness was constrained by his method: the pursuit of definitions. The irony is that, in practical terms, he could hardly avoid *performing* his values. His stillness expressed the inactivity of thinking; his *elenchus* the pursuit of self-consistency; his drinking of the hemlock his commitment to citizenship over exile. Yet in this latter case, it was not simply a thought-out principle that

and 'keeping company with' examples, it suggests a revision of that structure in the direction of a kind of expanded internal plurality that we would expect of someone who exercises their enlarged mentality by thinking from other perspectives.[52] It therefore retains the relational structure that was of central value to Socratic (as well as Kantian and Nietzschean) morality, but expands that structure to include worldly ballast, orientation, and plurality. If thinking in its pure Socratic form leads us to abstain from evil, thinking in its form redeemed by judging conditions us against it.

Notice also how this picture dovetails into one of the core elements of the deliberative will. Arendt suggested that the discovery of the will by Paul and Augustine owed to the experience of the will's impotence, occasioned by the presence of conflicting voices of moral authority.[53] That these voices appeared in conflict, however, owes to the will's commanding function, to the belief, that is, that action requires that one voice commands the others into obedience. The idea that decisions of how we wish to appear are guided by thinking in and keeping company with examples retains the plural vocality characteristic of the *liberum arbitrium*, but it recasts the tenor of that vocality from command-obedience and towards friendly dialogue characteristic of the Socratic two-in one. From this perspective, thinking in and keeping company with examples would represent an overcoming both of the internal agonism characteristic of the *liberum arbitrium* in its classical form, as well as the self-centeredness and relational

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expressed his citizenship, but more fundamentally both his actions and 'apologies' (accounts) of them that just *are* practices of citizenship. He acted, and so *set an example*.

In other words, it was as by enacting his citizenship that Socrates *proved* the principle of self-consistency that guided his inner life (Arendt uses the word 'proof' to describe the exemplification of internal commitments in her essay 'Truth and Politics'). To do so, he had to place the city above his soul, his appearing before others ahead of his inner self that never appears (*The Human Condition*, 475). Politically speaking, the otherwise moral principle of self-consistency implies two entailments: first, acknowledgment of oneself as belonging to a shared world in which one is responsible as a citizen; second, acknowledgment that the primary value of our commitments derives from that belonging. As Arendt quotes Machiavelli, it is the *world*, not the self, that matters most to actors—and this is indeed what emerges between the *Apology* and *Crito*.

Even Kant, who formalized self-consistency in the categorical imperative, required a similar scaffolding to bring it into effect. For Kant, the modality of the self is not citizenship but noumenal agency, and the space in which that agency is expressed is not the polis but a kingdom of ends. The point is also present in Nietzsche's notion of eternal recurrence, where self-consistency is positioned within an infinite horizon of life. We will see in the fourth section how Arendt's turn to judgment departs from both Kant's moralization of aesthetics and Nietzsche's aestheticization of ethics. Reflective judgment retains the fundamental subjective–objective–intersubjective structure of judgment (present, if only implicitly, in each). And we will also see that citizenship revolves around, indeed derives from, the fact of our appearing as persons.

[52] Arendt suggested the inclusion of other perspectives in thinking as early as *Origins*: "All thinking, strictly speaking, is done in solitude and is a dialogue between me and myself; but this dialogue of the two-in-one does not lose contact with the world of my fellow men because they are represented in the self with whom I lead the dialogue of thought" (Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 476.)

[53] "With Christianity becoming an institution, the 'Thou shalt' or the 'Thou shalt not,' that which commands, appeared more and more exclusively as a voice from outside, be it the voice of God speaking directly to man or the voice of the ecclesiastical authority in charge of making the voice of God heard among the believers. And the question was more and more only whether or not man possessed an organ in himself that could distinguish between conflicting voices" (Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, 136.) We might also note that according to Arendt Eichmann's conscience spoke only in the voice of the *Fuhrer*, which exposes both the primacy of the will in his understanding of the source of his own actions, and the absence of plurality in the life of his mind. Both of these follow from his peculiar uptake of Kantian morality.

minimalism characteristic of Socratic thinking.[54] The result, to anticipate, would be a characterization of the inner life correlative to the relations of freedom and equality proper to the world of action: "the revelatory quality of speech and action comes to the fore where people are *with* others and neither for or against them."[55] [56]

If thinking in examples and deciding how one wishes to appear represent redeemed modalities of thinking and willing as they appear in judgment, the "latecomer of our mental faculties," then the final passage of 'Some Questions' offers a rare picture of an integrative relationship between these faculties reciprocally oriented toward positively telling right from wrong. Indeed, we find intimations of deliberative performance within Arendt's choice of the word 'tell,' which carries senses of expressing or revealing something otherwise hidden and of heightened significance, as in 'tell-tale'; mentioning in order, as in narrating; and as having indicative effect or force, as in a 'telling gesture.' We may therefore take this passage as providing the clearest indication of what the political morality or halfway plausible theory of ethics that Arendt projected into the third volume of *The Life of the Mind* might have looked like.

PUTTING EXEMPLARITY FIRST

The remaining sentences of the passage help us see why exemplarity would have laid at the very center of this theory. Arendt says (a) that one may "prefer" to keep company with exemplary wrongdoers; (b) that one may be indifferent to the company of examples they keep; (c) that the latter is not only more dangerous than the former, but "by far morally and even politically speaking the greatest danger;" and (d), that "connected" with this, "only a bit less dangerous," is the failure to judge. There are two kinds of claims being made here. The first establishes a hierarchy of dangers, the second concerns the scope of exemplarity with respect to that hierarchy. Let's consider these in turn.

The greatest danger is indifference to one's exemplary company, followed by failing to judge, and then preference for keeping company with bad examples. The first and third suggest bankrupt and depraved modes of relating to the exemplary, respectively.[57] The second is more mysterious, for although it implies

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[54] It has been pointed out that Arendt's conception of plurality is a revision of Heidegger's *Mitandersein,* or *being-with-others* (see, e.g.: Sophie Loidolt, "Hannah Arendt's Conception of Actualized Plurality," in *The Phenomenology of Sociality: Discovering the 'We.,'* ed. Thomas Szanto and Dermot Moran (Routledge, 2016), 49.). Little, however, has been written about how this plurality obtains in the life of the mind alongside action. My argument, which underlies this dissertation, is that the two levels presuppose one another.

[55] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 180.

[56] There is an important consequence to this view that we will return to later (III.v): a condition of possibility for maintaining a dialogical relation with exemplary persons and events is something like an originary commitment to hospitality. If exemplary appearances are initially given *against* the mind, as shown in the previous chapter, their presence as 'company' in our minds entails a stance of hospitality that permits them *around* the mind.

[57] The problem with Eichmann was not simply that he preferred the company of an evildoer, Hitler, but that his conscience came to speak solely in his voice. Arendt's presentation of how this came to be is significant. In the first instance,

that non-judgment carries its own danger distinct from the first two, does not indicate what that danger might be. This mystery can be resolved by taking non-judging to refer to cases where we may happen to keep company with putatively 'good' examples but do not choose them in the sense indicated by the positive description of judging. The domain of non-judgment might therefore capture the myriad ways in which we inherit and reproduce pro-social mores through habituating repetition of exemplary actions, while also indicating the susceptibility of those habits to erode should the world suffer a 'sea-change.' Not-judging would be less dangerous than pure indifference since it retains traction on pro-social norms, yet more dangerous than keeping company with evil examples since it is more pervasive, less easily recognizable, and its consequences more extreme. When widespread enough, the common failure to judge can produce effects that are not only vastly disproportionate to their cause but also entirely extraordinary in the history of morals and politics, as was the case with totalitarianism.

The second kind of claim, implied in the first, concerns the breadth of relevance that Arendt assigns to exemplarity. Since the explicitly central factor at each level concerns our relation to examples, the normativity of exemplarity must extend beyond its positive role in judging. This suggests that Arendt understood exemplarity as a basic source of normativity characteristic of a wide array of orientations and practices in relation to which judgment operates as something like a redeeming power. We will canvass some of these orientations and practices in the next section. For now, let us position the basic idea in relation to my claim at the outset of this section that Arendt's presentation of judgment at the end of 'Some Questions' is intended to resolve the antinomy between philosophical theories of morality and ethics, which portrays the difference between right and wrong as an "absolute distinction," and the deflated meanings of these terms suggested by their etymologies, that is, as manners, customs, or habits.[58] If the appearance of examples in judging redeems a broader terrain of example-following ranging from indifference to

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Eichmann's conscience spoke in the voice of "respectable society," which, because it was guided by "the sole standard of success," led him to submit entirely to its supreme 'leader' (*Führer*) as society's most successful member. As Arendt quotes Eichmann: "[Hitler] may have been wrong all down the line, but one thing is beyond dispute: the man was able to work his way up from lance corporal in the German Army to *Führer* of a people of almost eighty million… His success alone proved to me that I should subordinate myself to this man" (Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, 126.) From this perspective, we might say that Eichmann's reduction of conscience to a single voice was made possible by promoting a single standard – that of respectable society – as the only one worth considering. This of course eliminates the need to judge between differing voices (see, e.g., Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, 116.), and leads in this case to a reduction of the quality of that voice to a functional command the authority of which is determined by its special status in a social hierarchy, as the mouthpiece of 'respectable society,' as it were. Hence could Eichmann come to excessively "identify" with those commands (Arendt's discussion of Eichmann's perverse understanding of Kant's categorical imperative at 136-37 is pertinent here). Eichmann's conscience was evil not just because it spoke with the evil voice of Hitler, but more fundamentally because it surrendered itself to the supreme authority he commanded. It was thus closer to an indifference to exemplary company than to preferring the company of an evildoer. Hitler was not for Eichmann a *who,* a person, but a role to be obeyed, the sole purveyor of the law of the land. On Arendt's reading, then, Eichmann did not so much *oppose* humanity, as in wickedness, but by failing to acknowledge the personhood of persons as sharing the world with him, *renounced* it (279).

[58] Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, 75.

habituated preferences, then Arendt's theory of judgment would represent an attempt to deepen the aesthetic roots of normativity implied in the etymology of ethics and morality and left disturbingly exposed by the event of totalitarianism in the direction of the aspirations of traditional moral philosophy without for that committing to normative absolutism. The point would be neither to deny customs, manners, and habits, nor to abandon more robust senses of right and wrong, but to strive to articulate judgment's heightened role in the terrain of example-following upon which they are related and separated.

The picture that appears from the final passage of 'Some Questions' is at once commonsensical and unconventional. Commonsensical, because it affirms what all actors assume, namely, that their inner lives matter to their actions, and that actions matter to their inner lives. By placing exemplarity at the center of this mattering, commonplaces like "Be the change you wish to see in the world" gain some, if qualified, bearing. But this picture is also unconventional, for it runs contrary to several staples of Arendt interpretation. It says, for instance, that thinking is not good-for-nothing, but is good-for guiding right action in the form of thinking in examples. It also says that judging is not without standards to 'hold on to,' but has them in examples.[59] The word 'standard,' recall, comes from the Old German *stehen* and *ort*, and originally meant 'standing-place' or 'stand-point:' the relevant kind of standpoints of judging persons are those exemplary 'places' they turn and return to as company. Far from serving as Archimedean rules, then, examples inform the normative orientations of persons on the level of their imaginations; the place, that is, from which they initiate new beginnings and to which they may return, again and again anew. But this picture is also unconventional because it suggests that while *who* someone is remains the prerogative of second-personal public judgments, as is often emphasized, it is nevertheless supported by first-personal thoughts, wishes, choices, and decisions. Renouncing agency, after all, is renouncing responsibility, and here Arendt is here supplying clearest indication how to walk this middle path.

II. Mimesis and Morals

I suggested in the introduction that the subjective axis of judgment represents a layer of responsiveness to exemplary givenness that can be characterized in terms of heautonomy. It is through heautonomy that responsiveness becomes responsibility. The textual analysis presented in the previous section suggests that this layer is best characterized by thinking in and keeping company with examples in view of deciding how we wish to appear before others, where such decisions are deliberative performances of our senses of right and wrong. In this section, I begin to develop the view of heautonomy that this picture implies. Before I

[59] Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, 143.

begin to sketch this picture, however, it will be helpful to first clarify the model of aesthetic judgment upon which it will be based in relation to the problem of theory and practice.

If, as the foregoing suggests, judging is preparatory for acting, and if, following Arendt, we take aesthetic judgment as the right way of thinking about this preparation, then we would be permitted to think of the heautonomy of judgment by analogy with artists who judge works of art in view of their own creative capacities. With respect to moral heautonomy (of which Arendt is principally, though not exclusively, concerned in 'Some Questions'),[60] this would mean that moral judgments concern moral actions under awareness of moral responsibility, that we are responsible for our actions toward general others.[61] With respect to political heautonomy, it means that political judgments concern political actions under awareness of political responsibility, that we are responsible for actions toward common enterprises.[62] But Arendt's turn to Kant's aesthetics seems to avowedly privilege the spectatorial judgments of critics over that of artists, an implication of which would be a shift in the object of responsibility from one's own actions to the world as the space of public appearances, or for how the world should look.[63] The view that I wish to advance throughout the following is that the apparent tension between these two positions can be dissolved

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[60] In the third lecture of 'Some Questions,' Arendt distinguishes moral from political action in this way: "We shall now turn our attention to action as distinguished from activity and to conduct toward others as distinguished from intercourse with oneself. In both instances we shall remain restricted to moral issues; we shall stick to men in their singularity and leave out of account all political issues such as the constitution of communities and government as well as the citizen's support of the laws of his country or his action in concert with his fellow citizens in support of a common enterprise" (Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, 112.) While Arendt's concern here is avowedly moral, when she arrives at judgment in the fourth lecture her discussion begins to blur the distinction. For instance, the standard of concern shifts from the self to community (in the sense of Kant's *sensus communis*); her examples of examples are both moral and political (e.g.: Jesus of Nazareth, St. Francis, Caesar, Bonaparte); and indifference to exemplary company is, as we said in the last section, *morally and politically* 'the greatest danger.'

[61] Hannah Arendt, 'Some Questions of Moral Philosophy,' in *Responsibility and Judgment* (New York: Schocken, 2003), 112. Moral action concerns others who are not friends, which I call general others, and that are not "predetermined by some common worldly interest" (viz., political action).

[62] Hannah Arendt, 'Some Questions of Moral Philosophy,' in *Responsibility and Judgment* (New York: Schocken, 2003), 112.

[63] We might here mark a point of distinction from neo-Aristotelian ethical approaches to exemplarity, like those of Linda Zagzebski and Jonathan Lear. In Zagzebski's now influential account, admiration provides the source of value-perception and mimetic motivation. Recent work on exemplarity has been rightly critical of Zagzebski's near naturalization of admiration, however, since admiration is invariably influenced by cultural factors and thus, when naturalized, risks hypostatizing oppressive norms (See: Alkis Kotsonis, "On the Limitations of Moral Exemplarism: Socio-Cultural Values and Gender," *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 23, no. 1 [2020]: 223–35). Approaching the Aristotelian theme of exemplarity from a post-Freudian psychoanalytic perspective, Jonathan Lear's approach by contrast more fully acknowledges the contextuality and indeterminacy of exemplary meaning (Jonathan Lear, *Imagining the End: Mourning and Ethical Life* [Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2022], chap. 3.). See Appendix I for a reflection on Lear's account.

Both approaches, however, suffer from an inattentiveness to the public character of exemplary meaning. The Arendtian approach developed in this paper is intended to make good on contextuality and indeterminacy while positioning that meaning as originally public or shared. Although it cannot be unpacked here, the ana-teleological perspective that partly animates Arendt's appreciation of Kant's discussion of the beautiful ("purposiveness without purpose") locates the relevantly motivating feeling not in admiration but in disinterested delight, which solicits the exercise of representative thinking. And this is possible only where interest, including self-interest, is interrupted. From this perspective, exemplarist normativity does not in the first instance yield a self-oriented ethics of character development but rather occasions a reflective process through which we find ourselves belonging to, and responsible for, a world shared by our peers.

by qualifying the objects of judgment (public appearances) as exemplary actions and events, and the space in which they appear (the world) as a space of possible action.[64] Judging from this perspective would 'redeem' the past in view of its possible endurance in the future. And storytelling – as the paradigmatic activity of spectatorship – would not merely reconcile us to the past but also, and in so doing, prepare us for an indeterminate horizon of further action (as was the case for the humanist tradition of exemplary literature, for instance).[65] On this reading, the boundaries separating spectator from actor would dissolve along a continuum that, far from denying the archetypal positions that make up its poles, relates and separates them. We can retain the priority that both Arendt and Kant assign to spectatorship as well as accommodate a host of common-sense intuitions the occlusion of which would otherwise constitute an embarrassment to a theory of political judgment: that we often judge the actions of others without being in a position to act ourselves; that prolonged periods of spectatorship may be suddenly interrupted by calls to action; and that actors may achieve relative degrees of impartiality by temporarily stepping out of the fray in an effort to glean the whole of which they are a part.

Let us therefore continue with the action-oriented picture outlined in the passage from 'Some Questions' and take the heautonomy of artists as our model, provided that we expect the primacy of spectatorship to reveal itself in due course. We will thus turn to Kant's discussion of the aesthetic heautonomy of artists, of which there are two basic elements. First, the aesthetic heautonomy of artists is *mimetic*. It depends on the representation of reality through example-following. One does not produce art in a vacuum but learns to do so in view of other artists and their works.[66] Second, aesthetic heautonomy depends on the reflective consideration of the public for whom art is produced, that is, on the exercise of taste *via* the *sensus communis.* Arendt emphasizes this latter aspect as it implies that above even the work of solitary geniuses stands a community upon and in view of which the value of their work depends.[67] A

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[64] In this regard, I follow those commentators who observe continuity between actor and spectator positions. As David Marshall has argued, for instance, "In the original rhetorical context of *krinein*, out of which Arendt's account [of judgment] evolved, there was no meaningful distinction to be made between making a judgment and acting upon it" (David Marshall, "The Origin and Character of Hannah Arendt's Theory of Judgment," *Political Theory*, no. 3 (2010): 370.) For contrasting accounts, see: Beiner, "Hannah Arendt on Judging"; Vasterling, "Plural Perspectives and Independence: Political and Moral Judgement in Hannah Arendt."

[65] See, for instance: John D. Lyons, *Exemplum: The Rhetoric of Example in Early Modern France and Italy* (Princeton University Press, 1989).; Hampton, *Writing from History*.

[66] (Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment,* trans. Paul Guyer, and Eric Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 282-83.)

[67] "The very originality of the artist (or the novelty of the actor) depends on making himself understood by those who are not artists (or actors)" (Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 63.)

fundamental question concerning aesthetic heautonomy thus concerns how *mimesis* and taste relate to one another such that the latter retains priority. Let us consider *mimesis* in this section, taste in the next.[68]

The word Kant uses for "follow" in the previous quote is *Nachfolge.* This is the same term Arendt uses in the *Denktagebuch* passage, quoted earlier:

> Every actor wishes to be followed (*Nachfolge*). Thinking and judging politically is exemplary (Kant) because acting is exemplary. Responsibility essentially means: knowing that one sets an example that others will 'follow' [*folgen*]; *in this way one changes the world*.[69]

Nachfolge, literally 'following-after' and often translated as 'succession' or 'emulation,' is a technical term the specificity and importance of which is best seen by comparison to the range of other mimetic orientations articulated by Kant and, it seems, appreciated by Arendt.[70] In ascending order from heteronomy to (one aspect of) heautonomy, following (*Nach*) an example can take the following forms:[71]

1. Copying (*Nachäffung*), where an example appears as a "peculiarity" simulated or repeated by 'plagiarists,' 'counterfeits,' 'beginners' ('tyros'), and by 'mannerism'.[72] Arendt's tracing of ethics and

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[68] I here note that Arendt's treatment of the distinction between spectatorship and production/action is best understood as inverting the priority traditionally given to the latter. Her emphasis on spectatorial judgment does not lead to the absurd view that spectators are not also actors. The difference is that spectators do not judge with their own action in view of self-development, of a good internal to the self, but with regards to the horizon of action itself. The latter does not preclude the relevance of our judgments to our own actions, but it does not necessitate it. I address this briefly in the next section.

[69] Hannah Arendt, *Denktagebuch: 1950 Bis 1973* (Munich: Piper, 2003), 644.

[70] Among political theorists who have recognized in exemplarity a non-universalist form of normativity suited to action in plural contexts, Kant's understanding of genius has not yet been appreciated. Aletta Norval, for instance, turns to Nietzsche and Emerson (via Conant and Cavell) (Aletta Norval, *Aversive Democracy: Inheritance and Originality in the Democratic Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), conclusion); Linda Zerilli to Wittgenstein.

[71] Kant's clearest description of the following typology appears at *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 5:318 - 5:319. It does not, however, include all the elements listed here. For an overview and elaboration of Kant's aesthetics of exemplarity, see: Martin Gammon. ''Exemplary Originality: Kant on Genius and Imitation," in *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 35, no. 4 (1997). It is worth noting, however, that Kant's thinking on exemplarity is not exhausted by his aesthetic philosophy. The more recognizably 'Kantian' position is rather found in his moral and theoretical philosophies, where examples are generally derided as misdirecting reason from its own rules and laws. In the *Groundwork*, for example, we read: "One could not give morality worse counsel than by seeking to borrow it from examples;" even "the Holy One of the Gospel must first be compared to an ideal of moral perfection before he can be recognized as one" (*Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, ed. Gregor and Timmerman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012). 23). Compare this to Arendt: "If we say of someone that he is good, we have in the backs of our minds the example of Saint Francis or Jesus of Nazareth" (*Lectures*, 84). Although Kant's apparently derisive comments do not undermine the value of examples for pedagogical purposes across the range of his domains of philosophy, they are in both cases supervened by ideas and principles of reason. Only in the domain of adherent (cultural) beauty are examples necessary the whole way down, as it were. For an analytic account of exemplarity that resembles this one, see:

[72] There is an extensive social psychological literature on the mimetic practices of young children that affirms both the importance of copying in early development and the similarities of those practices with our nearest animal relatives (see, for instance: Albert Bandura, *Social Learning Theory* (New York: General Learning Press, 1971), 5.; Andrew Whiten, et al., "Emulation, Imitation, Over-Imitation and the Scope of Culture for Child and Chimpanzee," *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* 364 (2009).) The word 'tyro,' however, harbors a political association: it also means an initiate into an order of discipline, as in 'young soldier.'

morality to habits, customs, and manners is evocative in certain respects of this rudimentary level.[73] It suggests that the norms of conduct upholding right and wrong can be reduced to a mere repetition of their outward display without either reflective awareness of their meaning nor of one's creativity with respect to it. This makes possible the substitution of customs and mores "almost overnight" because they are reduced to routinized displays of conformity, as Arendt's equation of morality to 'table manners' seems to suggest. And the political outcome of mannerism is conformism, which makes possible collaborationism.

2. Replication (*Nachmachung*), where an example appears as model (*Modell*) for education in schools. With replication, a student or trainee also copies the external form of an example, but does so in view of learning its inner rule so that they can practically apply it to new cases for themselves, as in the learning of letters or simple technical tasks. This level of example-following appears most readily in Arendt's description of examples as analogous to Kantian schemata (the imaginal form appropriate to cognitive judgments) in her *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*. Like schemata, she writes, examples in the first instance allow for the spontaneous recognition of particulars.[74] Just as a table-schema allows me to say, 'that's a table,' the example of Achilles allows someone from Ancient Greece to say, 'that's courageous.' In the second place, examples are also similar to schemata insofar as they make communication possible.[75] If you and I do not in some sense share examples of courage, we will misunderstand each other when we speak the word. Because Arendt thought that reflective judgment is primary to determining judgment, the schema-example analogy suggests that although examples function on the level of replication like schemata, we should understand them not as residing in the 'depths of our souls' a priori (Kant), but as culturally learned imaginative forms that stabilize as prejudices "in the backs of our minds" to make possible the ordinary (and necessary) capacities typically associated with determinative judgments.[76] Bonapartism, Arendt writes, is "immediately recognizable" to "students of French history […]" without "derivation from general rules."[77]

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[73] Kant appreciated one even lower level, which he called *Nachtun* or "acting similar." This is "the involuntary following of another's actions through a natural impulse, such as yawning or laughing" (Martin Gammon, "'Exemplary Originality': Kant on Genius and Imitation," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 35, no. 4 (1997): 576.)

