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Praxis, poiēsis, and durable public space
in the philosophy of Hannah Arendt

by

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Summary

Introduction

Hannah Arendt (1906 - 1975) is known for her relentless defence of political action as an affirmation of human being and freedom. Juxtaposed to this defence is the simultaneous demand that a shared, durable world is an essential aspect of meaningful human existence. It is this confrontation between freedom and action on the one hand and worldly durability on the other that forms the basis of this thesis. The purpose of this dissertation is to understand this tension as it comes forth in the relationship between *praxis* as free political action and *poiēsis* as work or fabrication.

Arendt's political theory is set forth in *The Human Condition* through an arrangement of capabilities or modes of being. She especially draws on the differences between capabilities in order to emphasize the respective value of each in human existence. Although she distinguishes between action, work, and labour, the relationship between action and work forms the core of this study.

Arendt's theory of political action is further rooted in a particular intellectual context and philosophical tradition. Although the varied influences upon Arendt's thought are undeniable, this study is limited to those immediately pertinent to the topic. Her experiences as a German Jewess and Jewish refugee certainly inform and are informed by her notion of worldliness and her insistence upon a public political sphere for the recognition and appearance of human dignity. Her critique of the modern condition in terms of world alienation, automatism, and the rise of mass society also offers a decisive backdrop for understanding contemporary phenomena. Even though both aspects are important, neither is directly pertinent, especially since this study proffers a provisional glance at the framework within which Arendt presents her critique. And although the latter context is briefly discussed in Chapter 2, it is rather the condition of worldliness that complicates the relationship between action and work. In terms of this question, the Platonic, Aristotelian, and Heideggerian influences upon Arendt's thought will be examined.

One of the main questions asked in this study is whether the capacity of political actors, as conceived by Arendt, is in fact dependent upon the capacity of the fabricator or craftsman. Such a dependence would be problematic for several reasons. First, Arendt specifically criticizes Plato for positing a philosophically biased view of human capabilities, which has since shaped

our Western philosophical and political traditions and categories. Although this critique is discussed in detail in Chapter 1, it is the introduction of the principles of work into the political realm that Arendt admonishes and thinks against. It is thus either unlikely or highly problematic that Arendt's attempt to rethink the distinct faculties of the human being would suggest the very subordination to or dependence of *praxis* upon *poiēsis* that she illuminates in Plato's thought.

The exploration of this relationship between action and work incorporates two approaches. First, the indication that action may be dependent upon work and the problematic nature of such a dependence is noted. Arendt's emphasis on the differences between the two activities seems to imply that a conflation of these modes of being also undermines the significant characteristics and principles of each. The second approach attempts to elucidate the relationship itself.

The significance of the durable, shared world to the realisation of human plurality and the possible exercise of action implies that the relations between the capabilities and between the conditions of human existence must be investigated. Arendt's insistence upon specific qualities of action (as performance, non-sovereign beginning, and frail), coupled with its apparent concern with the durable world, brings into question the manner in which political actors may effectively care for or relate to the world. The fact that it is through work that human beings build a durable world and preserve the appearances of freedom and action, although problematic in one sense, may indicate an interdependence between faculties. This relation furthermore appears as a complex tension in the experience of human being in terms of freedom and worldliness. Finally, it is suggested that the problematic aspects of this relationship and tension may be mediated by another human faculty, namely judging. As a capacity that Arendt argues is shared by all human beings, it may be through judging that the mentalities and principles of action and work care for the world as a durable, public space.

Chapter 1 serves as an introduction to the framework and significant elements of Arendt's overall project. It begins with an elucidation of the traditional philosophical bias that Arendt critiques, with a focus on Plato's and Aristotle's understandings of contemplation as the best mode of being. The introduction of fabrication into the realm of politics is also a central concern for Arendt, and in fact motivates the emphasis she places upon distinguishing between action, work, and labour. The rest of the chapter explores the unique characteristics and

principles that Arendt attributes to each respective activity of the *vita activa*. Labour refers to the mode of being of the *animal laborans* who is bound to life and necessity. This is distinguished from work as the activity of *homo faber*. In this mode, human beings are able to build a durable world as an environment of things that withstands the force of consumption and cyclical repetition of nature. The principles of work are utility and durability.