[74] Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 79-85.

[75] Arendt, *Lectures*, 79-85.

[76] Arendt's analogy of examples with schemata has been criticized as suggesting that examples function as stereotypes. Positioning this analogy on the mimetic terrain shows instead that it represents only one, if deeply significant, possibility. We can thereby accept the analogy without committing to the kind of cognitive, moral, political, or cultural closure that critics worried is implied. See: Alessandro Ferrara, "Judgment, Identity and Authenticity: A Reconstruction of Hannah Arendt's Interpretation of Kant," *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 24, no. 2/3 (1998); Linda M. G. Zerilli, "The Practice of Judgment: Hannah Arendt's 'Copernican Revolution'," in *Theory After Theory*, ed. Derek Attridge, and Jane Elliot (New York: Routledge, 2011).

[77] Arendt, *Lectures*, 84-5.

3. Imitation (*Nachahmung*), where an example appears as pattern (Muster) for the inventive repetition of other artists. Imitation is like replication insofar as it remains within the bounds of a school or culture, but is distinct insofar as it seeks to imitate the originality or inventiveness that formed that school or culture. Imitation "presupposes originality in the mode of invention, and similarity in its outward display or manner," says Kant.[78] Just as Monet's *Impression, Sunrise* was among the original catalysts for those working in what has since come to be called 'Impressionism,' so too, according to Arendt, were the political innovations of Greek and Roman antiquity catalysts for imitation by democratic revolutionaries. In On Revolution, for instance, she describes how, when faced with the "awesome task" of beginning anew, the American founders "ransacked the archives of ancient prudence for guidance:" it was "by being nourished by the classics and having gone to school in Roman antiquity" that they came to "consciously imitate the Roman example and emulate the Roman spirit." What "bound [the founders] back to the beginnings of Western history [was not tradition] but their own experiences, for which they needed models and precedents."[79]

4. Emulation (*Nachfolge*), where the exemplary appears as an original archetype (*Urbild*) for inspiring the original work of further geniuses. Genius puts "freedom from constraint of rules so into force that for art itself a new rule is won—which is what shows a talent to be exemplary."[80] Like imitation, then, emulation follows the originality of an exemplary predecessor, but manifests that originality in their own artwork and thus can be said to 'succeed' the predecessor in the sense of starting something new. With emulation, then, relationship between the authority of an example and the freedom of the author is tilted in favor of the latter. Following is inverted to the future-oriented language of inspiration and, in the case of Arendt, we might say, encouragement.[81] For Arendt, as for Kant, creativity is never ex nihilo; the imagination never absolutely productive; emulation never entirely released from imitation. One cannot be inspired by action without thinking through its pattern. Thus did Arendt understand the 'genius' of the American founders' institutional innovations as arising out of their attempts at imitation: the enlarged horizons of the present revealed the possibility of something new, like shifting the location of political authority from the senate to the judiciary on the basis of their appreciation of the Roman

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[78] Ak. 15.1, 405.
[79] Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, (New York: Penguin, 2006), 191, 195–96.
[80] Mer. 181
[81] I am indebted to Thomas Wild for this term.

distinction between power and authority.[82] The exemplarity of action is revealed through its model and pattern; its spirit resurrected through its letters.[83]

An important qualification is needed here. Although the language of genius and the example of the American revolution may invoke the rarefied air of world-historical aesthetic and political greatness, for which Arendt has sometimes been derided, it is I believe more accurate way to understand emulation as at play wherever persons are inspired to action from within or out of the whatever realms that occasions that inspiration, like at work, in the home, or at school, and on the basis of whatever exemplary models are available in those realms. In education, for instance: "If [a teacher] cannot read great books […] just because [they] are fond of the life of the spirit – the life of the mind – it won't do [them] any good, and it won't do the students any good."[84] The point is not that there exists a canon of 'great' examples that must be resuscitated and preserved, nor simply that canons are formed by communal judgments and thereby subject to revision, but that we inherit on the level of our personhood an array of examples through direct and indirect experience the claims of which we may gain some creative and reflective agency over. Arendt traced the word genius, after all, to the Greek daimon, that inner 'genie' or 'demon' that we cannot ourselves see but that appears over our shoulder to reveal to others our individuality, persona, or 'whoness.'[85] If judging is both guided by the examples with whom

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[82] The founders were able to do so, Arendt says, because they understood the Roman conceptual distinction between power (*potestas*), which occurs between actors and would be institutionalized in the legislative and executive branches, and authority (*auctoritas*) as 'founding, augmenting and conserving,' and as would be institutionalized in the American courts (Arendt, *On Revolution*, 191-92). (It has been pointed out to me that Arendt's claim here is odd, perhaps even anachronistic, given that the framers of the constitution did not clearly define the scope of the judiciary in relation to the other branches of government at the time of the writing of the constitution, even though judicial review: had been operative in some states preceding the constitutional convention; was debated during the convention itself; and was argued as implied in articles III and VI of the constitution in the Judiciary Act of 1789).

[83] Kant says, for instance, "there is no beautiful art in which something mechanical, which can be grasped and followed according to rules, and thus something academically correct, does not constitute the essential condition of the art. For something in it must be thought of as an end, otherwise one could not ascribe its product to any art at all. […] Genius can only provide rich material for products of art; its elaboration and form require a talent that has been academically trained, in order to make a use of it that can stand up to the power of judgment" (CPJ 5:310). Recalling Arendt's recuperation of the "secondary causes" of ends and purposes in her discussion of the *liberum arbitrium*, we can see here that this recuperation would be consistent with Kant's portrayal of beautiful *works* of art. For Kant, artists are guided by an aesthetic idea that they endeavour to present in their work. Since an idea guides artistic production, artistic production can be said to have an end. But since the end in this case exceeds concepts and is discovered in the free play of the cognitive faculties, its expression in the work also remains indeterminate and thus can also elicit free play in judging spectators. Aesthetic ideas are thus indeterminate ends, purposeless purposes. Art, then, *communicates the ineffable*. The notion of 'purposeless purpose' points to a middle terrain capable of resolving this paradox insofar as the meaning of exemplary appearances is positioned between *nonsense* on the one hand and propositional truth on the other through not a transcendent but pluralistic excess. Kant's statement that "since there can be original *nonsense,* [the products of genius] must be models, i.e., *exemplary*" (5:308) accords with Arendt's treatment of works of art in *The Human Condition*, where art redeems the productive activities by exceeding utility on the one hand and inspiring meaning on the other. The meaning of exemplars cannot be pinned into a formula: it roots in our imaginations, yields plural aspects, and through reflective deliberation can persuade and inspire possibilities without commanding their realization.

[84] Jerome Kohn, ed. Thinking Without a Bannister: Essays in Understanding 1953-1975 (New York: Schocken, 2018), 440.

[85] Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, 12–13.

> we keep as company and discloses who we are,[86] then who we are would owe to the singular way we reflectively refract the 'genies' we have come to keep dialogue with as company in the inner region of our minds;[87] from the way we transform a plurality of voices into one distinctly our own. Genius would thus lose its strict association with individual greatness and refer instead to the singular appearance of persons through words and deeds indeterminately fashioned through internal dialogue. It would become, in other words, congeniality.[88]

That mimesis arrays itself across these possibilities supports the supposition in the previous section that exemplarity names for Arendt a source of normativity that reaches beyond its positive role in judgment. Although these distinctions may not exhaust all mimetic possibilities, their breadth of coverage should encourage appreciation of the variated ways that actions can be reproduced, coordinated, altered, and redirected.[89] Kant says, for instance, that all learning is mimesis,[90] and today there is research supporting this insight.[91] It is not news that we are deeply mimetic creatures. And it is also not news that we are witness to an unprecedented frequency and intensity of mimetic claims on our imaginations that risk instilling in the backs of our minds relatively siloed visions for how the world should look. Kant and Arendt's sensitivity to the mimetic terrain therefore not only helps us appreciate the ubiquity of example-following across social life, but also how we might redeem this terrain in the direction of political action and responsibility where reflective agency and creative freedom between plural equals is required. It enlivens us to our capacities for freedom *through*, not against, the very medium upon which social coordination depends. We move from the *re*-productive imagination, which variously repeats the past, to the re-*productive* imagination, which

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[86] In the *Crisis of Culture,* Arendt writes that: "By his manner of judging, the person discloses to an extent himself, what kind of person he is," and goes on to say that this 'manner of judging' is a function of taste, of our choices of "company among men, among things, among thoughts, in the present as well as in the past" (Arendt, *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought*, 220–22.)

[87] Arendt, "The Crisis in Culture," 223–26.

[88] I note here what Arendt said of the selection of representatives in a council system. Unlike in a party system, where the "naming of a candidate depends on the party program or ideology, against which his suitability will be measured, the candidate in the council system must simply inspire enough confidence in his personal integrity, courage, and judgment for someone to entrust him with representing his own person in political matters" (Arendt, *Thinking Without a Bannister: Essays in Understanding 1953-1975*, 137. See also footnote 41 above for a brief introduction to the relational implications of congeniality. This will be developed further in the final section.

[89] As Stephen Halliwell has summarized, the discourse on mimesis carries two countervailing commitments: (1) "the idea of mimesis as committed to depicting and illuminating a world that is partly accessible and knowable outside of art, and by whose norms art can therefore, within limits, be judged;" and (2), "the idea of mimesis as the creator of an independent artistic heterocosm, a world of its own" (Stephen Halliwell, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis: Ancient Texts and Modern Problems* (Princeton University Press, 2002), 5.). The continuity implied across this typology suggests that the distinction cannot ultimately be maintained, however— which is Halliwell's own view. See footnote 141 in the second chapter for Arendt's discussion of Kafka's fiction (a "heterocosom" if there ever was one) as transformed lived experience.

[90] Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of the Power of Judgment*, sec. 5:308.

[91] Social psychologists have been exploring this dimension of social learning for decades: Haidt and Algoe, "Witnessing Excellence in Action: The 'Other Praising' Emotions of Elevation, Gratitude, and Admiration"; Bandura, *Social Learning Theory*; Bucher, "The Influence of Models in Forming Moral Identity"; Garrels, *Mimesis and Science*; Lee, "Can Classic Moral Stories Promote Honesty in Children?"; Matsuba and Walter, "Young Adult Moral Exemplars: The Making of Self through Stories."

envisions novel ways the world should look *through* exemplary affordances available in the present; from submission to authority to an assumption of authorship; from a subordinated awe of genial creativity to congenial equality with exemplars as peers in our imaginations; from a socially closed habitus to a world-oriented ethics oriented not by the force of the exemplary but by its world-building power. If birth is the appearance of the new through the old, it is in *Nachfolge* that Arendt found the relation to the past appropriate to new beginnings.

Another benefit of presenting judgment as redemptive of a mimetic terrain is that also helps us understand Arendt's presentation of the distinction between good and evil. In a letter to Gershom Scholem, she wrote that "Evil can overgrow and lay waste the whole world precisely because it spreads like a fungus on the surface. It is 'thought-defying' precisely because thought tries to reach some depth, to go to the roots, and the moment it concerns itself with evil, it is frustrated because there is nothing. That is its banality. Only the good has depth and can be radical."[92] The mimetic terrain brings into view just what constitutes superficiality and depth, and thus how we may move from one to the other. If it is indeed the case that "Arendt was convinced that evil could be overcome only if we acknowledge that it overwhelms us in ways that are minute," as Susan Neiman has put it,[93] then it is again in *Nachfolge* that we find a description of the kind of thinking – thinking in examples as ideals – by which we strike roots in the soil deep enough that we may not only withstand whatever sandstorms the winds happen to kick up, but also stand-for what remains, at least by our partial lights, enduringly right. In this mode, thinking not only *prevents* us from evildoing, as Arendt found in Socrates, but may also "*condition* us against it" (my italics).[94]

III. The Shape of Heautonomy

Let us turn now to the second pertinent element of Kantian artistic heautonomy. In addition to charting an increasing degree of originality in relation to exemplary influence, the mimetic terrain also culminates in the achievement of taste as that which guides emulation toward a public.[95] Taste, Arendt quotes Kant, "clips the wings" of genius, "gives it guidance," and makes its inspiring ideas "capable of being followed [*Nachfolge*] by others;"[96] "the very originality of the artist (or the novelty of the actor) depends on making himself understood by those who are not artists (or actors)."[97] This aspect significantly qualifies the nature of emulation since, under taste, creativity cannot be conceived as the work of lone geniuses nor oriented to

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[92] Arendt and Scholem, *The Correspondence of Hannah Arendt and Gershom Scholem*, 209.

[93] Susan Neiman, *Evil in Modern Thought: An Alternative History of Philosophy* (Princeton University Press, 2002), 301.

[94] Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 5.

[95] Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of the Power of Judgment*, secs. 49–50.

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

[97] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 63.

individual glory. That taste 'clips the wings' of genius is not, as the metaphor suggests, wholly negative: while taste limits the imagination's flights of fancy by returning it to the rough ground from whence it sprung, insofar as that ground is exemplary, the imagination may still spring into new terrain. It is not that flight is denied as such (clipped wings can still soar for a time), but that the gravity of reality keeps the imagination tending towards the space of (exemplary) appearances. The development and exercise of taste expresses our reflective agency over human conditions, our creative and deliberate attempts to shape the world that shapes us.[98]

What, then, is the character of this reflective agency? Let us approach this question from the perspective of Kant's treatment of the young poet in the third *Critique* as it is here that we find clearest indication of a path of resolution between the claims of exemplars and taste.[99] In Kant's telling, a young poet is right to shun public criticism because he must learn to base his aesthetic choices on his own judgments and not on others'. Yet the young poet cannot for this be indifferent to public criticism, either, for it is ultimately in view of the public that he produces their works in the first place. Hence, the young poet must somehow deny and accept the public at once. According to Samantha Matherne, the solution to this puzzle is provided by a relationship that forms between exemplarity and the *sensus communis*. By practicing her judgments on "great beauties that have long enjoyed public approval," the young poet comes to refine not her private preferences for the canonical works of a tradition, but her sensitivities to the presence or absence of disinterestedness in her aesthetic judgments. By practicing judgment on canonical examples of beauty, artists acquire "aesthetic autonomy" (or heautonomy) by learning to "legislate to themselves" the "[indeterminate] norm of common sense," *viz.,* that their judgments are disinterested and can thus make the kind of claim to universality that Kant ascribes to such judgments.[100] By treating "examples *as examples,*" Matherne writes, "we treat them as stand-ins for what, at least allegedly, pleases not in a purely private fashion but universally (*allgemeine*)."[101] It is in virtue of meeting the "standard" of common sense, learned through judging publicly approved examples, that artists can therefore "take themselves to be in a position to treat their [own] judgments [and thus works] as an example for others to follow."[102]

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[98] For Arendt's meaning of human conditions, see: *The Human Condition*, 9. For her discussion of the mind's ability to 'transcend' them, see: Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 70–71.

[99] Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of the Power of Judgment*, para. 5:282-583.

[100] Samantha Matherne, "Kant on Aesthetic Autonomy and Common Sense," *Philosophers' Imprint* 19, no. 24 (2019): 15.

[101] Matherne, "Kant on Aesthetic Autonomy and Common Sense," 15–16.

[102] Matherne, "Kant on Aesthetic Autonomy and Common Sense," 17.

In her English copy of *The Critique of the Power of Judgment,* Arendt strikes out 'universality' as a translation of *allgemeine* and replaces it with 'generality.'[103] This is significant, for if a conception of heautonomy rooted in the relationship between examples and the *sensus communis* is to be helpful to understanding Arendt's reading of Kant, the degree of disinterestedness or impartiality attainable by reflective judging must be relative to the scope of perspectives available in any given community. An important consequence of this terminological shift would therefore be that the array of allegedly great beauties available to an artist to train their awareness of disinterestedness is limited by whatever examples have been generally approved by their necessarily limited public. It is owing to this more deflated view, I take it, that Arendt's description of judgment as the ability to tell right from wrong for oneself does not consign examples to the realm of education (as if taste were a final achievement secured once sensitized to the presence of an unambiguous feeling of disinterestedness) but retains them as ongoing parts of the practice of judging itself. In the presence of many possible examples, indeed many possible publics, we are left to choose for ourselves "those with whom we wish to spend our lives."[104] The picture, to anticipate, would be that whatever private or esoteric examples we choose as indeterminately action-guiding company, that company must remain in frequent dialogue, *via* renewed acts of representative thinking, with the exoteric plurality with whom we share the actual public space of appearances, for without such contact our choices would risk becoming both unresponsive and irrelevant to commonly faced crises, and we would lose any chance of concerted action to address them.[105]

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[103] This point has also been picked up by Rudolf Makkreel, who cautions against over-reading 'universality' as a description of the normative scope of reflective judging. "Whereas Kant assumes that the *sensus communis* postulated by taste represents a universal community, we merely expect a general sharing that may in fact be less inclusive. There is no need to equate the common, the general, and the universal. […] This communal sense (*gemeinschaftlichen Sinnes*) is a possibility to be cultivated rather than something presupposed. Rather than being an innately endowed common sense, the communal sense aims at an ideal community. Thus the generality of the aesthetic judgment is not rooted in some existing commonality, but projects a normative universality to be arrived at by the human community" (Rudolf A. Makkreel, "Reflection, Reflective Judgment, and Aesthetic Exemplarity," in *Aesthetics and Cognition in Kant's Critical Philosophy*, ed. Rebecca Kukla (Cambridg University Press, 2006), 233–34.).

[104] Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, 146.

[105] The relationship between the esoteric and exoteric levels of plurality establishes a point of contact with relational approaches autonomy, for which the exercise of the enlarged mentality with respect to plural others within one's community is a condition for good judgment (See: "The Reciprocal Relation Between Judgment and Autonomy: Walking in Another's Shoes and Which Shoes to Walk in," in *Being Relational: Reflections on Relational Theory and Health Law and Policy*, ed. Jocelyn Downie, and Jennifer Llewellyn (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2012). It also recalls what Stanley Cavell once remarked about writing: "a book is written for two audiences: the one it may create, whose conversation it invites; and the one that has created it, whose conversation it invokes" (Stanley Cavell, *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film*, Enl. ed (Harvard University Press, 1979), xxv.; See also: Stanley Cavell, *A Pitch of Philosophy Autobiographical Exercises* (Cambridge, Massachusetts; London, England: Harvard University Press, 2009), 5). It is worth mentioning that while I take Arendt herself to have been eminently sensitive to this, she did not realize it as fully as she could have, not simply because contextual constraints always limit even the broadest of perspectives, but also because, as she herself admits, she did not broaden her mentality to include her contemporaries as fully as she could and should have. As she replied to Günter Gaus: "You said kindly enough that I want to share. Yes, that is true. I do want to share. And I do not want to indoctrinate. That is also true. I do not want anybody to accept whatever I may think. But, on the other hand, this kind of ignoring the main literature in my own field is something that should be held against me at some point. […] This

When Arendt therefore writes that "our decisions about right and wrong depend" on "thinking in" and "choosing company" with examples, she seems to be referring to an emulative orientation to the exemplary as guided by (or characterized as) the *sensus communis*.[106] This orientation does not treat examples as models for culturally hermetic replication, but as inspiring guides that, while yielding imitable content, serve to encourage freedom in the 'enlarged horizons of the present.' It is the role of taste to orient such choices towards the publics towards which we wish our actions to be received. Taste fashions our sense of not simply of what *is* publicly approvable, but what *should* be publicly approvable. It functions, if with qualification, as what was once called *conscience.*[107]

IV. Accounting for Taste

We may now confront the problem of normative foundations in judgment from a vantage point incorporative of Arendt's appeal to exemplarity.[108] The general issue is this: if exemplarity provides the form and examples the content of our senses of right and wrong, then our senses of right and wrong remain at risk of relativism or arbitrariness.[109] Arendt was not naïve, of course. She did not believe that we need

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ignoring I think is a real fault and not just a lacuna. The [charge of her being outside the tradition] would have cut much deeper if one said, Why don't you read the books of your colleagues? Or, Why do you do it so seldom?" (Arendt, *Thinking Without a Bannister: Essays in Understanding 1953-1975*, 497.).

[106] For discussion of the *sensus communis* as an orientation, see: Makkreel, *Imagination and Interpretation in Kant: The Hermeneutical Import of the Critique of Judgment*, chap. 8.

[107] Arendt, *Thinking Without a Bannister: Essays in Understanding 1953-1975*, 521. To anticipate the final section, that taste can supplant conscience owes, in the first instance, to the immediacy of its normativity. Conscience *calls*, bids us to do what is as if from beyond ourselves—a command that cuts straight to the heart. Something placed on our tongues generates a similar normative immediacy: the "it-pleases-or-displeases me" of taste is "unmediated by any thought or reflection" (Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 66.). Yet if taste also carries normative immediacy, it also carries distance. Physically, we can move flavours with our tongue, reach for new ones with our hands. But these are outcomes of what Arendt calls the operation of reflection, which establishes the needed remoteness or distance for impartial discernment. Unlike conscience, taste *forms* by 'chewing on' experiences not just in the immediacy of 'it pleases-or-displeases me,' but through reflective arbitration in view of choosing right or wrong, beautiful or ugly, or, as she says, "something in between" (by which she may mean: between right and wrong, between beautiful and ugly. But also: between *morality and aesthetics themselves*) (Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 67.)

[108] Whether judgment needs foundations, and what they might be if it does, has been divisive in the literature. For instance, Seyla Benhabib has sought principles of equality and respect from its communicative dimension (Benhabib, "Judgment and the Moral Foundations of Politics in Arendt's Thought."); Jennifer Nedelsky a principle of equality as undergirding the exercise of the enlarged mentality (Nedelsky, "Communities of Judgment and Human Rights," 37.); and Alessandro Ferrara a regulative idea of authenticity from the feeling of purposiveness generated by exemplary appearances (Ferrara, "Judgment, Identity and Authenticity: A Reconstruction of Hannah Arendt's Interpretation of Kant.").

[109] Avoiding absolutism, we may think, leads to relativism. As Akeel Bilgrami has suggested, it is this antinomy that typifies Western moral thought and its proclivity to moral violence, the alternative for which is supplied, he argues, by an ethics of exemplarity (which he finds in Gandhi) (Akeel Bilgrami, "Gandhi's Integrity: The Philosophy behind the Politics," *Postcolonial Studies* 5, no. 1 (2002): 79–93.). This is also Arendt's point, for she was also concerned to avoid grounding normativity in the force of Law and promoted instead the non-violent power of concerted action in which, as I have been suggesting, exemplarity is at the heart. But to say that exemplarity lies at the heart of concerted action (and, by extension, judgment) is to gesture toward a kind of 'ground' that exemplarist claims operate upon distinct from the Archimedean kind the absolutist wants. It is not to remove the ground, but to locate it within an altogether field and thus

choose the examples we keep as company (we may keep them passively or with indifference), nor that we must prefer the company of 'good' examples (we may prefer the company of a Bluebeard or Hitler).[110] She also accepted the "uncomfortable fact" that our senses of right and wrong range considerably between individuals, cultures, and over time. And yet, throughout her writings she consistently promoted persons and events that in different ways reveal and affirm the world as a space of appearances shared between free and equal persons, in light of which it remains exceptionally difficult to imagine that she would have been, or was, silent on the question of why, for instance, Socrates makes for better company than Eichmann; why, that is, we should choose to keep company with the maieutic and paralyzing public thinking exemplified by the former over the latter's lack of thought. Even if we accept the descriptive salience of the disjunction between a quasi-ideal realm of exemplary company, in view of which we develop our publicly oriented tastes, and the tastes of the actual publics of which we are a part, we remain in need of an account of how the normativity of the former is constituted to lead our actions in view of the latter toward recognizable senses of right and wrong. How, then, can we account Arendt's normatively loaded choices while remaining in the spirit of her agonistic realism? Is there a way to move from the descriptive claim that the normativity of judgment depends on examples to the prescriptive claim that some examples are better than others?

Arendt intimates the outlines of a response to these questions in one of the only places in which she explicitly, if indirectly, justifies her choice of an example to her readers. Near the beginning of 'The Answer of Socrates' in *The Life of the Mind* (which is an extended version of her treatment of Socrates in 'Some Questions), she offers a justification for her selection (*eximinere*) of Socrates in his 'stingray' persona (as opposed to in his 'midwife' or 'gadfly' personas) for exploring the moral vicissitudes of thinking by citing the "brilliant" observation of Etienne Gilson in his *Dante and Philosophy* that in order to make Thomas Aquinas eulogize a heretic (the Siger of Brabant) in the *Divine Comedy*, Dante had to "transform" the historical Aquinas by "separating" his Dominican faith, which would have disallowed such eulogization, from the conditions of paradise as Dante poeticized them. As Arendt quotes Gilson, this "part of Aquinas' makeup," which "belongs to a certain human weakness," "even [Thomas] had to leave at the gate of the *Paradiso* before he could enter."[111] There are three levels of justification at play here. On the first level, Arendt finds in Gilson's discussion an exemplary portrayal of what the "ordinary construction of ideal types" (exemplification) amounts to. The obscurity of the actual Socrates characterizes the position of spectatorship in general; we must not only choose which examples we wish to think with as company

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give it an alternative sense. Bilgrami leaves hanging an evocative allusion to conscience as fulfilling this role. From this perspective, Arendt's transformation of conscience to taste presents a distinctive contribution. The question is whether taste, as the heart of judgment, beats toward the company of certain exemplars. I thank Alexander Livingstone for bringing Bilgrami's reading of Gandhi's exemplarist ethics to my attention.

[110] Hannah Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment* (New York: Schocken, 2003), 146.

[111] Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 169.

but also from their oft-opposed aspects—as is necessary, of course for imperfect beings in an imperfect world. On the second level, and more to my point, Arendt's appeal to Gilson also clearly suggests that selections of both sorts do not occur in a vacuum but may be guided by certain supporting conditions—in Dante's case those of a paradisiacal realm of human weakness redeemed in the flourishing of the cardinal and theological virtues. Beyond her suggestion that such supporting conditions do in fact obtain for her own selection of Socrates, however, Arendt leaves open just what those conditions might be, for clearly, she did not think that a theological notion of a hereafter carries effective truth after totalitarianism.

I would like to take up Arendt's implied invitation to explore such conditions by expanding the idea that aesthetic heautonomy involves 'legislating to oneself' a norm of common sense (that others should take my judgment as an example to follow because it is impartial or disinterested) in a manner that resembles yet departs from Kant's own expansion. According to Arendt, Kant grounds the presupposition of common sense in the regulative ideas of a common compact of humanity and infinite progress. We take our disinterested delights as universally communicable insofar as we believe that humanity is united by an original compact to share the world peaceably and that we are forever progressing toward its realization. The basic sociality implicit in reflective judgment's 'universal' claims are thus elevated to coincide with the broader Kantian project of reconciling freedom with nature. Culture is where morality finds (symbolical) home in the world.[112] For Arendt, however, there are two inter-related issues with this move. First, belief in humanity as a never-ending project towards enlightenment obstructs the kind of stance needed to appreciate the particularity of actual persons. The idea of progress undermines human dignity by making actual persons reflections of a principle of rational progress. Second, and more searchingly, Arendt also takes issue with the viability of regulative ideas as such. Insofar as regulative ideas lie outside judgment, they are liable to function as determinative imperatives that, once again, albeit on this more formal level, obstruct attention to the particularity of particulars. It is not only that *these* regulative ideas threaten human dignity, but that the supervenient function of regulative ideas *as such* also does.[113] Arendt's preference for Kant's notion of 'exemplary validity' as his "by far most valuable solution" to the question of standards in judgment is thus intended to replace not simply a regulative idea of humanity but also the appeal to regulative ideas as such by grounding judgment's general communicability in the reflective

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[112] See: Shell, *The Politics Of Beauty: A Study Of Kant's Critique Of Taste*, chap. 5.

[113] "Kant argued that an absolute exists, the duty of the categorical imperative which stands above men, is decisive in all human affairs, and cannot be infringed even for the sake of humanity in every sense of that word. Critics of the Kantian ethic have denounced this thesis as altogether inhuman and unmerciful. Whatever the merits of their arguments, the inhumanity of Kant's moral philosophy is undeniable. And this is so because the categorical imperative is postulated as absolute and, in its absoluteness, introduces into the interhuman realm – which by its nature consists of relationships – something counter to fundamental relativity. The inhumanity which is bound up the concept of one single truth emerges with particular clarity in Kant's work precisely because he attempted to found truth on practical reason; it is as though he who had so inexorably pointed out man's cognitive limits could not bear to think that in action, too, man cannot behave like a god" (Hannah Arendt, *Men in Dark Times* (Harvest, 1983), 27.)

appreciation of the singularity of appearing persons.[114] Each appearing person 'represents themselves,' as it were: they are exemplary of *who* they are.

But if particularity tends through judgment towards exemplary generality, and if by relating to exemplars congenially we not only make available the practical possibilities that they disclose in light of the enlarged horizons of the present but also come to choose those with whom we wish stand in our own out-standing before others, then we are once again faced, albeit on these alternative grounds, with the question of choice and the burdens it imposes. Arendt's turn to exemplary validity embraces these burdens more fully than Kant's regulative alternative: the ambiguity that forms between taste and publicity constitutes a chasm that must in each case be traversed (thus courage being the political virtue *par excellence*) and for which there are no *a priori* protections (thus the need for promising and forgiveness).[115] If judgment is the activity by which we transform the authority of the past into original authorship in the present, then the 'validity' of the exemplary is from this perspective never simply a matter of affirming common reference points or identical meanings but is always precisely at issue. The burden of judgment is to stand at the threshold of the past and future, of the private and public, and to accept the risk and humility that this liminality imposes.

But there are burdens and there are burdens. To describe the burdens of judgment in *this* way is to relieve it of subordination to externalities and take it, as Arendt intended, in its own *modus operandi*.[116] It must therefore be distinguished from the kinds of burdens incurred when we worry about contributing to civilizational progress or measuring up to imperatives or regulative ideas. There therefore must be *criteria* to the kinds of burdens judgment induces, indeed for what we mean by judgment itself, provided we take 'criteria' in the phenomenological sense as those invariant elements belonging to the phenomenon itself and drawn forward through reflective description.[117] It is by describing such criteria, I would now like to suggest, that we bring into view what I called above those 'supporting conditions' for choosing (*eximinere*) exemplars as company. Let us, then, undertake a brief description of judgment in its most basic elements.

In its broadest articulation, judgment is comprised of three phenomenal axes. Call them: the objective axis, that axis towards which judgment is oriented; the subjective axis, that axis so oriented and

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[114] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 76–77.
[115] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 186; 236–47.
[116] Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 216.
[117] Arendt's inheritance of the tradition of phenomenology involves a reworking of the notion of appearances as essentially public and communicable. The reality of essences is dependent on their endurance across plural perspectives, which must include the essence of judgment itself. Judgment therefore names both the mental activity by which we reflectively draw out the essences of appearances, as well as a phenomenon in its own right that can be reflective described and enacted. The words 'criteria' and 'essence' may also be posed as 'principle,' which is similarly for Arendt tied not to indubitable foundations but to phenomenal endurance across perspectives. When Arendt says that "The manifestation of principles comes about only through action" and "are manifest in the world as long as the action lasts, but no longer," she is marking the initiating moment of reflection through which they may inspire further action (*Arendt, Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought*, 152.).

seat of responsibility; and the intersubjective axis, as the realm in which subjects are related to one another through their mutual relation to shared objects. Together, these axes describe an activity in and through which subjects relate to the world and other subjects. For the sake of comparison, let us notice that these axes also make up the normative structure of Kantian moral judgment: the categorical imperative is the objective source of the moral law; the noumenal agent is the relevant subject of the moral law, and the kingdom of ends is the realm within which the noumenal agents belong together through mutual respect for the moral law.[118] These axes hang together in reciprocal support insofar as we reflectively assess a course of action through the kind of judgment that Kant called practical. Because, however, judgment on this view is supervened by reason, each axis is, as it were, split: sensible objects are split from the moral law; appetitive subjectivity from rational subjectivity; and the world of empirical causality from the kingdom of ends as the realm of universal freedom. One outcome of this splitting is that particular features of actual persons are shorn from relevance. We need not take them into account because the relevant characteristic of each axis – rationality – is *a priori* universal. For a conception of judgment responsive to exemplary appearances, however, the primary faculty is not reason but the imagination, which does not supervene but operates as something like a centrifuge.[119] In this case, each axis retains itself within a conjunction of the real and ideal, and takes the following forms: when we 'legislate to ourselves' the *sensus communis* (communicability, publicity, impartiality), we implicitly acknowledge that the 'objective' sources of value that guide our judgments are world-given and possibility-disclosing *exemplars*, not a moral law; that the relevant quality of ourselves as judges is as *persons* responsible for our own and others' appearing in the world before others as possible exemplars to be followed (in the sense of *nachfolge*), not as noumenal agents; and that the intersubjective realm in which these axes relate to one is the world as a space of appearances exemplarily claiming endurance between plural persons, not a kingdom of ends. Just as in Kantian moral judgment, these elements hang together in reciprocal support whenever we judge in the relevant sense: responding to appearances as exemplary implies taking oneself and others as persons responsive to and responsible for the potential exemplarity of their own (and others') actions, which is also to take the 'space' in which persons are related to and separated from one another as a world in which appearances endure through example-following.

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[118] My appreciation of the phenomenological structure of judgment is indebted to Christine M. Korsgaard's presentation of Kantian moral judgment, in particular her clarification of the notion of practical identity in moral agency. Just as our imperfect duties to children, students, or clients follow from ours (role) identities *as* parents, teachers, or lawyers, so too do our perfect duties to other rational agents entail taking ourselves as members of a kingdom of ends (see: *The Sources of Normativity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.).

[119] As Arendt cites Kant, "the intellect is at the service of the imagination" in the *Critique of Judgment* (Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 84; Alessandro Ferrara, *Justice and Judgment: The Rise and the Prospect of the Judgment Model in Contemporary Political Philosophy* (Sage, 1999).).

Part of the importance of this picture comes into view when we recognize that each of these axes may not take the aspect I have suggested, as the comparison to Kantian moral judgment already makes clear. Each axis refers to a phenomenal region from which many concepts have historically been derived. At the risk of over-simplification, we might observe the following distinctions: examples are singular persons and events that reveal normative possibilities. They are not a priori principles (presumption of rational determination), customs (presumption of authoritative traditions), habits (presumption of behavioral momentum), wills (presumption of desire satisfaction), interests (presumption of pleasure satisfaction). Persons are singularly unified centers of enacted choices, witnessed by spectators.[120] They are not citizens (presumption of membership in nation-state), souls (presumption of metaphysical essence), authentic selves (presumption of expressivist identity), or characters (presumption of unity of traits). And the world is the space of exemplary appearances between a plurality of persons. It is not the earth (presumption of naturalism), the state (presumption of sovereign governing institutions), community (presumption of common norms), or society (presumption of shared interests). Judging actualizes a specific orientation to basic and inter-related phenomenal regions that is by no means a matter of course, either historically or in the present. But this distinctiveness is not absolute, for exemplarity, personhood, and worldliness also both intercede and makes possible revised understandings of each comparative term. For instance, exemplarity bears on our understanding of principles (revealed by action) and customs (mimetically shallow); personhood bears on our understanding of citizenship (grounding the right to have rights, duties to migrants) and authenticity (as second-personal attribution of performative sincerity); and world bears on our understanding of the state (as guarantor of political rights) and earth (as that upon and through which common worlds are built as places of political belonging).

To conclude this section, I would like to briefly address the question of how these reciprocal axes bear on the reflexive constitution of judgment, or its heautonomy. It may appear that by presenting these axes I am introducing a kind of invariant criteria that risks reproducing the kinds of problems that Arendt associated with foundationalism in general. Since the objective sources of normative guidance are examples, however, such sources are not Archimedean but world-given. They remain within the scope of reflective judgment as a political activity oriented to spaces of common concern. This means that the objective sources of normative guidance are discovered reflexively through experience and gain value as guides precisely in reference to the world and the crises that appear within it. But recursivity also applies

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[120] Amelie Rorty has begun such a comparison, indeed in a manner consistent with Arendt's tracing of personhood to *persona*. For Rorty, the concept of person in its original context carried both a juridical element, that of responsibility, and an aesthetic element, that of performance: the person is "the unit of legal and theatrical responsibility. Having chosen, a person acts, and so is actionable, liable. It is in the idea of action that the legal and the theatrical sources of the concept of person come together. […] Persons are required to unify the capacity for choice with the capacities for action" (Amelie Oksenberg Rorty, "A Literary Postscript: Characters, Persons, Selves, Individuals," in *The Identities of Persons*, ed. Amelie Oksenberg Rorty (University of California Press, 1976), 301–23).

to judgment itself as a specific possibility that we can exercise or not. Judgment is not historically or culturally universal but is reflectively brought to language and practiced within a fragmented occidental history, reaching phenomenal specificity in shrouded form in Kant's third *Critique* and set in relief as its own 'modus operandi' by Arendt and others in the wake of totalitarianism. Judgment itself is *exemplarily revealed*, and thus its 'foundations' are recursively discovered from within itself.[121] Put simply, judgment is that mental practice through which we exercise reflective agency over the conditions that condition us.[122]

These two levels of recursivity describe a kind of virtuous-virtuoso circularity in which judging is placed on 'foundations' that arise within its discovery and practice. To judge in the full sense is to reflexively acknowledge the responsible orientation to the worldliness of the world and personhood of persons that it itself implies. From this perspective, the heautonomy of judgment is not only characterized by reflectively endorsing or choosing exemplary company as guides for decisions of how we wish to appear in the world before others, but also by acknowledging and exercising judging itself as that activity in which such choices and decisions are possible. By placing the 'objective' sources of normativity alongside the other axes of judging, then, we displace the normativity of judgment from relying solely on the influence of examples (which as we have seen exceeds judgment) to include supportive conditions that balance and orient their choices in the 'right' direction: toward harmony with the world, toward justice.

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[121] The normative foundations of judgment are thus exemplarist all the way down, as it were. Hence it is indeed appropriate to speak of a 'Copernican revolution' (Zerilli) of judgment, a "paradigm of judgment" (Ferrara), or that judgment is a historical-cultural 'germ' arising from Greek democracy (Cornelius Castoriadis, *Philosophy, Politics, Autonomy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), chap. 5.). On my reading, each characterization attests to an implicit understanding of the circle of exemplarity mentioned in my introduction, albeit in a way that is, now inclusive of judgment itself. One important question that arises when we characterize judgment as the circle itself is how we enter the circle at all, that is, how we take up the standpoint of judgment. Clearly, we can fail to do so. And although there can exist no complete argument against that fact – as I think skeptical challenges to constitutive accounts of agency have persuasively shown (see: David Enoch, "Agency, Shmagency," *Philosophical Review* 115, no. 2 (2006): 31–60.) – there are nevertheless many responses to the threat, the one most appropriate to the level of analysis I am now tracing resting in the motivating power of exemplarity itself. As James Tully has said of civic humanism with respect to this very problem, "Civic empowerment and enchantment do not come from grand narratives of universal progress but from praxis […]. But this […] raises the question of the motive for participation in the first place. The civic answer has always been the motivating force of examples of civic activities and exemplars of civic citizenship. Since the civic tradition has no place for the cult of great leaders and leadership but only for citizens linking arms and working together in partnerships, it turns once again to everyday practice for these motivating stories" (James Tully, *Public Philosophy in a New Key Volume Two: Imperialism and Civic Freedom*, Ideas in Context, ed. Quentin Skinner and James Tully (Cambridge University Press, 2008), 308.)

[122] It may helpful here to clearly distinguish heautonomy from autonomy and heteronomy. Autonomy, in its rational-moral sense, rules the human conditions from the standpoint of reason insofar as the moral law does not arise from the contingencies of finitude but subjects them to a form that transcends them. Heteronomy, by contrast, gives itself over to inclination or external authority and thus allows the human conditions—needs, desires, fears, social pressures—to dictate the will. Heautonomy stands between these without being reducible to either. It is the capacity of judgment to give itself a rule in the act of judging, but a rule immanent to the appearance judged rather than abstracted from it. Its normativity emerges from attentive responsiveness to the world as it appears. In this sense, heautonomy articulates a freedom appropriate to finitude: a self-guidance that answers to the human conditions without being governed by them, and that remains receptive to plurality, contingency, and exemplarity as sources of orientation rather than threats to rational control.

Where, then, does this reconstruction put us with respect to the question of normative grounds? How might the reciprocal elements of judging help us clarify how our choices of exemplary company can be guided towards recognizable senses of right and wrong? It has been said that exemplary actions appear through the imagination's responsiveness to their claim to endure in the region of the world in which they do appear and that we at least partly also stand. We may now take one step further. Exemplary actions not only reveal regions of the world in which we ourselves at least partly stand, but also stand a chance of promoting the worldliness of the world and the personhood of persons themselves. Exemplars not only reveal ideals that can inspire creative renewal in the enlarged horizons of the present on a 'formal' level, but some reveal specific ideals that harmonize with freedom and equality. Examples of nonviolent action, for instance, are worth choosing not simply because they can be creatively renewed, but also because what they reveal remains open and encourages the renewed manifestation of natal action.[123] Hence does Socrates make for better company than Eichmann. His maieutic public thinking harmonizes, if obliquely,[124] with the basic elements of judging itself, whereas Eichmann, by refusing to judge, makes himself a non-person and thus destroys the worldliness of the world and the personhood of persons.

V. The Seat of Freedom and Ethics of Congeniality

> *At every meal taken together, we invite freedom to have a seat. The chair remains vacant, but the place is set.*[125]

To this point, I have dealt with two basic elements of heautonomous judgment: mimesis and *sensus communis*. These elements work themselves into a notion of taste, understood as the choosing of exemplary company. In sections three through five, I focused on the *sensus communis* in view of threat of arbitrariness, raised by the fact of choice, and suggested normative grounds for meeting that threat. In this section, I wish to reintegrate the mimetic element to lay out more clearly what this choosing looks like or *how* it comes to

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[123] It is in this sense that Arendt endorsed the Czech "experiment of freedom" as a "new example" of participatory democracy. Paraphrasing the Czech author Pavel Kohout, Arendt writes: "what the world today stands in greatest need of may well be 'a new example' [of participatory democracy] if the next thousand years are not to become an era of super civilized monkeys" (Arendt, *On Violence*, 88). And it is also in this sense that Arendt recommended the disobedience of Danish society to the anti-Semitic laws imposed by their Nazi occupiers: "One is tempted to recommend the story as required reading in political science for all students who wish to learn something about the enormous power potential inherent in non-violent action and in resistance to an opponent possessing vastly superior means of violence" (Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, 171.)

[124] The value of Socrates an exemplar after totalitarianism is limited by the self-centeredness of his thinking (consistency with oneself). It is not consistency with oneself that matters most, but care for the world. "The moment I act politically I am no longer concerned with me," Arendt wrote. "Rosa Luxembourg was very much concerned with the world and not at all concerned with herself" (Arendt, *Thinking Without a Bannister: Essays in Understanding 1953-1975*, 451).

[125] René Char, *Leaves of Hypnos*, 1st ed., trans. Cid Corman (Grossman, 1973), 131. Quoted by Arendt at: Arendt, *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought*, 4.

pass. By deepening the mimetic element, I wish to ward off any suspicion that the picture I have presented above is too structural to capture judgment as an activity of *freedom*. To this end, I intend to show how choosing examples as company characterizes a way of (mental) life, or political ethics, promotive of world-building action. Part of what is at stake here is elaborating the idea that the normative axes of judgment are not constitutive of judgment in a transcendental but a reflexive way.

Arendt is clear that responsibility depends on the freedom of judgment.[126] Only if judging is free are persons accountable for their actions. The freedom of reflection must therefore be preparatory for the freedom of action in some way, or even implied within it in some sense.[127] Let us approach the freedom of reflection on its own terms by setting up a provisional distinction. First, reflection appears free in a *negative* sense insofar as it involves something like a 'step back' from whatever appears to the mind *as* an object of reflection. For such a step back to be possible, there must be some element of subjectivity irreducible to, and thus free *from*, the objects it reflects upon (a freedom traditionally rooted in a soul or transcendental ego, for instance). Second, reflection also seems free in a *positive* sense insofar as it involves evaluating reflective objects in view of their worth or value. This implies a freedom of choice oriented toward objects under awareness of personal responsibility. Now, if heautonomy is to characterize a genuine alternative to autonomy and heteronomy, these aspects must be reconciled. Although the irreducibility of reflection to the external world may suggest something like an ego that in every case withdraws from appearances, heautonomy requires that we resist the temptation to assign the locus of freedom to such an ego for, as we saw in the previous chapter, the step back of reflection is not the achievement of a sovereign subject standing 'over' objects but characterizes a responsiveness to, and abiding relation with, the appearances that occasion that reflection. And while the fact of that relation may suggest a potentially deferential or subservient attachment to appearances, heautonomy also requires that we not take that attachment in a causal or determinative way for, as we saw in the second section of this chapter, reflection actuates a mode of relation through which the singularity of personhood is made possible. The distinction between negative

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[126] "For behind the unwillingness to judge lurks the suspicion that no one is a free agent, and hence the doubt that anyone is responsible or could be expected to answer for what he has done" (Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, 19.).

[127] It may seem that I am coming close to collapsing the distinction between the *vita contemplativa* and *vita activa.* The first epigraph to this chapter — "I do believe that thinking has some influence on action, […] because it is the same ego that thinks and the same ego that acts" — offers some evidence for what I am here calling the action-anticipatory orientation of judging, provided we take judging as incorporating aspects of thinking and resolving its paradoxes, as discussed in the first section. Further on in the passage the epigraph was taken from (Arendt's response to C.B. Macpherson's assertion that "teaching or theorizing is acting" at a conference dedicated to her work at York University in 1972), she says the following: "If plurality […] rules the earth, then I think one has to modify the this notion of the unity of theory and practice to such an extent that it will be unrecognizable for those who have tried their hand at it before. I really believe that you can only act in concert and I really believe that you can only think by yourself. These are two entirely – if you'd like – existential positions" (Arendt, *Thinking Without a Bannister: Essays in Understanding 1953-1975*, 445.) I think that the polarity of these existential positions is weakened when we substitute thinking with judging. What must remain in place, however, is the distinction between the invisibility of mental activities and the public visibility of action. I discuss this distinction below in terms of privacy and publicity.

and positive freedoms thus proves superficial. It points towards a more basic middle-voice freedom from which they derive:[128] responsiveness and responsibility, passivity and activity, are two parts of the same whole.[129]

If responsibility requires free judgment, and free judgment is relational, and that relation entails choosing exemplary company, then responsibility not only encompasses *which* company we choose but also *how* we choose it. There must therefore be a congruence between the 'content' of examples and the 'form' of our relation to them. When we speak of the spirit of exemplars, we include both the *what* and the *how*, which in the last chapter I called *meaning.* Bringing this relation into view will therefore not only help us more clearly understand the *way* we freely relate to exemplars in judgment, but also how enacting this relation 'actuates' the worldliness of the world and personhood of persons in the mind.