In political action, however, human beings engage with one another through the sharing of words and deeds. Only in action are the unique identities of the actors disclosed. This adheres to the condition of plurality, characterised by equality and distinctness. Within this mode of being, Arendt also rethinks the nature and experience of freedom. Freedom refers to human non-sovereignty and the capacity for beginning. Finally, Arendt attributes to action the quality of publicity or what I shall call publicness. Both labour and work are, for Arendt, essentially private activities. Publicness thus refers to the disclosive tendency and quality of action. It also, however, refers to a public space of appearance in the world. The relationship between the public space of appearance and the durable world is the basis for the next chapter.

Chapter 2 takes as its starting point the notion of “world” and its relationship to the public space of appearance. Arendt defines the public space as an intangible web of relationships, but also as the common, durable world. The significance of the durable world to the possibilities and exercise of action is thus addressed. It is concluded that the durable world provides both a shared context and shared concern for potential action and the realisation of plurality. But this is problematic considering the extent to which the durable world arises through fabrication. This suggests that action is subordinate to the faculty of work.

Arendt’s characterisation of this mode of being is reconsidered in light of the principles that inform *homo faber*’s view of the world in general and of public spaces of appearance in particular. *Homo faber* works according to the principles of utility and durability, which seem to contradict the respect for human plurality, disclosure, and freedom that makes action possible. *Homo faber* also regards the public spaces of appearance as places for the appearance of fabricated goods rather than acting human beings. The durable world, however, conditions the possibilities and relationships of human beings. It is thus concluded that Arendt’s delineation of the differences between action and work on the one hand, and of the relation between action and the durable world on the other, have problematic implications.

Chapter 3 takes as its starting point the notions of *amor mundi* and acting on principle. It is precisely by acting on principles that political actors relate to the world and care for it. *Amor mundi* further illuminates the fact that actors are concerned with the world as a space for appearance, but also as a durable world. However, acting on principle remains action as self-contained performance. The extent to which political actors may effectively care for the world is thus brought into question. This is further limited by Arendt's insistence on the frailty of action. Even in the capacities of promise-making and forgiving, political actors remain constrained by the qualities and principles that Arendt insist are essential. Finally, an examination of the faculty of remembrance, which Arendt introduces as a balance to this frailty, once again suggests a dependence of action on work. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the relationship between *praxis* and *poiēsis* in light of the role of remembrance and the tension between freedom and permanence.

Chapter 4 builds on the claim that the relationship between *praxis* and *poiēsis* must be rethought as an interdependence that reflects the nature of human being as free and worldly. It is argued that it is specifically in the faculty of judgment that this interdependence is mediated. This faculty emphasises the importance of spectators who judge all appearances (of actors, events, and fabricated objects) out of a concern for the world as a durable public space. But it is precisely because judging is a faculty shared by all that it mediates the tension between action and work. An examination of how judging may inform the activity of work as remembrance and fabrication may address the difficulties so far illuminated. The extent to which judging may also incorporate elements of action may provide further evidence of an interdependence. Care for the world through judging may therefore encompass the capacity to both continually judge and preserve meaning.

Chapter 1:

A tradition of distinctions

I had been concerned with the problem of Action, the oldest concern of political theory, and what had always troubled me about it was that the very term I adopted for my reflections on the matter, namely, *vita activa*, was coined by men who were devoted to the contemplative way of life and who looked upon all kinds of being alive from that perspective (Arendt 1978a: 6).

1. Introduction

Hannah Arendt conceptualizes the human condition by unravelling the essential differences between *praxis* and *poiēsis*. These two terms, and the distinction itself, are taken from ancient Greek thought and translated by Arendt into action and work (Arendt 1958: 12-17). Arendt's project may be understood as a reaction against the subjugation of *praxis* to *poiēsis* that occurs, she argues, in the Platonic origins of the Western philosophical tradition. It is Plato's philosophically biased elevation of contemplation over and against politics that makes such subjugation possible. She therefore takes Plato as her starting point for deconstructing the traditional categories of political thought that, she further believes, undermines politics as action and freedom as non-sovereign beginning.

Both Plato and Aristotle develop schemas to understand human being and possible ways of living. Our philosophical origins thus consist of a tradition of drawing distinctions, of which the delineation of *praxis* and *poiēsis* is but one example.¹ From a philosophical perspective, the thinking activity or a life of contemplation (designated by the Greek term *bios theōrētikos* or its medieval translation *vita contemplativa*),² is superior to all other human capabilities. Locating contemplation as the superior mode of being over and against all active ways of life conceals the significant differences among the 'active' but otherwise distinct modes of living. This allows, Arendt argues, for the conflation and inversion of these specifically distinct activities into a

¹ These two terms reflect two types of activities, sensibilities, modes of being, or what Lobkowitz calls, "walks of life". Distinguishing between different possible ways of living underlie the philosophical question of the meaning of human being, the best kind of life to live, the purpose and structure of the best form of government, etc.