I find the most promising way to characterize this relation is by returning to a term I briefly introduced in section II to describe the mimetic element of judging, namely, *congeniality.* This term appeared in the context of my discussion of *Nachfolge* or emulation, which according to Kant is associated with genius and that I argued redeemed the mimetic terrain in the direction of originality. Let us develop this term first from the vantage points of ordinary language and etymology, and then with respect to Arendt's own thinking.

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[128] Unlike Ancient Greek, English does not have a middle voice inflection. This makes rendering middle-voice phenomena difficult, but not impossible. "This book reads easily," for instance, is neither active (the book isn't doing the reading) nor passive (the agent doing the reading isn't mentioned), but both at once. The book *lends* itself to easy reading and is (implicitly) *discovered* as easy to read by the reader/speaker. Even sentences that may appear to assign agency solely to subjects, as when the subject is a person or the object is omitted, need not imply unilateral agency. "He dresses elegantly," for instance, may at first glance assert the intentionality of the man's choices over his clothing, but it may also refer to the *way* of elegance revealed by the man's manner of dress. Here, the evaluation/description 'dresses elegantly' refers to a reflexive *relation* of mutual enablement *between* person and clothing: the man dresses his clothing, the clothing dresses the man, and 'elegance' refers to this mutual relation.

Exploring the middle voice was something of a preoccupation of the phenomenological tradition (see Fn. 121 in the introduction for comments about Arendt's relation to this tradition). Phenomenology is not concerned with categorizing phenomena systematically as if independent of the mind but elucidates and explores the belonging-together of thinking (*logos*) and appearing (*phainomena*). Where phenomenology may have, and still does, hold out the promise of arriving at 'things themselves,' it was always understood that such things are never given *in* themselves. Phenomenology names a method or *way* that calls to be taken up anew (Husserl), a *way* of dwelling with presencing of things in their openly relational givenness (Heidegger), or *way* of life (Hadot).

The belonging-together of thinking and appearing of course troubles the metaphysical opposition between subjectivity and objectivity. Although I have used 'subjectivity' and its cognates throughout this chapter to mark its relevant domain of consideration, this has been a heuristic for bringing into view the middle-voice of heautonomy and the form of responsibility it carries. Heautonomy is a paradigmatic middle-voice concept: it is a self-relation that emerges through exposure to phenomenal relations in the world and is neither sovereignly active (autonomy) nor submissively passive (heteronomy). If autonomy means, 'I rule myself' and heteronomy 'I am ruled by another,' heautonomy means 'I find an inspiring law for the shared world the by reflecting what appears within it.'

[129] Zhengmi Zhouhuang puts it like this: "[Heautonomy] can be regarded as a third kind of freedom between transcendental and practical freedom. On the one hand, aesthetic freedom has more positive content than [transcendental or] negative freedom; on the other hand, it is richer, more flexible, and more vital than [practical or] positive freedom" (Zhouhuang, "Living Freedom," 84.).

We say that something is congenial when it is agreeable or affinitive in some sense. This agreeableness can stem from several sources, like need, temperament, preference, or taste. It can have an accidental quality, as when we unexpectedly find ourselves 'vibing' with someone we have just met or in a place that happens to suit our mood. But it can also have an intentional quality, as when we appreciate that a colleague's agreeableness derives not from their accidental affinity with us but from a cultivated friendliness that extends to all they interact with, or that our local library is congenial to study owing to its architectural and interior design.

The sense of agreeableness in ordinary usage derives from the combination of the word's etymological roots. 'Genial' stems from the proto-Indo-European '*ǵenh,'* meaning 'to give birth' or 'beget,' and in Latin usage came to be associated with genius, not in the internalized romantic sense of exceptional ability or talent, and even less in the contemporary sense of commodified genius worship,[130] but in the sense of an inborn spirit or genie bestowed on a person at birth.[131] When combined with the Latin prefix 'con,' meaning 'with' or 'together,' this spirit is set in relational terms. It names the quality of kindred spiritedness, natural or spiritual affinity or compatibility. If genius has come to suggest the awesome capacities of individuals standing apart from their relations (the sublime), congeniality names the way in which individuals appear as persons *through* their relations (the beautiful).

The presence of birth in the etymology of congeniality of course picks up Arendt's image of natality for freedom, and affinity resonates with the connotations of companionability in her use of company. The distinction between accidental and intentional also resonates, for if the availability of exemplars is contextual (owing to living here not there, now not then), then congeniality retains an element of accidentality, provided we take it in the phenomenal sense of a happening or event. But if we are also capable of choosing which examples we wish to keep as company from out of the vast array that we experience over the course of our lives, accidentality is the beginning, not the end, of the matter (there is never an end). Congeniality in the sense relevant to us is thus the one that pivots not on agreeableness but on choice; on (s)elective affinity as opposed to circumstantial or natural affinity (to borrow a term from Goethe and Benjamin).[132]

What, then, does it mean to *choose* company in a sense compatible with affinity? When Arendt writes that our decisions of right and wrong depend on our choices of exemplary company, it may seem that she is emphasizing choice over affinity, in which case we might be lead to read her examples of choosing company — "I would much rather be in hell with God than in heaven without him" (Eckhart); "I

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[130] See, for instance, Helen Lewis, *The Genius Myth: A Curious History of a Dangerous Idea* (Penguin, 2025).

[131] For an insightful discussion of the history of genius including its romantic and contemporary senses, see: Ray McDermott, "Situating Genius," *Counterpoints* 249 (2006): 285–302, JSTOR. While there is much written on genius, far less has been written on congeniality.

[132] I discuss the relationship between election and selection below.

would much rather go astray with Plato than hold true views with these people" (Cicero) — as invocations of something like the endorsability of their content. But this is not exactly what Arendt is saying, for although the content of examples is of course relevant (*what* they say and do), at the heart of their mattering is *how* they say what they say and do what they do. As Arendt puts it, "Even if all criticism of Plato is [correct], Plato may still make for better company than his peers."[133] Judgment is not about the correctness of our judgments *about* examples, but about their suitedness to maintaining a relationship *with* them. This clarification carries two important entailments. First, it emphasizes a distinction between truth-guided judgments, which are coercive, and company-guided judgments, which promote relational freedom. Second, it also subtly characterizes the empowering nature of that freedom (power-with, to borrow a term from Mary Parker Follett).[134] Choosing examples of freedom in an unfree world can be every bit as galvanizing as truth-bearing in a world gone mad. Not only may it lead someone to retain themselves against dominant opinion, but also to risk persecution for their choices.[135]

But while Arendt's references to choosing company point toward the principle of freedom such a choice is meant to preserve and the power of that principle to galvanize right action, she does not describe what the free relation characteristic of those choices looks like when she offers them. Indeed, it is not obvious how Plato or God are promotive of freedom in her sense (acting in concert). What *is* clear, however, is that Arendt is suggesting that *we* have the power to relate to exemplars in this way, and that this power is an *"*attitude*,"* a way of the life, or *cultura animi*—a cultivation of mind that *"*knows how to take care of, preserve, and admire things of the world*."*[136]

Although the "attitude" that coincides with our choices of company has to this point remained shrouded, we are not for this without clues.[137] An initial stepping-stone can be found in Arendt's comments about the 'two-in-one' of thinking, which recall she attributed to Western morality's desire for self-consistency and traced to the example of Socrates. "The only criterion of Socratic thinking," she wrote, "is agreement, to be consistent with oneself, *homologein autos heauto*."[138] And this, she says, is to be in

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[133] Arendt, *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought*, 225–26.

[134] Mary Parker Follett, *Creative Experience* (Longman Green, 1924), 186.

[135] Lessing's advocacy of religious toleration drew official and ecclesiastical retaliation during the 1770s when his publication of the *Fragmente eines Ungenannten* prompted a campaign by Hamburg's pastor J. M. Goeze and culminated in a ducal order forbidding Lessing from further theological polemics. Barred from arguing the issue in the genre of doctrinal dispute, Lessing shifted the same conflict onto the stage. *Nathan der Weise* (1779) functions as a dramatic form of toleration that reframes the question from proving the one true revelation to testing religions by their ethical fruits in a shared world. The "three rings" parable thus becomes Lessing's reply to silencing—an indirect, public argument for coexistence under conditions of unavoidable uncertainty. See: Toshimasa Yasukata, "The Controversy Between Lessing and Goeze," in *Lessing's Philosophy of Religion and the German Enlightenment* (Oxford University PressNew York, 2003), https://doi.org/10.1093/0195144945.003.0004.

[136] Arendt, *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought*, 225.

[137] Arendt, *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought*, 225.

[138] Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 203.

"harmony," or to come home to oneself as a "friend."[139] Hence its opposite, "to be in contradiction with oneself, *enantia legein autos*, actually means becoming one's own adversary."[140] Crucial for my purposes is (a) the correspondence Arendt lays out between reflexivity (as suggested by the presence of *heauto*) and friendship; and (b) her use of spatial and audial metaphors within a description of that reflexivity. Let us build towards (b) through (a).

We saw in the first section of this chapter that judging expands the inner duality of thinking and its self-relation to an inner plurality inclusive of exemplars *via* the enlarged mentality. This expansion arose out of the problem of accounting for the senses of right and wrong that must underlie the feeling of harmony or disharmony, as well as how our actions can be inspired toward right and wrong in a positive sense. The "dialogue of the two-in-one does not lose contact with the world of my fellow men because they are represented in the self with whom I lead the dialogue of thought," Arendt wrote.[141] It is not simply the retention of this contact that judging accomplishes, however, as thinking also requires such contact (metaphor), but also the transformation of this contact into a non-adversarial and pluralistic mode of relation anticipatory of action (exemplarity). While Socrates' choice to drink the hemlock may have expressed his ultimate indebtedness to the judgment of his peers and to his city, the kinds of thinking he disclosed throughout his life remained ineffectual in stemming the demise of democracy. As important as *stopping* to think may be, what is also needed is *action.* And it is here that judging orients the element of friendliness implied in the reflexivity of speaking to oneself toward harmony with the world in which one eventually speaks with others as *one*.

We may build upon this pluralistic revision of the *homologein autos heauto* by turning to Arendt's essay on Lessing, in which friendship plays a pivotal role. For Arendt, Lessing's play *Nathan the Wise* dramatizes the world-building power of friendliness in dark times.[142] "Lessing's self-thinking is not […] silent dialogue with oneself," Arendt writes, "but an anticipated dialogue with others."[143] This anticipatory dialogue is presented most prominently by the titular character who, although calls certain other characters his friend (e.g., Al-Hafi), more deeply exemplifies *how* friendship comes to pass through his enduring ethic of friendliness.[144] Although there are only a few instances in which Lessing makes Nathan's internal

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[139] Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 203.

[140] Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 203. Recall that theories of autonomy rooted in the will depend on an adversarial command-obedience relation to oneself.

[141] Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 476.

[142] *Nathan the Wise* dramatizes tensions between Jews, Christians, and Muslims in 12th century Jerusalem during the third crusade and was written in response to the banning of Lessing's essays on religious tolerance and freedom of thought in 18th century Prussia.

[143] Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*, 10.

[144] I believe there is an important distinction to be made between friendliness (as congeniality) and friendship. This distinction is akin to similar distinctions, like between trustworthiness and trust, or truthfulness and truth. The former speaks to the *adjective* behind the *noun*, the *ethics* behind the attribution of *attainment*. One benefit of focusing on friendliness over

dialogue explicit in the play, the wisdom that results from this dialogue is visible in his ability to keep dialogue and companionability alive even when his interlocutors betray motives of domination, trickery, or suspicion. This ability is in no way predicated on demanding or even requesting different behavior. He neither coerces changes nor does he close off from them when differences of opinion emerge, but enacts again and again an example that, over time, erodes whatever hostility or world-denying waywardness their actions seem to betray, even at risk to his own life. Arendt describes this ethic as a matter of relinquishing truth for opinion, self-importance for mutual belonging, and enjoining others into in the interhuman space of dialogue in which persons appear as free equals. (Perhaps the best instance of this in her own life was her befriending her arresting officer while briefly in a Nazi prison, who then released her). What brings them into equality is not whatever similarities they happen to share, but their capacity to speak and speak anew about aspects of the world occurring between them, whether these are mysteries of faith, fairness in lending and borrowing, or anything else. Thus if, as Arendt puts it, "Lessing's brand of friendship is as selective as compassion is egalitarian," that selection (*eximinere*) is not a matter of choosing based on

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friendship, I think, is that it helps address problems associated with Arendt's portrayals of friendship in ancient and modern (or dark) times. Where ancient friendships formed between citizens appearing to one another as free equals through their shared concern for public issues, modern friendship by contrast involves a private relation in which aspects of public friendship, like humanizing dialogue, survive despite both the presence of the private relation of intimacy as well as the loss of an actual public sphere in which political friendship can flourish. As Brian Singer has noted, this dual presentation raises questions about the nature of the social in Arendt's thought, which she portrays in *The Human Condition* as overwhelming both the private and public spaces with instrumentality like a 'blob,' as Hannah Pitkin put it. From this perspective, whatever elements of the public remain in modern friendships, these can seem but a consolation for the irrevocable loss of the shared world. Yet, Arendt's discussion of the social in *The Human Condition* is not monolithic when considered from the vantage point of her broader writings on this topic. In her reflections on Little Rock, for instance, she presents the social as an intermediary between the private and public that can both sustain and destroy them. As Singer summarizes, "The social realm helps secure a sense of personal pride in one's group belonging, but in ways that give rise to competitive insecurities; with its associative pluralism, the social realm promotes the freedoms of the political sphere, while simultaneously threatening the equality that underwrites the latter's public character; and by insisting on micro distinctions, the social realm arrests tendencies towards large-scale conformism" (Brian Singer, "Thinking Friendship With and Against Hannah Arendt," *Critical Horizons*, 2017, 11.). Singer rightly notes that this ambivalence presents an opportunity to develop a notion of friendship that "speaks to these ambiguities" and "ties social appearances to Arendt's other, more compelling themes – those, for example, that speak to the formation of a personhood open to others, the creation of a plural world in common, or the hope borne of new beginnings" (11). In this regard, it is worth noting that the kind of friendship exemplified in *Nathan the Wise* was both written in and portrayed 'dark times' in which the public sphere had all but disappeared. The absence of a public realm does not entirely eclipse the world-opening and building ethics of judgment. Much of what the play concerns is the ability of socially distinct persons to uncover a common world not against, but through, their social differences such that they can carry on together in an otherwise divided world without persecution and violence. Focusing on the ethic of friendliness exemplified by Nathan thus brings into view a world-building ethic that makes possible the kind of bond appropriate to world-building concerted action that does not require the attainment of lasting (social) friendships based on the sharing of internalized social conventions, norms, or interests. It rather depends on the re-narrativization (or re-judgment) of those conventions in ways conducive to mutual freedom and equality (as most famously presented by Nathan's ring parable). As suggested in the second section of this chapter, the mimetic terrain of conventional influence is redeemed by judgment through congeniality. And with respect to the play, this redemption holds true even if its climax presents the *dramatis persona* discovering previously unknown familial connections that, if taken at face value, would literalize the biological connotations of 'gene' and thus oppose the spirit of Nathan's ethic of friendliness. In Edward Kemp's stage version that I saw several years ago, the revelation of *natural* affinities occasioned a posture of regret from Nathan: the final scene culminates in a tableau in which the newly discovered family poses center stage as if taking a selfie, while Nathan turns away, head bowed, drifting into the shadows off-stage.

shared interests or beliefs, nor does it abandon equality in the non-ideological sense of free belonging to a shared world. It is rather a way of enacting a mode of relation in which that belonging is itself made recurringly possible. Every character that crosses Nathan's path – be it a family member, a sultan, a dervish, a servant, a knight, or a priest – is met with the same hospitality, the same sense that they share the same world whatever that might turn out to be. And as the play shows, what it reveals could not have been foreseen in advance.

Implied in Nathan's ethic of friendliness, then, is just the natal sense of freedom suggested by the etymology of congeniality. While it is helpful in showing the effects of congeniality in action, however, it remains to be seen how we are to characterize the freedom of mind that anticipates those actions. So far, this inner freedom has been characterized as a dialogue with exemplars that tends toward personal consistency or harmony with oneself as a person responsible for the world, where this is predicated on a congenial relation with chosen exemplars. In what follows I strive to deepen this description by developing four of its core aspects. Before doing so, however, I would like to briefly return to point (b) above (the presence of visual and audial metaphors in friendliness) to draw forward some of the general issues at stake and prepare for the elaboration to follow.

I suggested above that the question that guides this section concerns not *which* examples we choose but *how* we choose them. In doing so, I have implicitly outlined two sides of the bridge that judgment crosses between thinking and willing. Thinking, recall, is reliant on visual metaphors and is actively attentive to the *presence of appearances* (abiding over time/objectivity). Especially as reason, thinking has typically been associated with questions of right and wrong, duty, autonomy, and morality. The term *consistency* belongs to this metaphorical landscape. It means standing, setting, or placing firmly (*sistere*) together (*con*). Volition, on the other hand, is reliant on audial metaphors (the inner voice, shoulder angels, the call of conscience) and is passively receptive to the *mutability of appearing* (transience in time/subjectivity). Willing has typically been associated with questions of good and evil, how to live well, ethics and, in its extreme form, heteronomy.[145] The term *harmony*—which means fitting, joining, or tuning into a resonant whole (*harmonia*)—aligns with the metaphorical ambience of willing. While consistency and harmony thus overlap in important ways (fittingness, proportion, agreement), the former has come to

[145] In *The Gift of Death,* Jacques Derrida pushes the ethics of the will and audition to its extreme conclusion. Through a sustained reading of the biblical story of Abraham and Isaac as considered by Kierkegaard and Patocka, Derrida argues that the ethical call is never generated autonomously by the subject but comes from elsewhere, from an alterity that is irreducible to the self's mastery. In this sense, the call of ethics is absolutely heteronomous. It imposes itself from an outside that remains entirely illegible, precedes our freedom, and makes us responsible before we choose. Unlike traditional heteronomy, which voids responsibility in deference to an other, the absolute heteronomy of the call (exemplified by the silent voice of God that calls Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac) leads to the absolute and singularizing obligation of *decision*: acting in suspension of existing communal norms (Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death & Literature in Secret*, trans. David Wills, Religion and Postmodernism (University of Chicago Press, 2008), chaps. 2–3.)

carry static connotations of solidity and structure, while the latter more ephemeral connotations of attunement and resonance.[146] If my presentation of the normative axes of judgment in the previous section may have tracked to some degree the structural tendencies of the former (i.e., constitutive conditions/grounds of judgment), my elaboration of the *way* of judgment as a relational activity of mental freedom will strive to incorporate the voice of the will in fuller fashion.

To be sure, however, I am not after a mere balance. Thinking and willing, morality and ethics, stasis and ephemerality, sight and sound, the what and the how, are not in my view to be weighed against each other as if on the *scales* of judgment but rediscovered anew through the free reflexivity of judgment as it clarifies itself. By allowing images and sounds to speak not as metaphors but through examples,[147] we allow them into the space of dialogue in which their voices might help illuminate how the worldliness of the world and personhood of persons vibrates forth in the mind. While it is indeed the case, as Arendt says, that the

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[146] The distinction between thinking/vision/morality and willing/audition/ethics is of course simplistic. The distinction can and has been blurred in many ways. While Kant, for instance, distinguished morality and ethics (we can and should do what's right even without the virtues that support it), he nevertheless included the will in practical reason: through practicing their moral judgments on examples, the student of morality learns to harmonize their wills with the moral law to produce consistency towards right action over time. But since morality (the right) in this picture holds sway, Kant did not overcome the distinction but subsumed it. It was through the inclusion of the *sensus communis* in his aesthetic philosophy that he pointed towards a fuller overcoming. In *The Life of the Mind,* Arendt prepares for her turn to judgment by dismantling the authority of thinking and willing. If thinking, as guided by sight, produces the needed objectivity for supposing there are such things as natural goods with categorical rules, the frustration of those rules by the ceaseless activity of thinking nevertheless dissolves the moralistic tendencies of practical philosophy. Hence if we press the question of objectivity in thinking, as we did in the last chapter under 'thinking the particular', we are led to a weaker notion of the good in which its objectivity remains perspectivally excessive to rule categorization. And if willing, as guided by audition, establishes receptivity to an external call or summons that may yield subjective obligations of softer (e.g., acting prudentially in everyday choices) or firmer (Abraham's near sacrifice of Isaac) sorts, the very singularity and non-repeatability of that call wards against the relativism to which subjectivism is often reduced. For what is summoned is not a choice among preferences, but a fidelity to something that, precisely in not being generalizable, nevertheless binds—more intimately, more absolutely, because it cannot be exchanged for another. But if we pressed the question of the will, as I intimated in the first section of this chapter, the decisionistic outcomes of audition is dissolved into deliberative harmonization with exemplars. While the cleft between the inner and outer remains, the *sensus communis* serves to calibrate our 'decisions' to act toward a general good that emergent from and oriented towards the shared world. In this, the tendency of audition to ephemerality and silence is buoyed on the opposite direction, that is, towards endurability and shareability.

[147] As I discussed in the previous chapter (II.v), examples and metaphor are distinct: examples represent themselves while metaphor represents something else. In what follows, it may be difficult to shake the sense that my use of sensory language to describe judgment remains metaphorical. Although I have not yet found an adequate way of characterizing just how we are to read what may appear metaphorical as exemplary, my sense is that Arendt's thought invites us to do so. What this would seem to require is relinquishing the view that sensory language serves as a 'vehicle' for representing invisible 'thought-things' as 'targets' (as early philosophers of metaphor put it) by seeing the apparent world and inapparent mind as 'belonging-together' in an originary way. From this perspective, it would not merely be that the senses help us see what judgment is about, and judgment helps us see what the senses are about, but rather that, through judgment, the apparent world is liberated to exemplify judgment across plural vantage points. There is something of this view contained, it seems to me, in a quote Arendt provides from Bruno Snell: "if the rock in the sea 'which endures the swift courses of whistling winds and the swelling breakers that burst against it' can become a metaphor for endurance in battle, then 'it is not . . . correct to say that the rock is viewed anthropomorphically unless we add that our understanding of the rock is anthropomorphic for the same reason that we are able to look at ourselves petromorphically" (Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 109.). If metaphor leads us to treat these perspectives as parallactic, exemplarity leads us to see them as mutually constitutive and non-exhaustive through reflection. This is, once again, to discover the middle-voice of heautonomy.

senses cannot be translated into each other (e.g., we cannot literally hear what they see.),[148] it is through the gift of the *sensus communis* and its organ of language that we may welcome sight and sound as participants in a dialogue about the very activity that invites them to do so. While what they offer will of course prove limited, their contributions nevertheless have value.[149] And this not only because they are engrained in our imaginations as common vehicles for making sense of our experiences, but also because they can serve, both directly and indirectly, to highlight just why it is that examples of taste more perspicuously reveal what judgment is properly about, and indeed why morality and ethics are underwritten by the political.

Four Aspects of Congenial Ethics

The Movement of Reflective Freedom

We are after a clarification of the freedom of the mind in terms of congeniality. I begin with one of Arendt's most direct, if abstract, pronouncements on the subject. In her essay on Lessing she writes: "Lessing retreated into thought, but not at all into his own self; and if for him a secret link between thought and action did exist (I believe it did, although I cannot prove it by quotations), the link consisted in the fact that both action and thought occur in the form of movement and that, therefore, freedom underlies both: freedom of movement*."*[150] The question before us, then, is not only what kind of movement characterizes the mental freedom of judgment, but also how this movement anticipates action. Because movement occurs

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[148] (Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind* (Harcourt, 1977), 120). The phenomena of synesthesia, however, demonstrates that this is not always the case. And most people readily associate phenomena perceived through one sense with those of another.

[149] It is interesting to note that not only does the recurrence of these metaphors in the discourses about thinking and willing have something to do with thinking's dependence on metaphor (willing, of course, being a concept discovered by thinkers), but so too, it seems to me, does their polarity. In metaphysical (as opposed to poetic) thought, metaphor tends to *fix* the concepts it transposes from perception: a blueprint is to a chair what a Form is to an appearance. To dislodge this stasis requires motion—and in a world of otherwise static objects, motion requires an external force (e.g., an unmoved mover). The need for an external agent has historically underwritten the view that change arises only through collision, conflict, or dialectical antagonism. Yet we might ask: if in judgment exemplarity replaces metaphor as the vehicle for general meaning, and if we here take up the standpoint of judgment rather than thinking, are we not then free to draw upon visual and audial examples without being constrained by their untranslatability? Would we not then also liberate them to speak to one another not as adversaries but as companions? Of course, each remains irreducibly what it is. But by placing them in *free play* we may nevertheless allow them to speak together to disclose the terrain that lies between them—the terrain occupied by judgment, by *taste*. While taste too has its own array of metaphors, these serve less to ground judgment than provide perspicuous examples that clarify its activity. They do not so much compete with metaphors of thinking or willing as they invite them into dialogue. In what follows, then, I draw freely on Arendt's own use of visual and auditory examples as part of my effort to expand her reflections on judgment.

[150] I am of course here taking 'thinking' as 'thinking the particular,' or judgment, which I find to be clear in her analysis of Lessing.

in both space and time, the problem requires a spatial and temporal figuration of judgment itself: how freedom arises, where it travels, what it traverses.

Let us first clarify what this movement is not. The freedom of reflection is not the two-step movement of transcendental autonomy, backward into a purified interiority and forward armed with universal laws. Nor is it the horizontal movement of fraternalism, marching arm-in-arm against a common adversary. Both collapse human dignity, the former by reducing persons to instantiations of law, the latter by reducing persons to instantiations of shared passion or will.[151] The freedom of judgment, by contrast, is neither above nor beside, neither vertical nor horizontal. It emerges *diagonally* out of the linear courses of space and time, and *circularly* through relations with plural exemplars. Diagonality and circularity, I suggest, are the figures through which we may begin to sense the movements of mental freedom.[152]

As discussed in the previous chapter, reflective judgment begins with an event: something unexpected interrupts the continuity of our assumptions and renders the familiar strange. In the closing pages of *The Life of the Mind*, Arendt describes this event as a clash between and future. It is out of this clash that the freedom of thinking, which she nearly collapses into judging, emerges.[153] Where past and

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[151] For Arendt's critical discussion of the violent tendencies of political movements based on sentiment and passion, see: Arendt, *On Violence*, 69.; Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (Penguin Books, 1990), chap. 2.

[152] Counterposed against the linear image of time is the older image of cyclical time. Emerging from the recurrences of nature—the rising and setting of the sun, the turning of the seasons, the cycle of life and death—cyclical time extends infinitely as an eternal recurrence of the same. It seems likely that the linear image, more familiar to us moderns, emerged out of the cyclical. Our experience of the going-away and arriving of the cycles of nature was never a perfect circle, an Edenic paradise, but something more elongated, even elliptical. One *waits* for spring, *seizes* summer, *welcomes* fall, *prepares* for winter. While there is of course a whole geography of time one could explore here, however this elongation took shape, the innovations and planning it invited stretched the cycle until it appeared like a line of civilizational progress, of human perfectibility, of prowess over nature. And yet, the allure of the cyclical has never disappeared. Infinities stretching in opposed directions can be terrifying, so we have sought circles wherever we could find them: in the eternal hereafters lying outside time's arrows, in the tranquil pools of our souls, in the singular arc of our individuated lives, and, of course, in the rhythms of nature (which until recently were presumed a constant). Today, our culture is described as one of whiplash and burnout. Nostalgia is on the rise. Many of my generation find themselves wandering into AI-generated videos depicting interior spaces of homes in the 1990s that, while clearly inhabited, are for the short duration of the reel unoccupied: kitchens and bedrooms bathed in warm morning light, afternoon rain dripping down living room windows while a television quietly plays old cartoons, a landline telephone softly ringing in the distance. One feels a yearning for the cyclical—daily rhythms, seasonal comforts, the constancy of interiors—even as we live under the relentless acceleration of linear forces. The rapid changes in climate, economy, global politics, and technology are driven by forces so vast and nebulous that it is impossible to imagine a collective agency powerful enough to slow things down (Timothy Morton has called these forces 'hyperobjects'). They encourage world-destroying feelings like helplessness, cynicism, nihilism, narcissism, and hedonism. The logic animating them is not the establishment of just and durable human goods, but the innovation of new "goods" designed to be consumed. Linear time has colonized cyclical time: there may be "market cycles," but they must always inflate. What we need is a way to balance these visions—to return to the spiral where recurrence never simply repeats but carries difference forward. Heautonomy approaches this in a particular way. For what lies between the recurrences of nature and the ingenuity of humanity is not dialectics ('repetition with a difference'), but the fact of plurality: the inexhaustible presence of others who share the earth with us. The diagonals of heautonomy cross and circle through this plurality, tracing a spiral of worldly appearances woven together upon a single earth. We will see below how heautonomous judgment, understood in terms of taste, returns us to the language of our relation to the earth upon which we build our worlds: *cultivation.*

[153] The thinking that freely responds to this clash, Arendt says, is like an "umpire, arbiter and judge over the manifold, never-ending affairs of human existence in the world" (Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 209.) The umpire weighs past and future.

future have indefinite origins (infinity) but definite ends (the present), judgment, by contrast, begins with a definite origin (the present) and stretches toward indefinite ends (infinity).[154] Mental freedom thus appears as a line travelling at equally increasing distances from the clash of past and future. Arendt supplies a figure—the only one across her writings—which I would like to improvise upon to develop the freedom of judgment. Her image concerns time; let us balance it with space.

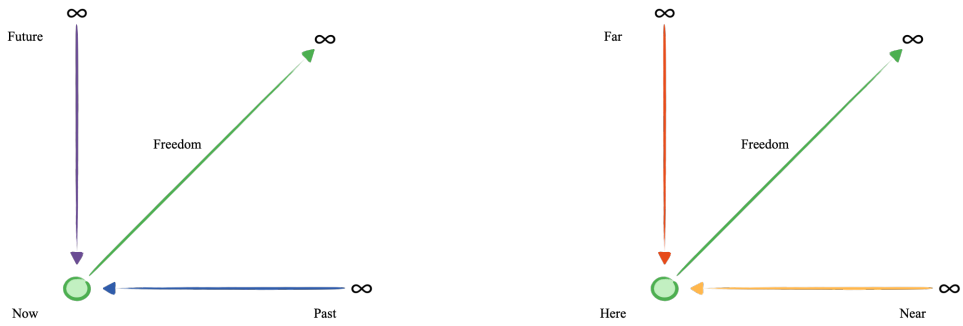

Figure 1: The Diagonality of Reflective Freedom

Ordinarily, past and future are felt as lines stretching behind and before us, while nearness and farness register as degrees of reachability along those lines. The near past has 'just happened,' the near future is 'about to occur'; the far past recedes into remoteness, the far future lies beyond our grasp. In space, too, these registers hold: we move toward what is not yet here and away from what has just been; what is near lies close at hand, what is far withdraws toward the horizon. When the mind is liberated by the clash of these forces, Arendt suggests, it transfigures our experience of them. We move not outside space and time as if into eternity where movement would be meaningless, but within a reflective dimension *less* burdened by their linear rhythms.[155] Just as a projectile seems weightless at the height of its arc, so too do the elements of a crisis appear suspended in reflection. Unlike a projectile, however, they are not determined solely by the forces that splayed them but are lifted from those gravities into the expanse and duration of reflective freedom. Reflection does not merely trace their arcs as fragments burst apart, but relieves them of tension by seeking general meaning. The movement of mental freedom travels between responsiveness and responsibility: buoyed by meaning, curved by possibility, and shadowed by the gravities of space and time into which the elements may eventually fall again.

[154] Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 209.
[155] Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 209.

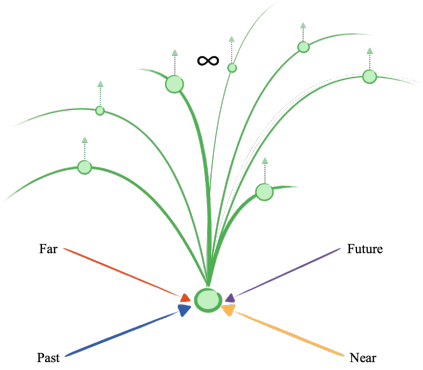

Figure 2: The Event of Reflective Freedom

If the revealed elements fall without reflection, they will never have been integrated into our understanding of the world. We will not have responded responsibly but will have repressed the new back into the same. If they settle through reflection, however, they will have been refigured in ways that help us find our bearings. They will give rise to new times-spaces, new meanings, new words and works of art.

If diagonality describes the first dimension of mental freedom, the array of elements it responds allows us to introduce a circular one. These elements are, after all, plural. They appear as indeterminately related parts of a whole we are trying to discern and navigate. In contrast to Arendt's linear figuration, then, let us expand the image to include the circularity implied. What we encounter is not a single trajectory equidistant from past and future, near and far, but a movement of elements that swerve and scatter from the instigating crisis.

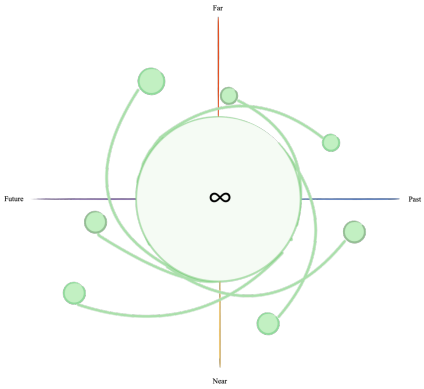

Figure 3: Emergent Circularity in Reflective Freedom

Now if the freedom of reflection requires responding to the array of elements revealed by a crisis in a way that not only clarifies what happened but also yields a path through it, we are invited to reconfigure the language of elements and circles in a way that resonates more fully with political-ethical nature of reflective

freedom. Instead of elements of nature, we have *examples.* And instead of a geometrical circle*,* we have a *table*—as both Arendt and René Char suggest.[156]

As at any circular gathering, our relation to each example around a table is never solely opposite or adjacent, but always both at once. Those across from us are also beside us; those beside us are also across from us. The relation between speaker and listener is irreducibly oblique. The Latin *dia-* in both diagonal and dialogue means 'through' or 'across,' for instance. To be sure, there are no direct pathways in reflective freedom, no straight lines of command or obedience. There is instead an array of vectors arcing through the common space of the mind (*sensus communis*) that together define the form of the circle itself and the relations within it. Since in reflection examples appear not in relation to one another but the common world that reveals them, the lines crossing the table are drawn by the gravity that world, their vectors bending toward a center not of sameness but of possible generality.[157] Just as the eyes of a speaker at a table scan the faces of those gathered near, never lingering too long on one lest partiality distort the field, so judgment inclines toward mutual availability. Food and drink are offered to all, conversation is shared, whispering is discouraged. These curvatures are the spatial-temporal figurations of freedom, equality, and worldliness. They reconcile line with circle and begin to describe the mind as a *place* of inner cultivation in which plurality is welcomed and the common world sustained.

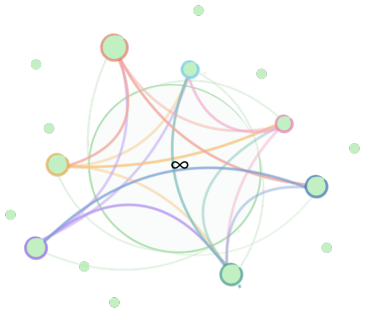

Figure 4: Relational Attunement in Reflective Freedom

Harmony and Disinterested Delight

That the relations of congeniality in the mind are not straight but parabolic invites a shift of register from the visual field into the auditory domain, where dialogue most intuitively belongs. The word *chord*

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[156] "To live together in the world means essentially that a world of things is between those who have it in common, as a table is located between those who sit around it; the world, like every in-between, relates and separates men at the same time" (Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 52).

[157] It would be worth here unpacking the *duration* of judgment. In *The Human Condition,* Arendt uses durability to refer to the artefactual world of made objects, and so it would be apt to elaborate this possible continuity. Arendt appreciates Bergson's notion of *duree,* for instance. I will not attempt this connection here but merely point to the senses of duration appropriate to taste: *ripening, savouring, lingering after-taste.* These will be discussed below.

names both a vector crossing a circle and a set of notes struck together in harmony. The eye traces an arc, the ear receives its resonance. Harmony is never about a single note but about intervals — nearness and distance in sound, the way tones lean toward resolution or hold in suspense, the way a melody drags or rushes the beat. In this sense, the spatial and temporal relations of the table of the mind find their analogue in pitch. A tone may feel close to completion or held far away, and a pleasure of harmony lies in the continual negotiation between the two.

Words, too, can be sounded so that their melodies, rhythms, and harmonies ring. Yet the auditory aspects of congenial judgment may also be represented synesthetically by colour.[158] Though sound and colour are not symmetrical, their overlap in physical properties allows us to enrich the visual figuration already at work. If only by approximation, let us attempt a chromatic rendering of the harmony that emerges when the friend we come home to is not the self but a plurality of exemplars. And since words with acoustic or chromatic roots so often describe our states of feeling (e.g., thunderous rage or bright hope), the analogy also allows us to register the emotional tonality of judgment. To be moved by an exemplar's presence is to sense a shift in tone or a saturation of colour in the mind. In the amphitheater of mental freedom, such tonalities sound as invitations to attune oneself to the possible harmonies arcing across a kaleidoscopic plurality of voices.

Reflective freedom is neither a lonely soliloquy nor a collective voice in unison, but a congenial self in company: *me, myself, and (at least) one other*. "Me" is the host who oversees the conversation but never appears, "myself" is the image of me that appears after 'I' speak, and others, of course, are exemplars. In this auditory register may therefore liken the host to a conductor guiding polyphony without a score. One exemplar may speak in a key alien to the rest; another too quickly, propelled by a passion for closure; another too loudly, convinced of their authority. As Lessing's *Nathan* exemplifies, congeniality entails patient and active attention to how each voice resonates with what lies between them: softening jarring tones, muting stridency, allowing timbres to mellow into a shared soundscape. Parabolic relations thus become harmonic intervals, producing moments of consonance and dissonance as tensions that sustain dialogue while opening the possibility of modulation into new keys. Over time, dissonances may resolve, new intervals may emerge, and tonal coherence may take shape. Nearness and farness here shift from a spatial register (who is close at the table), to an auditory one: who is close or remote in tone, timbre, or key. A voice too near in pitch can feel claustrophobic, one too far can thin the texture. The art of congeniality is to adjust these distances without silencing voices.

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[158] Physically speaking, sound and colour are both wave-like, often represented as parabolas or circles pulsing through space and time. The continuum of possible frequencies in each permit infinite combinations within the ranges perceivable by our senses (as we map in colour wheels and harmonic tables, for instance).

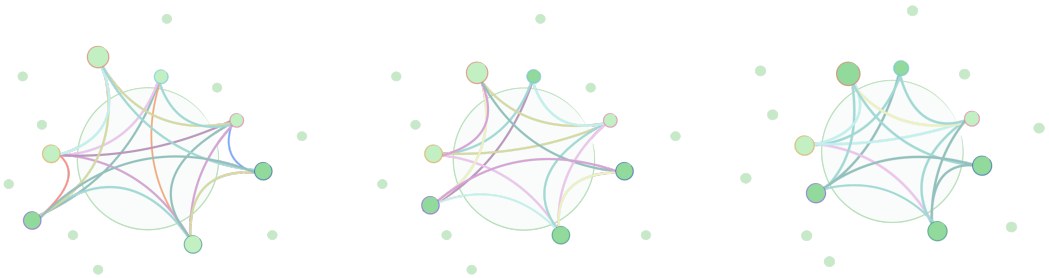

Figure 5: Harmonization in Reflective Freedom

In this register, mental freedom is the capacity to inhabit a tonal space shaped by plurality and oriented toward harmony or proportion, which are classical terms for justice. Arendt's writings themselves are so many examples of just such congenial conduction: a vast plurality of voices woven together through singular reflection. No voice appears absolutely authoritative, many are granted a hearing. And they sound at varying proximities to the tonal center of the world crises toward which she writes. Marx's voice is drawn near, for instance, only to strike dissonance with the human condition of natality. The movement of conduction is a movement tending toward impartiality and sustained by what Kant called disinterested delight—the affective pleasure of harmonies pulsing toward general resolution despite the absence of an unambiguous home key. Such delight cannot be willed. It does not aim to possess what it hears but arises unbidden from sustained conduction, in which every voice refines its relation within the polyphonic chamber of the mind.

What emerges from disinterested delight, then, is not the controlling voice of a master or the loudest of a majority, but the resonance of what is generally right or just taking shape. And with this resonance comes the emergence of a new voice, our voice, arcing across the webbed table toward the door where it may one day wish to sound. Though emerging from a relational place, this voice remains irreducible to any participant save the host who gathers them together but does not herself appear. The 'Me' that reflects becomes the 'One' who speaks *through* the dialogues sustained with exemplars. Indeed, even if the chords of dialogue end up sounding out familiar words like 'respect' or 'honesty,' that they appeared through reflection endows them with a meaningful sense of how 'the world should look.' Before dialogue turns to action, then, reflection finds encouragement in the appearance of publicly sustainable meaning. The result is a voice *between* deliberation and decision, thinking and willing. As Seamus Heaney put it, "deliberation can be so intensified that it becomes *synonymous* with inspiration" (my italics).[159]

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[159] Seamus Heaney, "Yeats as an Example?," in *Preoccupations: Selected Prose, 1968-1978* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1980), 110. It is worth here clarifying the aptness of *inspiration* to the phenomenology of congeniality. Where aspiration (from *ad-spirare*, "to breathe toward," "to strive after") suggests an orientation toward an ideal beyond oneself, inspiration (from *in-spirare*, "to breathe into") denotes an ingress of meaning that animates from within. Both virtue ethics

Just as the public happiness of concerted action occurs when traditional standards are no longer reliable,[160] judgment too arises when the novelty of the world upends authoritative standards. Before action can find its pitch in the world, judgment must hear the intervals that will inspire it there freely. Disinterested delight names the feeling of harmony that anticipates the joy of action, and congeniality names the attunement that brings it about while remaining open to a possible future ensemble. The delight of reflection does not dissolve into the joy of action but inflects it, not as a law to be imposed but as a tone to be publicly sustained and improvised upon—as something like a *wish* for new company, a *wish* to come home to the world.

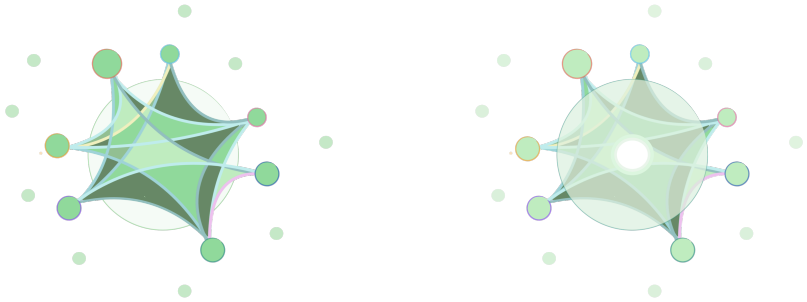

Figure 6: Encouragement

Yet harmony alone cannot tell us how to welcome new voices or how to choose among them. A chord must be tuned, a table must be set. The freedom of judgment therefore requires not only attunement, but hospitality and selection.

Hospitality, Selective Affinity, and the Taste for Company

So far my account of judgment's freedom has remained static in one crucial respect. Events in the world do not disclose themselves all at once but unfold across space and time. We follow the news as facts emerge, new actors step into view, spectators enter the arena to offer fresh judgments. Freedom of mind lies in cultivating an ever-richer sense of what is at stake by attending to these shifting arcs, as tones that enter, resolve, or trouble its harmony. Yet here a tension arises: while judgment must welcome as many

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and Kantian ethics retain something of the aspirational structure: a norm that stands over the agent as a higher constraint to which one must, or is called to, arise into. In heautonomy, by contrast, exemplarity constrains and opens at once in the mode of inspiration: its normativity is neither imposed nor projected but taken in as a necessity that wells up through reflection. What it reveals is not an ideal above the self but a voice that speaks through the self—a form of inward clarity consonant with Heaney's sense that deliberation is synonymous with inspiration.

[160] Following Rene Char, Arendt associated the freedom of action with joy or public happiness. Char called this the "lost treasure" of public freedom, which for Arendt "spells the innermost story of the modern age," appearing "abruptly" when the "expectations" of revolutionaries had been sundered by their respective breaks with tradition (Arendt, *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought*, 4.)

perspectives as possible, not all deserve equal weight. As Arendt put it, the exemplars we choose as company are those we judge as 'best' or 'representative' of how others of their kind *should* be.

For heautonomy to serve as an alternative to autonomy, then, we must clarify not only how new perspectives are welcomed, but also how some prove better company than others. The point is not that judgment 'reflectively endorses' *what* exemplars reveal by reference to its normative axes described above.[161] It is a matter of *se-lecting* examples *through* the affinity they reveal with the space of congeniality itself, which actualizes those axes in practice. What I will call 'selective affinity,' then, is distinct from the better-known 'elective affinity' with which Arendt was familiar through Goethe and Benjamin.[162] Selective affinity does not lift an example outside (*ex*-) a whole to represent it from the outside, but picks *a-side* an example within the whole to which it belongs. What appears affinitive in this sense are not examples of higher value promoted above the rest, but those whose singularity integrates the whole and thus bestows, as Arendt says in a related context, *con*fidence.[163]

Judgment must therefore expand its imaginative breadth while at the same time discerning those fit for company. Let us call these the hospitable and discerning aspects of selective affinity. While distinguishable, these aspects belong inseparably together within the same activity: welcoming new examples already implies discernment, and discernment already implies welcoming. One way to bring their relation into focus is to expand our image of the table by introducing what I will call, following Arendt and René Char, a 'seat of freedom' in the mind: "At every meal taken together we invite freedom to have a seat. The chair remains vacant, but the place is set."[164]

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[161] Reflective endorsement seems to me imply the backward/forward stepping of autonomy: something appears, we step back, endorse it from outside with reasons. This is how Korsgaard describes it. Selective affinity, by contrast, seems to better capture the continuity of the *with* relation of company. We do not judge exemplars from above, but from a free place beside them.

[162] Goethe coined the term "elective affinity" (*Wahlverwandtschaft*) in his 1809 novel of that title, drawing on eighteenth-century chemistry to describe the quasi-natural attraction by which certain elements, and certain persons, bind or separate according to an inner predisposition. The concept names a relational force that appears neither willed nor accidental, but law-like. Walter Benjamin, whose 1924 essay "Goethe's Elective Affinities" Arendt knew well, transformed the notion philosophically: for him, "elective affinity" marks the legibility of hidden correspondences between form and life, character and fate, that critical interpretation must decipher. In both cases, elective affinity describes a kind of structural or fateful correspondence. My use of "selective affinity," by contrast, names neither a natural law of attraction (Goethe) nor a hermeneutic of underlying correspondences (Benjamin), but the reflective discrimination through which judgment identifies those examples whose singularity coheres with, and helps constitute, the shared space of congeniality itself.

[163] Election, then, is to elevate an example as representative of a whole from which it *de-parts* (put on pedestal, bestowed higher office, etc.), and selection is to distinguish an example as representative of the whole of which it is *a-part* (set in relief, given space to shine, etc.). While selection in ordinary usage may carry connotations of exclusivity (a select wine), the sense I am developing does not collapse into exclusivity but distinguishes particulars as particulars deserving of special attention. Politically, this brings a different kind of representativeness than election. As Arendt puts it, "the candidate in the council system must inspire enough confidence in his personal integrity, courage, and judgment for someone to entrust him with representing his own person in political matters" (Arendt, *Thinking Without a Bannister: Essays in Understanding 1953-1975*, 137.).