² Arendt seems to use the two terms, *bios theōrētikos* and *vita contemplativa*, interchangeably. Lobkowitz, however, explicitly distinguishes between the two. According to him, the Greek experience of contemplation concerned the manifestation of the divine "in the visible world" (1967: 8). The *vita contemplativa*, on the other hand, most commonly refers to the contemplation of God. Arendt does not make such a distinction. Her purpose remains the contemplative, or inactive, nature of this activity. In this thesis, the *bios theōrētikos* and the *vita contemplativa* refer to the same, inactive contemplation of things eternal and absolute.

single notion of *vita activa* (1958: 85). This bias reflects the experience of the reliability of solitary thought and of the uncertainty and instability of human affairs. The reconfiguration of politics in terms of fabrication thus results from the effort to mitigate the uncertainty accompanying human freedom in and as politics. Furthermore, since this reversal in conceptual understanding, the particular roles and relationships between the modes of human being have become unclear. Hence, Arendt's task in *The Human Condition* is to recapture the differences between these activities in order to illuminate the plurality and freedom that constitutes genuine politics.

As an introduction to the main themes and concepts of the chapter, I begin with an examination of Plato's and Aristotle's distinctions made between philosophy, indicative of the contemplative life, and all other ways of life. In the second half of the Chapter, I explore Arendt's conceptualisation of labour, work, and action. Through her own method of drawing distinctions, Arendt underscores a notion of politics as action, characterised by the authentic appearances of human beings in their plurality, and by the exercise or appearance of freedom as non-sovereign beginning. This characterisation preserves rather than mitigates the frailty and unpredictability inherent in political action. However, her purview of the human condition also obscures the manner in which particular capacities and conditions may relate or overlap. Arendt's account of action therefore opens up the question of how to situate political action as freedom within the durable, fabricated world.

2. Philosophy and politics in Plato and Aristotle

2.1 The prominence of contemplation

Plato's and Aristotle's interpretations of politics and freedom illuminate Arendt's configuration of political action as the public appearance of human plurality and freedom as non-sovereign beginning.³ I therefore provide a brief overview of their respective texts in order to grasp Arendt's critique of a tradition of distinctions that, she argues, patently reduces politics and thereby undermines human being in general. According to Nightingale (2001), Plato, and to an extent Aristotle, reconceptualise contemplation by positing the experience of *theôria*, or

³ In understanding how Plato and Aristotle transform and establish the notion of philosophy and the implications thereof, I am heavily indebted to the work of Nicholas Lobkowitz (*Theory and Practice*) and of Andrea Nightingale ("On Wandering and Wondering: Theôria in Greek Philosophy and Culture").

thaumazein, as the constitutive essence of philosophy. In doing so, these thinkers redefine philosophy as an act of wonder and contemplation.

As a central figure in the foundation of the Western philosophical tradition, Arendt believes Plato's interpretation of and preference for the *vita contemplativa* imposes itself upon our political categories. For Plato, a life of contemplation, the philosopher's activity and mode of being, "is unmistakably the superior way of life" (Dossa 1989: 23; Nightingale 2001: 23). He also understands the "practice" of philosophy as inactive wonder, and redefines *theôria* and *thaumazein* as such. These two terms have since come to designate a state of "shocked wonder" (Arendt 1958: 302), of not-knowing (Schaeffer 1999: 643), of being in awe, of having admiration (Benardete 1978: 214) and reverence for (Nightingale 2001: 45) the beauty and mystery of being.

Prior to this understanding, the notion of *theôria* and its subsequent wisdom derived from a different kind of experience and practice (Nightingale 2001: 25). In the Greek experience, the wise philosopher, such as Thales for example, had to perform, enact, and disclose wisdom in a public space in order to gain acknowledgment from onlookers (2001: 26). In other words, "truth" was gained through discourse; it had to be spoken and heard (2001: 28-9). But in the fourth century BCE, a theoretical practice wholly disengaged from this process of discussion, collaboration and performance appealed to thinkers such as Plato. Disillusioned with the ability of human discourse to achieve moral virtue and political truth, Plato defends the experience of solitary wonder as the way to Truth. He does so by appropriating *theôria* (2001: 29) from the common Greek practice in which it was embedded.