[164] Char, *Leaves of Hypnos*, 131. Quoted by Arendt at: Arendt, *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought*, 4.

Under the first aspect, this is a seat of hospitality. It is not a throne or bench, but an open seat reserved for the arrival of the unexpected. It allows unfamiliar voices to appear without needing to justify themselves by prior standards or pre-established harmonies. It does not yield to gatekeeping (e.g., Thomas at the gates of *Paradiso*), but a radical responsiveness to the *lateral* appearance of the new. As Elaine Scarry observes, the perception of beauty displaces us from egoism into a position of "opiated adjacency," a pleasurable laterality attuned to proportion, balance, and fairness.[165] As hospitable, the seat of freedom works in just this key: it is both *kept* open *for* the new, and reveals itself *as* open *by* the new. It is owing to the inexhaustible roominess of the free mind, then, that reflection can continually shift its vantage point, reweave its harmonies, and expand its perspectival breadth. And even when a newcomer speaks in a voice that seems discordant or strange, because its very appearance reveals an aspect of the world not previously available, keeping a seat open for the new allows us to keep our reflections trimmed against the pretensions of a closed circle and towards the world shared in common.[166]

If hospitality tunes judgment to the world *as it is*, discernment orients it toward the world *as it should be, given how it is*. The readiness to receive newcomers is matched by a discerning activity of inner-world building by which we rearrange our mental space—move chairs, extend the table, open a window. Under this aspect, the seat of freedom not only refers to a prepared vacancy in the mind, but also to the *movability* of every seat currently occupied. The arrival of the new does not exhaust the free place into

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[166] It may, for this reason, also be the source of the right to hospitality, which Arendt grounded in what she called the *right to have rights.* Although this thought requires extended development, I would like to attempt the connection here. As Arendt says, the right to hospitality was the most original and important of Kant's rights of citizenship (Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 75.). For Kant, the right to hospitality derives from our "common possession of the surface of the earth" (Immanuel Kant, "Toward Perpetual Peace," in *Practical Philosophy* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), 8:358.). Given that the surface of the earth is finite and that encounters between peoples is inevitable, the right obligates non-hostile relations to preserve peace. Because Kant's right to hospitality does not clearly include a right to asylum (although he does mention that we cannot turn away someone if doing so "destroys them"), neo-Kantians like Seyla Benhabib and Onora O'Neil have sought to deepen Kant's juridical-cosmopolitan justification with a moral-cosmopolitan one: by including the moral rights of persons, the right to hospitality can be strengthened to include duties of hospitality toward refugees, migrants, and strangers. Arendt also embraced a stronger version of the right to hospitality—she herself was a refugee without political rights in America for around a decade. Yet, as far as I know, she never developed how the spatially derived right can be connected to the morally derived right, as neo-Kantians have done. In place of the Kantian paradigm of autonomy as that which dignifies humans as moral agents and thereby strengthens the spatially motivated juridical right, the paradigm of heautonomy I am sketching would strengthen the juridical right through the dignity of persons as *appearing actors*. Since the right to hospitality rests on the right to have rights, and the right to have rights rests on the fact of *natality,* it matters greatly how we *receive* persons appearing before us *as* actors in the moral-political sense—as singular, unique, irreplaceable. And by extension, since it is the fact of human appearing that motivates the need for a right to hospitality in the first place (as one kind of right we have a right to), it also seems the case that both the right to have rights and the right to hospitality, relies on movement itself—as is implied in *action* broadly speaking as well as more particularly in the many ways we move through space, whether by our own choice or not. In this case, the right to hospitality would not refer exclusively to duties obligated in exceptional cases but would coincide with what dignifies persons as persons—their ability to act and to move, again and again. While this leaves open vast distinctions between kinds of movement and whether, and in what way, they can be accommodated juridically in a charter of rights, what I mean to suggest is that insofar as the ethics of congeniality I am ascribing to congeniality requires *receiving* or *welcoming* the new into the mind as guests and possible companions, then we might round out Arendt's derivation of the right to hospitality from the right to have rights in a manner that mirrors, though alters, the neo-Kantian of balancing of the former with moral dignity.

which it is welcomed but gives it discernable meaning that can be *moved.* Discernment includes a normative valence appropriate to choosing company. We arrange examples *near* that enrich the general meaning taking shape at the center and hold examples *far* that are discordant to it. By *nearing* them, we esteem them, make them *dear* as company. By *farring* them, we disesteem them as not (yet) fit to contribute the general harmony we seek. The ordinary senses of near and far thus reveal their subsidiariness to the normative valence of heautonomy: if crises collapse the usual way we relate to these measures, they not only *liberate* us *from* their directional 'force' but also liberate us *to* 'measure' *freely* in an active sense.[167] What is temporally near may be placed at a distance (a contemporary voice exposed as irrelevant or corrupt), while what is temporally far may be placed closer (an ancient example rising to relevance).[168] Such movements occur in awareness of our mimetic vulnerability. As Arendt implies, although we have some say in the matter, we are shaped by those we keep close. Discerning examples is how we assume responsibility for this fact.

If hospitality and discernment enrich the place where the mind moves, they do so in the direction of taste. For taste is both the name of judgment's discriminating power and its common language. On one side, it describes the selective affinity of judgment — examples that refine and cultivate our sensibilities. On the other, it describes the taste of language itself — the way judgments must be rendered in words that persuade without compulsion.[169] Where the former encourages us to draw from examples of taste in our description of judgment, the latter not only permits such examples to play freely alongside the other senses, but also names the kind of speech in which judgment expresses itself reflexively. Let us, then, branch into this (middle-voiced) language of taste.

Similar to the sounds we hear and the images we see, flavors also arc across our perception in approach and retreat. Flavors spark, ripen, linger, and fade on our palates. But unlike phenomena perceived by hearing and audition, the 'objects' of taste are perceived subjectively, as 'within' us. As Kant and Arendt put it, taste is thus the most private of our senses. This carries three entailments. First, it means that normativity of taste appears in the *immediacy* of 'it-pleases-or-displeases me.' We feel the pleasures of taste without mediation by external distance or distortion: they are "discriminatory by their very nature," and

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[167] If liberation owes to event-character of exemplarity, which displaces our ordinary orientation to the world, freedom speaks to the *activity* that responds to that event by *placing* what is revealed into relations of adjacency. Since both are implied in heautonomous agency, the distinction between *pre-reflective and reflective* that they imply seems to me porous (a point that bears on my discussion of the redemption of the social imagination by the democratic imagination in the introduction). Arendt thought that the freedom of the imagination is more fundamental than its merely associational tendencies: the imagination "does not need to be led by temporal association, it can make present at will what it chooses" (Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 80.) We not only may actively *place* ourselves in the path of the new (*tune in* to the news, *search* the internet, *look for* the book on our shelves), but actively represent what appears once received.

[168] The activities of nearing and farring seem to me to extend beyond the mind into the world. We not only keep examples close by actively recalling them in imagination, but also by arranging our external world to prompt such returns. This occurs in private spaces as much as public spaces, albeit with different valences.

[169] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 69.

relate to "particulars *qua* particulars."[170] Second, the immediacy of taste also prompts an "operation of reflection" often glossed by the more externally oriented senses. In the absence of external mediation, our judgments remain our own: *we* must discern for ourselves. And third, since like all of our senses taste fits us into the apparent world, it must overcome its privacy and be rendered communicable. Where hearing and seeing imply a separation between the internal and external (and generate our usual senses of objectivity in different ways), because the distance between ourselves and the 'object' of taste remains an internal feeling (in both physical and mental senses), our communication of its pleasures cannot go by way of an adjudication of external states of affairs but must rather move through *persuasion.* While taste is not completely bereft of a 'referent' – the dish on the table, the beautiful painting, the courageous act– the communicability of our pleasures relies on the medium of language itself more fully than the other senses. For Kant and Arendt, taste therefore fits us not to the objects we taste, at least not primarily, but to the world of communicability that we share with others who taste and judge what we taste and judge. While we may refer to whatever pleases us when we *communicate* our pleasures, then, it is our *judgments* about them that is at stake in *persuasion*. When we persuade, we do not coerce others by truth, but 'sound through' our judgments to reveal *who* we are (*per-sona*) in terms of *how* we judge what lies between us: *like this.*

By discerning our pleasures through reflection, taste is made cultivable. Reflection allows us to train our palates to notice subtleties of flavor and guide them towards balance or harmony.[171] But since reflection raises our pleasures to the realm of communicability, it also motivates cultivation in the direction of general assent. Set in terms of taste, then, the nearing and faring of discernment becomes a nearing and farring of communicable language—'*notice how the tannic overrides the sweet…*'; '*Heaney observes an important synthesis here...*' It is the interplay between discernment and communicability, in other words, that motivates the cultivation of taste in view of the shareability of our judgments, and the absence of objectivity that places cultivation in the direction of person-disclosing speech considerate of the judgments of others. We not only reveal *who* or *what* has shaped our judgments (living or dead, past or present), *viz*., our 'culture,' but also our *wish* to fit into the world shared with others—to find new company, perhaps. "The beautiful interests us only in society," Kant says.[172] "You must be in company to enjoy a meal," to speak with Arendt.[173]

More than seeing or hearing, then, taste reveals judgment as a congenial ethics: an ethics that moves between nearness and farness, savor and distaste, words said and words heard, company welcomed and

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[170] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 66.

[171] The cultivability of taste places my description of judgment within what Kant called 'adherent beauty,' which belongs to culture, not 'free beauty,' which belongs to nature. In my view (which I cannot elaborate here), the adherent is subtended by the free. Cultivation can remain *beyond* the taste of any particular culture only if it retains the radical freedom to welcome the new—which may include persons and works from other cultures as much as natural phenomena.

[172] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 67.

[173] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 67.

company refused. If sight had been our sole guide, judgment would have remained weighed toward the frozen patterns of metaphysical Forms. If hearing had been our sole guide, judgment would have been drawn into an ephemerality tending to silence. Neither the security of rational deliberation nor the blind faith of decisionism, then, but the careful crafting of a persuasive standpoint. Taste neither leaps nor stands still but *sustains* itself between the fleeting and everlasting—lingering, enduring in anticipation of words spoken freely and in our own voice. But adopting the language of taste does not necessitate that we abandon sight and sound—they are, after all, nearly intractable parts of the human condition. It rather allows us to recalibrate their exemplary value in relation to their fitness for the common world. Images once frozen in the heights of abstraction are thawed to life as examples encouraging perspectival imagination, and voices once resting in silence are called back to sound again. Deeds seen and words heard are savored and savored anew as sustenance at a feast.

But not all dishes brought to the table are fit to be eaten. Some nourish, others spoil. The question of selective affinity thus leads us directly to a consideration of the full normative weight of exemplarity itself: the discernment of good, bad, and evil.

GOOD, BAD, AND EVIL EXAMPLES

> *Imaginary evil is romantic and varied; real evil is gloomy, monotonous, barren, boring; real good is always new, marvelous, intoxicating.*[174]
>
> *Good can imagine Evil, but Evil cannot imagine Good.*[175]

Judgment reaches its sharpest edge when it confronts the difference between good, bad, and evil examples. If our ability to tell right from wrong depends on the company we keep, then what matters is not whether examples are themselves "right" or "wrong," but the (reflectively inspired) 'decisions' that emerge from them. Right and wrong suggest rules and closure, categories we only come near to when we step out of the doors of our minds into action: *this is how things should be*. By contrast, examples move in the ethical registers of good, bad, and evil. These are richer, more ambiguous, and more revealing terms. They draw us into the work of discernment rather than deduction. To make sense of them, however, our language must shift once more. The visual, auditory, and gustatory registers explored so far find their culmination in the language of *place*, which although I have alluded to above has yet to be set in relief. For it is only by situating examples within the soil of the world (as roots that nourish or weeds that choke) that we can grasp what good, bad, and evil mean for judgment. *Cultivation* (or *culturation*) is the hinge: the activity by which

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[174] Simone Weil, *Gravity and Grace*, trans. Emma Crawford and Mario Von der Ruhr (Routledge, 2002), 70.
[175] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 169.

sight, sound, taste, and place are held together and apart in the congenial activity of building a world fit for mortal beings on a single earth.

Until now, I have suggested that it is *we* who host exemplars in our minds. Yet Arendt insists that in reflection the imagination "goes visiting."[176] It is not only that by enlarging our mentalities we host others, then, but that, in so doing, they host us in return. If reflective discernment accentuates our capacity to relate to examples congenially, however they appear, when raised to the level of companionship, congeniality refers to hospitality reciprocated: we keep examples near who are also capable of nearing us. Such examples receive our visitation in a way that allows us to speak in our own voices and return them enriched with a renewed sense of what belongs in the shared world.[177] Good exemplars appear as worthy of company because their words and deeds reveal a whoness that is communicable, that feels in tune with what seems generally right.[178] Arendt says that "only the good can be radical."[179] Exemplary goodness, I wish to suggest, is radical in the sense of rootedness she intends (*radix,* in Latin). To see why, let us reconstruct radical goodness from basic premises.

Humans are born on a single planet called earth. Because the earth is finite, humans not only factually appear before others at the moment of birth but are forced to do so as long as they live. Birth therefore describes both a biological fact and the fact of our appearing more broadly. They way humans appear before others is through action. Action requires witnesses, and in being witnessed, actions are rendered meaningful in ways that exceed the actor's intentions. These meanings contribute to building a world on the earth, a network or web of meaning that endure beyond the ephemerality of action. This basic condition of appearing before others, then, exposes action to what can be redeemed and esteemed in public, to what can be seen and heard as fitting the world shared in common. While this exposure may lead actors to merely reflect the parochial norms of the communities witness to them, because community itself is subtended by plurality, actions are originally guided toward plurality as such: we act not before "man" in the singular, but before actual women and men who reveal the human condition in its vast diversity. In this

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[176] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 43; See also, Elaine Scarry, *On Beauty and Being Just* (Princeton University Press, 1999), 114.

[177] Following Kant, Arendt says that we can only think from the standpoints of others, and refers to their possible as opposed to actual judgments (Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 43.). The consequence of the distinction has been pressed, since one implication is that we would not need to actually communicate with the other's whose standpoints we represent, leading to projection, stereotyping, and naivety (see, for instance: Jennifer Nedelsky, "Judgment, Diversity, Autonomy," in *Judgment, Imagination and Politics: Themes from Kant and Arendt,* ed. Ronald Beiner and Jennifer Nedelsky (Rowan and Littlefield, 2001). Since every actual judgment must be represented in reflection after it is heard, 'possible' need not be read as alienated from other perspectives but as in fact making possible their ongoing renewal.

[178] "One is not overeager to express joy at the death of a father or feelings of hatred or envy; one will, on the other hand, have no compunctions about announcing that one enjoys doing scientific work, and will not hide their grief at the death of an excellent husband" "The criterion of [approbation and disapprobation] is [therefore] communicability, and the standard for deciding about it is common sense [*sensus communis*]" (Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 69.).

[179] Arendt and Scholem, *The Correspondence of Hannah Arendt and Gershom Scholem*, 209.

way, plurality itself presses action toward publicity, toward deeds that can endure in the shared light of appearance.

The way by which actions properly endure before plural equals is what Arendt, following Kant, called *exemplary validity*: the capacity of a deed to resonate beyond its singular occurrence. Some actions, then, resonate beyond their appearance by virtue of their fittingness to the common world. Such actions endure as good examples that, picking up now the language of radicality, appear as indigenous[180] to the soil upon which worlds are built. As well-suited to the shared soil of the world, good examples inspire congenial reflection and encourage like-action: congenial reflection freely re-presents good examples in the mind and, in so doing, cultivates their roots into the depths of the imagination (the understanding heart); and the actions encouraged by the delight of this reflection serves to reseed the good back into the world in a novel form that is singularly attributable to the actor. Hence is the common soil enriched by good examples, wilting back to earth after their duration of appearance to seed new and thicker growth. The shared ground becomes interwoven with roots threading through plural imaginations, keeping alive what is worth keeping. The soil begins to feel firm, fertile, good-for acting and building upon. Good examples are thus the proper sustenance of judgment: the only nourishment suited to beings who are born into a world they must build together.[181]

With the good now in view, we can turn in the direction of evil by way of what I will call the bad.[182] As the foregoing suggests, both bad and evil examples are neither hospitable nor communicable, and thus do not make for good company. While this is true in both cases, the reasons are different and carry different consequences. Bad examples occupy an ambiguous zone between good and evil. They range from ordinary

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[180] I acknowledge the charge of this term. I mean it in the original sense of *indigena*, which is rooted in *indu-,* meaning 'in' or 'within,' and *genu,* meaning 'birth' or 'beget.' It's Latin meaning was 'native, sprung from the land itself.' Native is rooted in *natu,* 'to be born.'

[181] Good examples are not perfect. Since reflection is occasioned by specific events in the world, the value of an example pertains to those of their aspects of greater resonance for those events. One does not usually ask their mechanic for career advice, so we ought not presume that persons can satisfy as perfect hosts and companions for every issue we face. They will have their flaws, shortcomings, and blind spots. Balancing the good with the good-for in this way, however, need not obviate a more 'all things considered' approach. As I discussed in the second chapter, the relevant aspects of an example are precisely what judgment seeks to discern, and it does so by thinking from other perspectives. The dialogue conducted in the mind renders this point intelligible in a new way. By enlarging our mentality, aspects of an example otherwise hidden can be revealed, like consequences that make their opinions less desirable than originally thought, or a track record that weakens their integrity.

[182] I find this distinction useful for making sense of a discussion between Arendt and Karl Jaspers concerning the nature of evil (See: Hannah Arendt and Gershom Scholem, *The Correspondence of Hannah Arendt and Gershom Scholem*, ed. Marie Luise Knott and Anthony David (The University of Chicago Press, 2017) 166). Like Kant, Jasper warns about placing evil outside of human comprehension. It is not a mythic or cosmic force that takes hold of humans from without but stems from the free-will itself—or a corrupt version of it. This view has since become standard to the point of diminishing the term's distinction from badness. As we will see, Arendt resists collapsing the evil into the bad (in a qualified sense). What I here call bad, then, intends to capture the wickedness that Kant and Jaspers call evil. The difficulty for Arendt's view is that if evil is not wickedness because it is beyond humanly understandable motives, it is not for this *outside* humanity as such. Paradoxically, evil must defy the conditions of humanity while nevertheless remaining a distinctly human possibility. Without the former, evil would be dissolved of its extremity; without the latter, it could not be judged.

human failings to acts of wickedness and overlap to some degree with what we might call good-enough examples (which I won't explore here). That ordinary badness and extraordinary badness belong together is intuitive when we consider that what was once called radical evil (wickedness) was typically hooked into everyday vices: a single lie can may beget others along a slippery slope of mendacity.

In contrast to its traditional depiction, however, bad examples are neither evil nor radical properly speaking, but bear a distorted resemblance to both. To see why, let us consider Arendt's cautionary remark about Bluebeard: "If someone should come and tell us that he would prefer Bluebeard for company, and hence take him as an example, the only thing we could do is to make sure that he never comes near us."[183] Notice Arendt's choice of words. Such a person does not keep Bluebeard as company through judgment but through *preference*. Preference belongs to what Kant called the agreeable, which pleases only in a private fashion. Its privacy lies not in being incommunicable *per se* (we routinely state our preferences), but in the fact that such statements make no claim on the agreement of others. They leave untouched the inter-space of persuasion in which reflective conversation gains traction. But while two persons trading preference would merely be whistling in the wind, Arendt's imagined encounter implies that she and her audience stand not in preference by judgment. Although *he* may be whistling, *we're* meant to pick up the tune. And what we hear is not only someone oddly voicing a private preference in public but a melody that makes our hairs stand on end.

If the one who keeps Bluebeard close is preferring rather than judging, and if genuine judging would lead someone away from choosing Bluebeard as company, then the heart of the matter is the difference between preference and judgment. Arendt is not telling us that we should banish such a person from our imaginations any more than we should erase Bluebeard from memory. To taste the danger of such a figure is precisely to acquire a distaste for Bluebeard: to know who he was, what he stood for, and what it could mean for someone to keep company with him. What she counsels instead is that we should not let such a person near our person in the world. But while this is good advice, of deeper concern here is what Arendt's allusion to preference tells us about our propensity for badness, and indeed what characterizes it.

For Kant, the agreeable is an incipient form of judgment that occurs without reflective concern for others. One who judges in the mode of the agreeable does not test their pleasures against the possibility of being shared, and so remains unguided by what can be sustained in public. They consume what pleases them, indifferent to the world in all respects except those that satisfy them. There is, of course, an ambiguity here. If it were possible to be educated into pro-social norms by external force alone, then we might say that keeping company with 'good' examples need not be dependent on reflection but can maintain itself on the level of preference. As discussed in section I, something of this insight seemed to be behind Arendt's

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[183] Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, 144.

claim that preferring examples is less dangerous than not preferring them. (The terrain here may be slippery, of course: an example once chosen may drift to preference, one preferred may be raised to the level of choice, and we may find ourselves at times blank to both). Whether the preferer is an individual or a group, preference is always self-relational and therefore characteristic of what Kant called 'egoism,' *viz.,* the corruption of the will into the self and root of "radical evil."[184]

But Arendt has both a softer view of egoism and a more disturbing view of evil. In her account, egoism is not yet evil because it is still rooted in humanly understandable motives. To possess roots is to stand within the horizon of plurality: even selfish or vicious desires arise within a world of others, where they can be traced, named, criticized, and, crucially, addressed. In this sense, rootedness marks a minimum threshold of intelligibility. Bad examples, however deplorable, still belong to the field of human action because they emerge from recognizable passions, interests, or failures of reflection. Their problem is not that they are alien to the conditions of plurality, but that they distort them. Seen this way, rooted badness is structurally related to goodness in the same way that the agreeable is structurally related to the beautiful in Kant: both stand at the threshold where private orientations can be transfigured by reflection into shared, communicable meaning. What matters is not the content of these roots (their shape, depth, or public worth) but the fact that they can be brought into relation with others at all.

To call such rootedness "evil" would therefore obscure what is most politically significant about it, namely, that it remains within the domain of responsibility, judgment, and possible renewal. Like Kant, Arendt thought that even deeply vicious tendencies need not be politically fatal; "even a nation of devils" can live in peace under good laws.[185] But she adds a more searching thought: if good and bad lie along a continuum that's differentiating point is the presence of absence of judgment, then it remains within the realm of human responsibility to condition and encourage movement away from egotistical pleasure-satisfaction (passions) and towards the disinterested pleasures of reflection. Even when the roots of a wrongdoer appear so tightly coiled around the heart that the light of the world barely penetrates, their very rootedness means that, under the right conditions, they can still be reached. As Arendt insists, it is not *what* someone has done that calls for forgiveness, but their *whoness*—their capacity to begin anew. Without forgiveness, "our capacity to act would be confined to one single deed from which we could never recover; we would remain the victims of its consequences forever."[186]

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[184] "The depravity or, if one prefers, the corruption of the human heart is the propensity of the power of choice to maxims that subordinate the incentives of the moral law to others (not moral ones). It can also be called the perversity of the human heart, for it reverses the ethical order as regards the incentives of a *free* power of choice; and although with this reversal there can still be legally good actions, yet the mind's attitude is thereby corrupted at its root […], and hence the human being is designated as evil" (Immanuel Kant, *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason: And Other Writings* (Cambridge University Press, 1998), 54.).

[185] Immanuel Kant, *Practical Philosophy* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), 335.

[186] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 237.

Bad examples, then, are like shadows that help reveal the contours of good ones. Greed helps illuminate charity, for instance; authoritarianism the worth of democracy. Although they do not make for good company, bad examples should nevertheless be given a hearing. Biblical depictions of demons, the pantheon of villains coursing through literature, and the biographies of murderers, rapists, and corrupt politicians all testify to our need to reflect the bad alongside the good. To admit bad examples into reflection is not to value them as company, but to grant them an audience to hear in their dissonance the tones that call for resolution and action. Such reflective admission does not rehabilitate the bad but clarifies the stakes of judgment by sharpening our sense of what must not be allowed to take root again. Hence while it may be good advice not to allow a friend of Bluebeard near our person, we should still allow both him and Bluebeard to orbit within our mental life, for only in this way can we trace the conditions that made Bluebeard who he was and reshape, within our power, those conditions in the direction of the good.

Arendt herself was of course committed to doing so. She devoted two books to judging the unprecedented harms of totalitarian regimes. Yet what she discovered along the twisting course of the history from which they emerged was that the network of roots that here and there sustained plurality had seemed to wither to the point of absence.[187] What appeared had never appeared before: persons without roots at all. This is where evil lives.

If evil is the opposite of goodness, and goodness roots itself in a darkness that nourishes (earth, privacy, shelter, intimacy, solitude, home), then the opposite of the good cannot be straightforwardly subterranean. It must be the absence of roots. Yet if the good also seeds inspiring examples to grow and endure in the light of the world, then evil cannot be straightforwardly visible, either. The fullness of the good, encompassing world and earth, light and dark, visible and invisible, therefore presents a puzzle for thinking about evil: where does it live, and how does it move? For Arendt, these old questions were animated anew by Eichmann, who she took as her "concrete model" for evil.[188] Evil, she said, is in "every instance extreme:" "it can overgrow and lay waste the whole world precisely because it spreads like a fungus on the surface."[189] Through Eichmann, Arendt found that the vertical paradigm of immanence and

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[187] Arendt's early correspondence with Jaspers framed evil as the production of "superfluous" human beings, and as Andrew Chignell has argued this conception hinges on a form of unintelligibility distinct from Kantian rigorism: the kind that emerges when agents or systems deny, rather than merely violate, the conditions of moral standing (Andrew Chignell, ed., *Evil: A History*, Oxford Philosophical Concepts (Oxford University Press, 2019), chap. 1.). My account develops this line by locating the unintelligibility not in subterranean depths of radical evil but in the disappearance of any rootedness in plurality.

[188] Arendt and Scholem, *The Correspondence of Hannah Arendt and Gershom Scholem*, 209.

[189] Arendt and Scholem, *The Correspondence of Hannah Arendt and Gershom Scholem*, 209. In his treatment of Arendt's account of evil, Richard Bernstein stresses that her shift from the language of "radical" evil to the "banality" formula does not entail a diminution of evil's magnitude; it marks a conceptual re-orientation. What is radical is not the depth of motives but the systematic destruction of the conditions for meaning, thought, and plurality. In this sense, my use of the fungal metaphor extends Bernstein's reading: surface-spread is not superficiality but a mode of devastation uniquely suited to political modernity, in which the erosion of judgment occurs not in the depths of the will but across the very surface

transcendence that patterned our thinking about good and evil could not make sense of the unprecedented combination of the man's mediocrity and monstrosity. Neither deep nor elevated, then, but *superficial*; moving across the surface, flattening growth, and smothering roots along the threshold where above and below meet. Evil neither builds in the light nor digs in the dark but wanders in a fog that nullifies distinctions into placid sameness or indifference.[190] If the good arises from the fact that we inhabit a finite planet and must therefore learn to live together, and if our living together invites us to seed exemplary goods in public, then evil is diametrically opposed to good precisely because it obliterates the very condition for the good to appear at all—human plurality. By obliterating the basic sources of human distinctiveness, evil collapses the very terrain that holds together and apart good and bad, thereby nullifying their meaning altogether.

By failing to judge, Eichmann relinquished the capacity that makes us persons: to think what we do in light of the perspectives of others. He was not, at least on Arendt's reading, an egoist. He submitted his pleasures to the standards of society and became a dutiful servant to its genocidal intent (at least in Arendt's contentious view). Unlike the egoist, who may answer his door to our call but block our entry, evil may answer the door, and may even let us in, yet it will still seem like nobody's home. We may speak, but our words will fall flat against a wall of stock phrases, cliches, and slogans. Evil doesn't whistle in the wind but blows "hot air," to speak with Harry Frankfurt.[191] When we try to draw an evil example near, it will seem impossibly far. And if we try to push it far, it will slip undetected back into the near. Our senses of near and far flatten and our orientation drifts. What we are called to judge, in this case, is not a person but a thing, something subject to external forces. Like bad examples, then, evil examples are inhospitable because what they reveal cannot endure in public. Unlike bad examples, however, they are unable to endure

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that sustains worldly appearance. Banality names a structural quality of evil — the flattening of distinctions, the corrosion of worldly texture — that cannot be captured by moral psychology alone (Richard Bernstein, "Is Evil Banal? A Misleading Question," in *Thinking in Dark Times* (Fordham University Press, 2010).

[190] In *Evil and Modern Thought,* Susan Neiman argues that experiences of evil often resemble a failed or aborted sublime: they present an initial shock of horror and incomprehension but never culminate in the rational "epiphany" through which the sublime restores moral orientation. The result is what she calls a rupture in the intelligibility of the world — a world in which our expectations of order, justice, and meaning collapse (Neiman, *Evil in Modern Thought*.). The fog described here shares this structure of disorientation, but differs in its locus: for Neiman, the collapse is fundamentally epistemic and moral, an event in the subject's confrontation with a world that no longer makes sense; for Arendt, as I follow her, the collapse is more worldly and political. Evil erases the articulations of the *in-between* — the common world where appearances are stabilized and distinctions can be drawn. If Neiman shows how evil overwhelms reason, Arendt shows how it dissolves the web of relations from which reason, judgment, and meaning draw their worldly traction.

[191] Frankfurt uses the notion of "hot air" not in connection to evil but to clarify the distinctive threat to truth posed by what he calls 'bullshit.' "Hot air" names speech that has been emptied of substantive content and detached from any genuine concern with how things are, just as excrement is what remains of food once everything nutritive has been removed. On this basis, Frankfurt argues that bullshit differs from lying not by being more false, but by being more indifferent: whereas the liar must still track the truth in order to conceal it, the bullshitter does not care whether what he says is true or false, so long as it serves his purposes. It is this structural indifference to reality, rather than straightforward deception, that leads Frankfurt to conclude that bullshit is ultimately a greater enemy of truth than lying itself (Frankfurt, *On Bullshit*, 42–44.)

not because what they say should not be said, but because they have nothing meaningful to say. Evil examples can neither be hosted nor granted a hearing.

Evil examples present not the shadow of good examples, but the obliteration of their very possibility. They are non-examples that colonize the terrain of exemplarity. The generality that their particularity reveals is not a meaning that can be reflected upon, but a hollowness that resists reflection, deflects it elsewhere. Hence if it is by choosing company that we gain the only kind of normative depth possible in a world struck through with freedom, the "inability or unwillingness" to choose examples is indeed the 'greatest danger by far'—so far we cannot draw it near. Kant was right when he said that "in taste, egoism is overcome."[192] To this we may now add, for reasons distinct from his own: 'So too evil.'

CONCLUSION

In its fullest sense, heautonomy describes the reflexivity of choosing examples as company in anticipation of appearing in the world before others. The ethics corresponding to this reflexivity is congeniality, which occurs through selective affinity. Through congeniality, relationality is integrated with singularity: we welcome, attune, conduct, arrange, and select exemplary voices into harmonies that map the world as it is and reveal how it should be. The harmony of this inner dialogue tends towards impartiality and is accompanied by disinterested delight—a feeling that inspires our own voices and encourages us to appear before others in what we might call, again following Char, 'naked sincerity.'[193] By exercising judgment, we are led to keep good examples near in light of the crises unfolding around us. In this way, the reciprocal axes of judgment are actuated in practice: through congeniality, we are led to select examples that reveal the personhood of persons, the worldliness of the world, and the exemplarity of examples. Good examples are those that reflect our belonging to a shared world in which others appear as free and equal persons. We near them in their freedom, they near us in our freedom; our judgments serve theirs, and theirs serves ours in return. Congeniality is *amor mundi* reciprocated, an activity of companionship that enlivens our minds—"those with whom we wish to spend our lives." They nourish us toward the world when we are weary from the light, or when the light has all but faded.

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[192] Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 67.

[193] As Arendt paraphrases Char, the those "discovered that he who 'joined the resistance *found* himself, ceased to be 'in quest of [himself] without mastery, in naked unsatisfaction;" "that he no longer suspected himself of 'insincerity,' of being 'a carping, suspicious actor of life,'" and "that he could afford to 'go naked'" (Arendt, *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought*, 4). The word 'sincerity' derives from the Proto Indo-European *smkéro,* 'of one growth.' In our context, the 'one' refers to the 'naked' *persona* revealed through enacted judgments independent of social masks or roles. And the 'growth' toward oneness is an anticipatory cultivation of the mind through exemplars. Our sincerity is naked when our internal dialogue anticipates the responsibility that awaits us when we stand out into the space of appearances. From a second-personal perspective, reliably doing so bestows confidence and integrity.

In December of 1950, a year before being granted citizenship in the United States, Arendt recorded a poem by Emily Dickenson in her *Denktagebuch*:

> *Up life's hill with my little bundle,*
> *If I prove it steep,*
> *If a discouragement withhold me,*
> *If my newest step*
> *Older feel than the hope that prompted,*
>
> *Spotless be from blame*
> *Heart that proposed as heart that accepted,*
> *Homelessness for home.*[194]

Darkened worlds may indeed lead us to such a tragic acceptance. When our homes are no longer safe, sometimes the wisest thing to do is pack our bags. Totalitarianism obliterated our safety. 'Thou shall not kill' became 'thou shall kill.' And yet, the wisdom of escape does not strike a full harmony with the world reflected. The weightless here-and-now in which judgment lives is not only a place in the mind, but a place in the bodies that carry it, a place in the world that grants it solitude, a place on the face of the earth. If judgment is the inner place 'we come home to,' then, it is also the place through which we may act and build homes across all the places that contain it. Judging not only cultivates our mind for the shared world, but in so doing can cultivate these places, too. In our little bundles we carry the fragile spirits of the past to encourage our search for a more hospitable home. Homelessness, then, not as permanent condition, but the condition of possibility for rebuilding. And we are not alone in this. We may, along our world-travels, happen upon refuge that, although previously unknown, may encourage home-building not only for ourselves but in concert, for everyone that appears.

We are neither noumenal beings floating in a kingdom of ends, nor a species bound to the earth by human nature. We are earthbound creatures dwelling in and conditioned by the worlds we ourselves have built. Good examples reveal and sustain this condition: they relate and separate human beings to one another and to everything around them. They supply that modicum of measure by which we may gauge the shape of our renovations. It would be a mistake to imagine this home as a house that's structure needs only outward expansion. A finite planet cannot bear the logic of the additive. We must learn to live together. Judgment must thus measure privacy against publicity, and publicity against privacy, as what is born in private should appear in public, and what appears should public takes root in private. Judgment keeps birth alive in death, and death alive in birth; the earth alive in the world and the world alive on earth; the mind healthy in the body and the body enriched by the mind.

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[194] Arendt, *Denktagebuch: 1950 Bis 1973*, 45.

While Arendt did not live to integrate her reflections on judgment in this way, I think she would have and, if not, should have. Judgment serves to 'build a home for mortal' beings in all respects. This building stems from our reflective harmonies. Harmony, balance, proportion, are terms for justice. Judgment is a practice of justice across the many places that call for judgment. As we can now appreciate, justice integrates ethics with morality, the good with the right, social patterns of belonging with the laws that guide them, freedom with equality, bodies with minds, world with earth. It is the ongoing work of harmonizing the new with the old, the near with the far, in the common place from which we currently stand and in view of what we feel should endure into the future. It separates what it relates and relates what it separates, and speaks in a middle voice. It yields neither absolute distinctions nor absolute unities, but always the 'with' relation of plurality reflected. But since new examples are ever-appearing, the movements of judgment must remain ever-unfinished. At its center is the understanding heart, the free imagination that beats to the tune of plural exemplars.

CONCLUSION

The world we inhabit is saturated with images and stories of exemplary figures. Yet increasingly we experience them as unstable, fleeting, or contested. Statues are toppled, canons revised, icons denounced, hashtags promoted; new figures rise only to fade into obsolescence or controversy with startling speed. Some of this churn expresses healthy democratic renewal, but much of it reflects a deeper malaise. We live in a culture of exhaustion, whiplash—our imaginations reeling from one thing to the next with such speed that our nervous systems flattens and capacity for attention wanes. And yet, exemplars continue to exert their claims in the many ways they can. They show us what has mattered, what might yet matter, what does or doesn't deserve to matter again. But which exemplars instill confidence in our shifting world? Which sustain our freedom, and which erode it? This is what I have called the crisis of exemplarity.

Theoretically, this crisis took the form of what I called the circle of exemplarity. Examples guide judgment, but judgment selects which examples to follow, and thus we are confronted with the problem of our 'grounds' for endorsing them. Today, there seems to me little value in trying escape this circle. Traditions that attempt to reduce exemplars to mere illustrations of transcendent principles deny the very freedom of judgment they presuppose. And theories that diminish or deny exemplars normative power at all overlook the obvious fact that human beings acquire many of their norms through mimetic re-presentation. In both cases, exemplarity seems irrepressible, but its freedom is either contained or denied. Hence the temptation to resolve this circle by leaning toward moralist abstraction or realist resignations is misguided. Moralists require that exemplars be measured against principles, but in doing so they risk detaching political life from the reality of its historical conditions and plural struggles. Realists, by contrast, derive norms from what has worked in practice, but in doing so they risk endorsing domination, cruelty, or exclusion when they prove effective. Both are insufficient to the democratic demands that norms emerge from the free actions of persons and are just.

The wager of this dissertation has been that only a properly democratic imagination can redeem the circle of exemplarity. Not reason in its sovereign, law-giving guise, not affect in its immanence, not the social imagination of pregiven meanings, nor the sovereigntist imagination of transcendence, but the democratic imagination as Arendt understood it operating in judgment: the free play of reflection responsive to exemplary appearances in view of the shared world. Judgment is the name for this imagination. It is the capacity by which we discover meaning in exemplary deeds, reflect upon their claim to guide us, and orient

ourselves and others toward worlds that affirm freedom and equality. To judge is to respond to the crisis of exemplarity by making its circle turn toward justice.

In this dissertation, I have endeavored to show how this is the case over three chapters, which together traced two-thirds of the circle of exemplarity redeemed by judgment. As I suggested at the end of the previous chapter, the circle of exemplarity is better understood as a spiral. If circles close in upon themselves, a spiral more faithfully captures the reflective openness of time and space, and the condition of plurality it makes available. The redeemed circle of exemplarity—worldly, subjective, intersubjective—therefore beckons us outward, toward ever-changing horizons of the human condition. We do not stand outside the spiral but are surrounded by it and reflect within it. It does not move towards progress but invites us to return, ever and anew, to the initiating events that appear to have shaped the world we find ourselves navigating. Let us position ourselves in view of some of the turns that remain under-explored at the conclusion of this dissertation by first recapitulating the arc it did endeavor to trace.

In chapter one, I offered a reading of Arendt's most famous work of political theory, *The Human Condition*, which is often read as a wholesale rejection of models, measures, or standards in politics. On the common interpretation, Arendt's critique of "fabrication" and instrumentalism implies that political action cannot and should not be measured against any kind of standard, for its greatness lies precisely in its boundless novelty. Against this interpretation, I argued that Arendt's position is in fact more ambivalent. Her rejection of instrumental models—which treat politics as a means to some preordained end—does not preclude the possibility of non-instrumental standards. Indeed, her sensitivity to the dangers of measure prepares the ground for a conception of exemplarity as the kind of standard appropriate to plurality and natality. By weaving the loose threads of *The Human Condition* into *The Life of the Mind*, I showed how exemplarity occupies the space where action and judgment converge. Far from hostile to standards, then, Arendt's thought opens the path to exemplarity as the kind of measure that sustains political freedom without sacrificing its contingency.

In chapter two, I turned to the objective axis of exemplarity, which I called exemplary givenness. Here, my concern was how exemplary appearances first make themselves available to judgment as possible standards. This concern was motivated by the problem of normative regress threatened by the circle of exemplarity. If examples are both selected by yet also guide judgment, how do we avoid arbitrariness or relativism? Drawing primarily on Arendt's engagement with Kant, I argued that exemplary appearances disclose norms not through satisfying rules or projected outcomes, but through their originary claim to endure in the imaginations of spectators. They appear as they 'ought' to be without rules and thus set our imagination into free play in search of the durability of that 'ought' in public, which I called meaning. I elaborated three dimensions of this givenness: its indeterminate-determinate character (at once singular and generalizable), its primitive or politically originary normativity (a call to reflection prior to justification),

and its relation to linguistic creativity (how judgment responds by discovering new words and narratives). Exemplary appearances, I argued, are world-opening *res publica*. They do not merely reflect inherited norms, but inaugurate new possibilities of meaning, orientation, and renewal between plural perspectives. Because exemplary actions appear as excessive of any single perspective, their appearance occasions broadening our vantage points by imagining how they look from the standpoints of others. In this way, the objective axis clarifies how exemplary actions interrupt normative regress in a politically originary way, and how judgment sustains the openness of the world by reflecting upon them from other perspectives.

In chapter three, I moved to the subjective axis of exemplarity: how responsiveness to exemplars becomes responsibility for our own actions. Standard theories of democratic agency pivot on a binary between autonomy and heteronomy. Either citizens legislate norms for themselves, or they submit to external authorities. I proposed instead a mediating possibility, *heautonomy*, drawn from Kant's *Critique of Judgment*. Heautonomy describes how citizens cultivate agency by reflectively selecting exemplars as company, thereby orienting their conduct toward exemplarity without collapsing into self-sovereignty or subservience. Through Arendt's claim that 'our decisions of right and wrong depend on our choices of exemplary company,' I argued that judgment is not about cultivating companionship: keeping company with examples that disclose the personhood of persons and the worldliness of the world. Heautonomy reconciles the mimetic and the discerning aspects of judgment, allowing us to recognize our vulnerability to exemplars while assuming responsibility for the worlds they shape. In this sense, citizens emerge not as passive norm-followers but as exemplars-in-the-making whose judgments and actions sustain democratic renewal.

Taken together, these chapters traced two-thirds of the circle of exemplarity. They showed how exemplary appearances arise (objective axis) and how we respond to them responsibly (subjective axis). But the third axis remains unexplored. If exemplarity is to be redeemed democratically, it cannot stop at the meeting point of world and person. It must also pass through the space between actual persons, the intersubjective field where plurality takes concerted form. While I was unable to treat the intersubjective axis directly, much of my discussion at the end of chapter three prepared the way for it.

The missing arc would have re-examined judgment's double openness (responsiveness to exemplars in anticipation of action) from the vantage point of its concerted achievement. Here exemplarity appears not only in the mental company we keep, but in the solidarities and common-places that arise between persons struggling to shape the world that shapes them. To study this axis would have required developing an exemplarist reading of the 'power-with' relation (to speak with Mary Parker Follett) internal to acting in concert: how collective actions set new standards of belonging, how mutual commitments and promises preserve pluralities toward justice, how persuasive speech may open new common grounds from which diversely situated and divided persons can act freely together. It would also mean attending to the

worldly by-products of exemplary action, like monuments, archives, photographs, and stories, through which exemplary deeds endure as touchstones for imagination.

The texture of the intersubjective axis is readily observable. Consider, for instance, the way the American civil rights movement's sit-ins and marches became exemplary not only for their participants but for countless spectators across the globe. Their exemplarity was not exhausted by individual charisma nor by abstract ideals, but by the solidarities formed through shared action, the songs sung in common, the photographs circulated in newspapers, and enduring phrases like 'I have a dream.' These did not simply supplement judgment but became part of its very substance, anchoring imagination in a shared world oriented toward justice. Or consider the Czech Velvet Revolution of 1989: the exemplary power of public gatherings in Wenceslas Square, sustained by the solidarities of striking workers, students, and artists, created a common space that toppled a regime without violence.

Had I written this chapter, I would have shown how the intersubjective axis completes the spiral of exemplarity as it weaves through and is redeemed by judgment. Exemplary givenness discloses exemplary norms; subjective heautonomy orients us to them responsibly; intersubjective action sustains them in concert and gives them worldly durability. The three together would form a political phenomenology of reflective judgment that portrays the life of the mind as care for the world.

But if the image of the circle must give way to the image of a spiral, the completion of the circle within judgment would open onto a range of topics that exceed its three axes. To read Arendt *with and with Arendt*, as I put it in the introduction, requires continually rediscovering the distinctions, tensions, and possibilities in her writings. With the conception of judgment advanced in this dissertation, we are indeed invited to do so. For if judgment was what Arendt was doing all along, then we are invited to reflect anew the world she draws forward in light of our own. And our world is different. Many of the distinctions that Arendt seems to firmly maintain have appeared unsustainable, and this owing to the exemplary actions and writings of those trying to find their way to justice since the time of her writing. There are distinctions that appeared in this dissertation – like between examples, words and narratives; world and earth; privacy and publicity; mind and body; the social and political; democracy, republicanism and aristocratism – that require renewed reflection.

Among all the distinctions addressed in this dissertation, whether directly or indirectly, the one between goodness and evil deserves, I think, special attention. Arendt thought that the problem of evil would be "the fundamental question of postwar intellectual life."[1] I'm not sure she was right about that, but given the reflections at the end of the last chapter, the insight that motivated her premonition seems to me entirely apt. If Arendt's judgments were motivated by crises, and the central crisis was totalitarianism and

[1] Hannah Arendt, *Essays in Understanding, 1930-1954: Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism* (Schocken Books, 1994), 134.

the evil it revealed, what we are called to ponder today is not only how totalitarianism in its now classical form still casts its shadow over the 21st century, but also how it has morphed into something potentially more insidious. The internet has remade the conditions of exemplarity, collapsing distance, amplifying commodified images, and curating admiration through algorithms in ways that reinforce what Sheldon Wolin called 'inverted totalitarianism': a system where domination occurs not through terror but through distraction, spectacle, and managed horizons of attention.[2] Artificial intelligence promises both creative possibilities and new forms of manipulation. Nationalism has returned in new guises, fracturing global institutions that once seemed to promise durable pluralism. State surveillance has expanded its reach and become automated. Ecological breakdown and forced migration place unprecedented pressure on the earth and the laws that govern it. The spiral of history has widened, and its trajectory remains unpredictable. It is here, in confronting inverted totalitarianism, that the stakes of judgment come into their sharpest relief. If the "greatest danger" is the inability or unwillingness to choose examples, inverted totalitarianism intensifies this danger. For unlike the naked horrors of classical totalitarian regimes, which annihilated plurality through overt violence, inverted totalitarianism buries the conditions of plurality beneath a surface of ordinary functionality. The sun shines, roadways hum, citizens vote. But beneath the bright surface, exemplarity corrodes. Banal evil does not vanish, it goes underground. It appropriates the darkness once reserved for the wicked and becomes harder to notice. It seeps into the wires of communication, into the basements of disinformation, into the hidden channels of the dark web, into the silent logics of algorithms. It inhabits the ordinary forms of life while deflecting reflection from its glossy surface. If totalitarianism smothered roots with concrete, inverted totalitarianism coats the earth with a shiny veneer, a black mirror manipulated from below. It produces not terror but indifference, not silence through censorship but noise through saturation. It flattens near and far by flooding the 'public' with examples curated for spectacle rather than worth. It colonizes judgment by outsourcing admiration to celebrity, virality, or metrics of attention. It makes us less able to notice when evil appears, for it cloaks itself in the banalities of entertainment and efficiency. The sun shines, yet we cannot see.

This is why inverted totalitarianism renders the moral and political danger of failing to choose examples even more acute. In an environment where exemplars are algorithmically amplified and mimetically consumed, the temptation to relinquish judgment is overwhelming. To not choose is to be chosen for. To drift into indifference is to consent to a managed horizon where the possibility of good examples fades from view. The danger is not that exemplars disappear, but that their exemplary power is hijacked, banalized, and redirected—living where judgment has trouble following. Hence it is against this backdrop that the world-building power of judgment appears all the more urgent. By judging, we resist the

[2] Sheldon S. Wolin, *Democracy Incorporated: Managed Democracy and the Specter of Inverted Totalitarianism* (Princeton University Press, 2008).

passivity that inverted totalitarianism requires. We keep alive the capacity to discern world-affirming exemplars even when distraction tempts us otherwise. We choose, and in choosing, we keep a brighter world alive.

To be sure, this is not a call to hope. Hope, as Arendt saw, is blind. In inverted totalitarianism, where the vectors of domination are diffuse and ever shifting, the ground from which hope leaps gives way such that the only hope possible is that the conditions for hope may appear again. But discovering such conditions needs something else: courage, the "political virtue *par excellence.*"[3] In contrast to hope, courage is anchored and directed. It forms through exemplary encouragement, by the sight of another's action that dignifies the world enough to inspire us to also stand with it. Times have not always been dark, nor are they fully dark now. But since we cannot rely on the rules handed down by tradition, we must carry and cultivate our own ground. "Our inheritance was left to us without testimony," as Arendt quoted Rene Char. Courage, then, is not antecedent to judgment but a byproduct of it. It arises when the reflective activity of selecting exemplary company encourages us to act ourselves. Judgment is the precondition of courage, and courage the condition of political belonging. Without judgment, courage dissipates into bravado or despair. With judgment, it orients itself toward freedom and equality.

In my introduction, I said that redeeming exemplarity for democracy would require addressing seven questions. We may now respond to six of them:

1. *How do we discover meaning from exemplary events, and how is this meaning related to the publics they are oriented toward?*

Meaning is *discovered* or *revealed* when an appearance "claims" us as exemplary—i.e., sets imagination into reflective free play—before any rule or outcome adjudicates its worth. This claim is never addressed to a view from nowhere but is addressed to *a public*, whether latent or actual, bounded by shared references, languages, and memories. Judgment makes that public both broader and more porous: by imaginatively visiting the standpoints of others, we re-contextualize the claim of exemplary events so it can circulate beyond its initial audience without losing the singularity that gives it power.

2. *What is the relation between an event or action and the example derived from it?*

An example is not a deduction from an event but its *exemplary transfiguration*. It is a selective, public-facing crystallization of the event's normativity. The derivation is neither conceptual subsumption nor mere reportage. It is a work of *world-measuring* where spectators articulate what in the event ought to endure or be 'built' into the world. Hence the same event can yield divergent examples: Socrates can be all of a gadfly,

[3] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (University of Chicago Press, 2018), 36.

stingray, and midwife, for instance. The polyvalence of exemplary meaning is only a problem if we suppose actions, events, and lives should be totally visible. But this betrays a unity of the exemplary that approaches idolism. Thus judgment is responsible for distinguishing mimetic capture from *selective affinity*—for extracting the orienting core without coercive repetition or alienating abstraction.

3. *How are examples different from myth, metaphor, parable, and symbol—and why does it matter?* Examples *present* a singular deed as an orienting measure here-and-now. By contrast, myths *found*, symbols *condense*, metaphors *transfer*, and parables *stage* a practical inference. Unlike myths, examples need no transcendental warrant; unlike symbols, they are not fixed codes; unlike metaphors, they do not merely illuminate by likeness; unlike parables, they need not be didactic. Their significance is precisely that they are *world-immanent standards*: they enact normativity by showing how the world might look and inviting public assent without compulsion.

4. *How can imitation be adjusted in pluralism where authoritative exemplars are contested?* Heautonomy replaces raw mimesis with *reflexive congeniality*: we admit the formative power of exemplars while taking responsibility for those that we keep near. The practice implied here has two aspects: hospitality (keeping a 'seat open' for the new so the circle of judgment doesn't close) and discernment (nearing/farring in light of freedom and equality). In this sense, judgment leads not to *admiration*, as in virtue ethics, but to political *cultivation*: we learn *how* to *relate* in dialogue without surrendering *who* we are, and avoid both conformist drift and idiosyncratic isolation.

5. *What responsibilities do exemplary practices place upon us—and how can they promote speaking and acting in our own voices?*

First, *responsiveness*: to hear the claim of exemplary givenness and test it against an enlarged *sensus communis*. Second, *responsibility*: to choose company in ways that make us answerable for the worlds we help sustain. Paradoxically, reflective congeniality yields personal voice: by conducting a polyphony of exemplars (congeniality), the "host" that never appears generates an address that is singular yet publicly legible—the middle voice of judgment that persuades without commanding.

6. *On what grounds can our choices of exemplars affirm the world as a space between free and equal persons?*

On the grounds of *exemplarity, personhood, and worldliness* itself: we affirm exemplars that (a) disclose *persons* as singular and non-substitutable; (b) enact *worldliness* by appearing in ways that invite congenial persuasion rather than demand submission; and (c) *seed durability* by leaving traces (stories, monuments,

archives) that inspire free renewal. Such choices instantiate the only kind of political measure fit for plurality: not a rule above the world nor a *fait accompli* within it, but a *standard through appearance*. In short: through judgment, we choose those examples that open a world in which free and equal persons seem capable of standing and acting as persons.

Allow me to conclude with an example. In 1930, Mahatma Gandhi led thousands of Indians on the Salt March, a 240-mile walk to the sea to protest the British monopoly on salt. His act was simple—to make salt from seawater. Yet in its simplicity lay its exemplary power. It disclosed the injustice of imperial control over the most basic of human needs. It invited millions to follow, not by coercion but by persuasion, and it set into motion a ripple of actions that transformed a nation. The Salt March remains exemplary not because it conforms to principles, nor because it 'succeeded' in a narrow consequentialist sense, but because it revealed how nonviolent action can build a world fit for mortal beings.

So too must we. If judgment is the most political of our mental faculties, it is because it teaches us how to choose our company well, how to care for the world, and how to cultivate our common places with those who also dwell in them. From judgment springs courage, and from courage the possibility of freely acting together. Hence if in the amphitheater of *amour mundi* we faintly hear, *be the change you wish to see in the world*, we may now reply in turn: *Yes—through judgment, and with good exemplars.*

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APPENDIX A
POLITICAL & ETHICAL EXEMPLARITY

In chapter II, I developed a distinction between objects and regions to render the publicity of exemplary appearances. I would like here to mobilize this distinction to show how ethical approaches to exemplarity rely on the very same publicity. Like the distinction between aesthetic and political works of art introduced at the beginning of II.vi (*Das Balkonzimmer* and *Declaration of Independence*), the distinction between ethical and political is also not absolute. Whatever clarity we gain by their separation is deepened by their relation. I wish to show how near to my own account ethical approaches can come, and where the public perspective adds something essential to them. Although there are several accounts that might serve such a comparison,[4] the one best fit for my purposes is Jonathan Lear's, whose blend of Aristotelian virtue ethics and post-Freudian psychoanalysis yields insights that overlap in many respects with the account I have been developing.

In *Imagining the End,* Lear offers a vivid account of how exemplars spur the pursuit of virtue. "In the autumn of fourth grade," he writes,

> I swore on the playground. Although I remember what followed, I cannot directly remember what I said. The class was at recess in late morning, it was a gray day, and I am pretty confident I said, "Goddammit." This is where my memory clicks in. […] Mr. McMahon turned around, and he started walking toward me. […] He looked me in the eyes, and said in a low, calm voice: *We do not use profane language on the playground.* He then turned around and walked away. That was it.[5]

Simple as it was, this experience shaped Lear's life. The calm composure with which McMahon spoke, his refusal to dramatize or humiliate, and his measured use of the unfamiliar word *profane* all struck Lear's imagination with enough power to produce a lifetime of reflection. Lear's account of why this is the case largely rests on his reading of Aristotle's notion of *kalon,* often translated as "beautiful," "noble," or "fine," and that Lear renders as the inner "kernel" of the good (*eudaimonia*) radiating from an exemplar.[6] "The key to our happiness," Lear says, "lies in the active exercise of our ability to delight in, and be motivated to emulate and imitate, those exemplars of *kalon* that we experience in life, as well as our success through practice in internalizing and identifying with *kalon* so that, having acquired human virtue or excellence, we

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[44] E.g.: *Alasdair C. MacIntyre, Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity: An Essay on Desire, Practical Reasoning, and Narrative* (Cambridge University Press, 2016), chap. 5.;Linda Trinkaus Zagzebski, *Exemplarist Moral Theory* (Oxford University Press, 2017).

[5] Lear, *Imagining the End*, 48.

[6] Lear, *Imagining the End*, 16.

shine forth ourselves."[7] Successful attainment of virtue entails transforming the *kalon* we receive into one that shines from ourselves. Had the significance of McMahon's action derived solely from the force of the rule that his speech asserted, the transmission of virtue would have been rather straightforward: McMahon's rebuke would have been heard in the register of moral discipline and required nothing more than dutiful observance. But just as the mere assertion of the rule would have done little to set Lear's imagination alight, so too would his observance of that rule do little to alight ours.[8]

It is here that Lear's account of *kalon* converges with the Arendtian account I have been developing. Lear also notices that the experience of exemplarity must entail enough ambiguity to motivate not rule-following but reflective play, and that this ambiguity belongs not to moral excellence in the first instance, but to what he calls the "persuasive power of reality."[9] That reality is *persuasive* and not *certain* owes to the what Lear calls the "enigma" of the *kalon,* thus coming close to what Arendt called the "fluctuating ambiguity" of objects: just as "table" and *Tisch* are at once related and separated through the object they commonly designate, so too was Lear's prior understanding of the rule (not to swear) related and separated from McMahon's use of *profane* in reference to the playground in which such a rule obtains. It was precisely this tension between the familiar and the unfamiliar that awakened in Lear a moral awareness inseparable from ethical freedom: McMahon's example supplied an imaginative *topoi* the meaning of which Lear would turn and return to over the course of his life as he continued to confront the vexing relationships between speech and transgression, authority and normativity, creativity and validity.[10] If McMahon interrupted the play of recess to reorient his student's conduct back toward the school's shared norms, Lear and Arendt would agree that his action endured as exemplary not because it ended play but because it set Lear's mind into free play.

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[7] Jonathan Lear, "When Meghan Married Harry: A Comment on the Humanities," Judgment and Values in the Humanities: What's Worth Conserving?, Yale University, 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6-L22mVGy8k. It is worth mentioning here that behind this reading of *kalon* is a psychoanalytic insight that Lear elsewhere makes use of. Comfort with ambiguity is characteristic of what Melanie Klein calls the reparative position, which is the capacity to tolerate ambivalence without splitting an object into idealized and persecutory parts. This stands in contrast to the paranoid–schizoid position, which defends against ambiguity by seeking to control or annihilate the object through projection and splitting. Although Arendt herself was generally hostile to psychoanalysis, her understanding of it was largely shaped by her reading of Freud. She might have been more sympathetic to Klein's object-relational view, in which the freedom to sustain relation across difference resembles the political condition of plurality. If the 'fluctuating ambiguity' of the world allows there to be more than one at all, I think it a benefit to see how comfort with this ambiguity can be threatened by possessiveness or rejection. Without this comfort, objects could not yield plurality. They would appear as either mine or not-mine.

[8] "If I had simply received a standard punishment," Lear writes, "I suspect I would have forgotten about this moment long ago" (Lear, *Imagining the End*, 50.

[9] As Lear puts it, "I know he was remarkable in that moment—and in several others—but it is precisely because of his reality that there is much about Mr. McMahon that I do not know and could not hope to know. That's what real experiences are usually like: much that happens is beyond one's ken. But ironically, all this not-knowing adds to rather than subtracts from my confidence in what I do know. All the aspects of not knowing are part of what it is to experience something real" (Lear, *Imagining the End*, 52.).

[10] I deal with the coincidence of morality and ethics in chapters V and VI.

Yet if Lear and Arendt converge in their appreciation of the fluctuating ambiguity of exemplary reality, the dyadic *I-you* relation that structures Lear's account largely occludes the dimension of plurality so central to Arendt's.[11] That the dyadic frame impressed itself so prominently to Lear is of course natural enough: McMahon looked directly into his eyes and addressed him as a momentarily wayward ethical agent in need of course correction. Yet for Lear this frame is not accidental but proper to exemplarity as such.[12] Arendt would not deny the salience of this relation but would insist that the power of McMahon's action belongs in the first instance to its publicity. Notice, for instance, three interwoven layers of publicity operating within Lear's account. First, the dyadic immediacy of Lear's experience took place within a broader space of visibility that surrounded their interlocked eyes. While the direction of McMahon's gaze may have singularized Lear as the main addressee of his words, the *kalon* of his example did not belong to Lear alone but would have radiated across the playground, setting the minds of the other children into similar free play. McMahon not only set an example *for* Lear but also, at least potentially, made an example *of* him to his peers.[13] At the level of its very appearance, then, McMahon's action opened a mini-public within the social space of the schoolyard.

Second, although McMahon's rebuke may have impressed more than one child that morning, Lear's account shows that the publicity of its claim does not in fact require the presence of an actual plurality beyond the dyadic frame. Even if the other students were irrelevant or inattentive, the fact that Lear continued to draw on the example across the very different contexts of his life indicates that publicity can radiate even from a seemingly isolated dyadic encounter. That the *kalon* of McMahon's words exceeded Lear's immediate perspective does not mean its reach was bounded by the literal playground. Had McMahon's *we* ("…do not use profane language…") referred unambiguously to the school community alone, Lear could not have transported the example into the University of Chicago, his psychoanalytic practice, or into the book *Imagining the End* where he recounts it for his readers. It was thus not only *profane* that must have struck Lear as enigmatic, but also *we* and *playground*. Behind the literal *we* there must have radiated a virtual *we* that opens onto any public whatever. McMahon spoke in what Arendt, following Kant, calls a "general voice" (*allgemeine Stimme*), inviting Lear to recognize himself not merely as a member of that morning's community but as a participant in a broader world in which such norms *may* obtain. The exemplary power of the act thus lay not in the dyad itself but in the latent plurality that its very mode of address presupposed and quietly summoned.

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[11] Lear, *Imagining the End*, 51.

[12] "The 'power of the exemplar' lies not so much in the exemplar *per se* but in a dyad that stretches over space and time that includes the exemplar and the person who was on the 'receiving end' of the exemplifying experience" (Lear, *Imagining the End*, 51.) This is why Lear's account of exemplarity fits naturally with the teacher-student, adult-child, model—just like Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*.

[13] Part of what McMahon exemplary was his respect for the playground. He made sure to interfere only minimally to let Lear and the other students carry on as they were.

Third and finally, the exemplarity of McMahon's action derives neither from the immediacy of the first- and second-person encounter nor from the neutrality of third-person observation, but from the first-person-plural perspective that binds them together. The *shining* that Lear described as initiating the acquisition of virtue also appears at the 'end' of that process in Lear's own actions, thereby locating the recursive circle of ethical reflection within a broader public sphere of visibility. Yet because Lear does not trace how the enigma of the *kalon* radiates not only for *him* as its ethical recipient but also for the indeterminate community that may inherit and renew the meaning of *both* their actions, his account leaves unarticulated the very first-person-plural standpoint he briefly invokes. As the foregoing analysis shows, that standpoint is already operative in the exemplary deed's mode of appearing and is the condition from which its public validity ultimately derives. Arendt thus provides the conceptual architecture to Lear's insight: the ambiguous radiance of the example is public in principle, even when encountered alone, because the very grammar of exemplary appearance summons a *we* to whom its meaning is always addressed.

Lear's commitment to the dyadic I–you structure quietly shapes not only his account of exemplarity but also his preference for direct experience over indirect reception. If exemplarity is fundamentally interpersonal, then its full power must be felt *in person.* Yet from an Arendtian perspective, the distinction between direct and indirect in fact rests on a false dilemma. While it is certainly the case that *our* image of McMahon is far less vivid than Lear's own, for Arendt the kind of transformative radiance described by Lear is nevertheless available through indirect imagination as well. As she cites Thomas Jefferson: "'The fictitious murder of Duncan by Macbeth' excites in us 'as great a horror of villainy, as the real one of Henri IV,' and a 'lively and lasting sense of filial duty is more effectually impressed on a son or daughter by reading *King Lear* than by all the dry volumes of ethics and divinity that ever were written."[14] The reason the contrast between direct and indirect experience resists final resolution is that both perspectives ultimately open onto the same first-person-plural horizon. McMahon's *we* was an act of generosity not only because it kept the space of play alive both on the playground and in Lear's mind,[15] but also because it recalibrated Lear's orientation from the otherwise punitive first-person singular toward the plural standpoint of membership in a community. Both the vividness and transportability of McMahon's example lay partly in the fact that McMahon did *not* name Lear directly, in other words. Conversely, while Shakespeare's plays never address the reader in the second person, Jefferson could still recognize himself as the implicit addressee of their claims. In exemplary experience, then, the line between direct and indirect experience is blurred along a continuum sustained by the first-person-plural.

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[14] Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, 145.

[15] Lear identifies McMahon's *generosity* (refusal to shame, calm restraint, and allowing Lear simply to step aside) as integral to the *kalon* of the act. This generosity is not a psychological embellishment but a structural feature of exemplarity: it creates the non-coercive space in which the recipient can take up the *kalon* as his own (Lear, *Imagining the End*, 50–52.)

All this bears on the distinction between objects and regions. From the first-person-plural perspective, the perspectives of onlookers matter as much as those of the participants locked in the drama. If Lear focused on McMahon's action, we, like the children on the playground, focus on McMahon's action and Lear's response to it. Those children may have noticed the quiet bravery of Lear's composure as McMahon approached; Lear himself may have imagined how the scene looked to his peers; and he certainly imagined his readers' perspectives when he recounted the event in *Imagining the End*. All of these perspectives belong to the exemplary phenomenon. If the action corresponds to what we above called the reflective object (*Gegenstand*), then its radiance necessarily extends into the region (*Gegen*) of the world in which it appears. It is the interplay of object and region (deed and world, appearance and horizon) that transforms an isolated exemplary action into what we might call an exemplary event. It is in this event structure that exemplarity is fully political: an exemplary appearance not only unfolds the agent's virtue but also the world space in which the reality of the action, and the contours of its virtue, can be witnessed reflected, and retold anew.

The appearance of Jefferson above is apt. In the second chapter, I drew upon the example of the Declaration of Independence to prompt a movement from aesthetics to politics. We may now do so the same with ethics. The small republic opened by McMahon's *we do not use profane language on the playground* recalls the famous Jeffersonian phrase under which the American founders signed their names: *We hold these truths to be self-evident.* For Arendt, this utterance marks the passage from private conscience (or taste, more accurately) to the public enactment of freedom: the freedom to appear before others as rights-bearing equals capable of founding a common world. Like McMahon's *we*, the *we* of the Declaration names no pre-existing subject but calls one into being. Both utterances fuse authority and freedom in the very act of address, radiating a *kalon* that invites co-authorship without coercion. Their truths are "self-evident" only through the concerted action of those who imaginatively assent to the *we* they invoke. To hold such truths is not to possess them as self-evident by the light of nature or reason, but to keep open the region in which they endure as renewable objects of reflection and inspiration.[16] This kind of truth operates neither as a truth of fact nor a truth of reason, but in the mode of what Arendt following Kant calls exemplary validity (*exemplarische Gültigkeit*):[17] a reality that, by radiating in a general voice, persuades an

[16] Renewability and inspiration are normatively arbitrary but, as I argue in chapter three, are guided by reflexive conditions within judging itself.

[17] In her essay "Truth and Politics," Arendt distinguishes factual from rational truth and argues that both are coercive when they enter the public sphere because they end reflective dialogue (Hannah Arendt, "Truth and Politics," in Between Past and Future (New York: Viking, 1968), 304–6). In her discussion of rational truth, however, Arendt opens a path toward an exemplarist conception of truth. The only way rational truths become politically viable, she says, is if the philosopher chooses to act on their basis so that they can appear "in the guise of an example." The moral principle of non-contradiction, for instance, has endured because Socrates chose to stake his life on it. But Arendt's discussion of "exemplary truth" is brief. No matter how awe-inspiring exemplified rational truths may be, once they enter the sphere of action, such

indeterminate plurality to turn and return to the essence or *kalon* of its meaning. Like the white rhombus of light in Menzel's *Balkonzimmer*, then, McMahon's rebuke and Jefferson's *we* appear as part of the very world they illuminate: singular, situated, open to infinitely many spectators. Their brilliance does not erase obscurity but transforms it into a chiaroscuro of meaning. Each exemplary act, ethical or political, draws its normative power from the same source: the ambiguous radiance of an essence or *kalon* that, in supporting and eluding definition, gathers the many around a "common-identical world" without subsuming them into One. What Lear's narrative helps us glimpse but cannot fully articulate within his dyadic frame is that the *we* that arises in such moments is never a pre-given subject, individual or collective, but an ever-renewable plurality. Exemplary *res publica* thus names the objective condition for that plurality, the condition by which freedom appears and reappears as a shared beginning**.** In this sense, exemplarity does not merely mirror the public world but actively renews it.

truths no longer compel by rational necessity but persuade through the power of their reality—through the reflective assent of judging spectators. In this sense, the disjunctive connection between rational and exemplary truth must be underwritten by judgment itself: the 'truth' of an example depends for its validity on being shared, renewed, and contested in public. While rational truth can *become* exemplary truth, exemplary validity is broader than rational truth.

APPENDIX B
DAS BALKONZIMMER

In my discussion of Kant's notion of *schematizing without a concept* (II.iv), I drew on Keren Gorodeisky's account of the relation between parts and wholes with reference to Adolf Menzel's *Das Balkonzimmer* . In II.vi, I suggested that the radiance of exemplary works and actions emerges not only from the internal coherence of their parts, but also from the specific *world-regions* that such coherence discloses. While I take this to be true of exemplary works and actions more generally, I have come to see *Das Balkonzimmer* as a particularly powerful instance of this connection, and one that exemplifies in visual form the structure of judgment this dissertation seeks to articulate.

Menzel painted *Das Balkonzimmer* in 1845, during the period in which he still lived with his mother and sister in their Berlin apartment on *Königgrätzer Straße*, prior to his later prominence as Prussia's great history painter. The work depicts an intimate domestic interior, opened to the world by the quiet incursion of afternoon light through a lace curtain. Although the painting does not take political life as its explicit subject, it reveals Menzel's early preoccupation with light, appearance, and the permeability of interior space to what lies beyond it. In this sense, the painting stands at both a biographical and a political threshold: created before Menzel became the chronicler of the Prussian state, it attends instead to the modest conditions under which the world first comes to presence in private life.

The painting also contains a number of elements that resonate closely with the account of heautonomy developed in this dissertation. The depiction of an interior room recalls the interiority of the mind itself: *raumhaft*, spacious rather than enclosed. The empty chairs evoke what René Char called the "empty seat of freedom," a space held open for appearance rather than occupied by authority. The stillness of the scene mirrors Kant's description of the reflective mind as composed rather than driven, receptive rather than commanding. The mirror introduces a moment of doubling and multi-aspectuality, suggesting reflection not as self-absorption but as the coexistence of perspectives within a shared space. And above all, the light is neither dramatic nor symbolic, but quietly diffused—flooding the room with appearing things, illuminating them without subsuming them under a concept.

Seen in this way, *Das Balkonzimmer* does not merely illustrate reflective judgment; it stages it. The work's coherence does not impose itself through rule or design but emerges through a delicate attunement between parts, whole, and world. It offers a visual analogue to the kind of exemplarist normativity at stake

in heautonomy: a form of orientation that binds without coercing, reveals without commanding, and invites judgment rather than dictating it.[1]

Figure 7: *Das Balkonzimmer*

[1] Adolf Menzel. *Das Balkonzimmer.* 1840. Artstor.