Prior to its contemplative connotations, Nightingale explains, *theôria* referred to an important cultural practice wherein appointed ambassadors would travel to foreign cities to witness foreign events, festivals, or religious proceedings (2001: 29-31). It therefore entailed "witnessing a spectacle" through performance and discourse (2001: 23). Linking the experience of detached contemplation of truth to *theôria* was thus a strategic way for Plato to defend and incorporate a new conception of philosophy within Greek culture.

Nightingale finds evidence of this transformation in Plato's *Dialogues* and his portrayal of Socrates first as a "performer of wisdom", and then as a contemplative philosopher "who journeys to a higher world in search of true reality" (Nightingale 2001: 33-4). Plato's famous

Allegory of the Cave also describes the philosopher as one who departs from practical affairs and enters into the realm of “true being” (2001: 36-7; Waterfield 1993: 240-5). This departure signals an experience that is wholly “inactive”, a speechless, motionless wonder described by the term *skholē* (Arendt 1958: 302, 15). The distinction between *skholē* and *askholia* (the un-quiet) serves to combine the distinct modes of being of the *vita activa* under the rubric of activity versus inactivity or absolute stillness.

It is therefore in the absolute stillness of contemplation that the philosopher travels “abroad” into the metaphysical realm and receives divine visions, the eternal forms of beauty, justice, the good, etc. Similarly, in the *Republic*, the philosopher is described as the “lover of the spectacle of truth” (Nightingale 2001: 36; Waterfield 1993: 196). It is this contemplation of the beauty and truth of “changeless eternity”, possible only in solitude, that encompasses Plato’s understanding of the *vita contemplativa* (Arendt 1958: 15). The role and meaning of the eternal informs Plato’s hierarchy of activities, and, Arendt argues, elucidates his distrust of politics and human affairs in general. In this regard, it is noteworthy to look at Aristotle’s support of the supremacy of contemplation over all other ways of life.

In *The Thracian Maid and the Professional Thinker*, Jacques Taminiaux argues that Aristotle is exemplary in his struggle against Plato’s subjection of all human activities to the superior rule of the *bios theōrētikos* (1997: 46). Nonetheless, although Aristotle acknowledges the value of politics and *praxis*, he still seems to endorse the belief that contemplation is the highest mode of being (Arendt 1958: 12-13; Dossa 1989: 23).⁴ In *Politics*, for instance, Aristotle divides all activities into “those which are [merely] necessary, or useful, and those which have

⁴ Unfortunately it is not within the scope of this study to perform an in-depth analysis and critical evaluation of Plato’s and Aristotle’s texts, or Arendt’s interpretation thereof. However, Aristotle does in fact distinguish between *praxis* and other activities. He defines *praxis* as doing and an end in itself. This he specifically contrasts to *poiēsis* as the making and producing of external ends (Lobkowitz 1967: 9; Villa 1996: 22). Even though he acknowledges a degree of freedom in *praxis* (because it is for the sake of itself), contemplation still seems to provide the superior mode of being. Consider his insistence in *Politics* that if “the life of action is best”, then “thoughts with no object beyond themselves, and speculations and trains of reflection followed purely for their own sake, are far more deserving of the name active” (1995: 259/1325b14). Lobkowitz defends this reading by insisting that Aristotle understands contemplation as “the activity of the best part of us, the *voûς*”, which is the capacity to take part in the eternal and thus, for a moment, transcend human mortality; it is “in accordance with the highest virtue” (1967: 23).

On the other hand, some scholars still maintain that Aristotle understands the best way of life as the life of political action (Strauss and Cropsey 1987: 152-3). Such differing claims illustrate the difficulties of translation and interpretation. But according to Dana Villa, Arendt uncovers an inherent instrumentalism in Aristotle’s notion of teleology which in fact undermines action as something pursued for the sake of itself. See footnote 6 in this section for more on this point.

value [in themselves]” (Barker 1995: 285/1333a30). As a consequence, some activities are taken up in order to achieve something else, while other activities are meaningful in and of themselves. This distinction between the useful and the meaningful, between *pros ti* (“in order to”) and *hou heneka* (“for the sake of”), serves as the measure for evaluating the relations between activities. It also highlights the designation of freedom. That which is for the sake of itself enjoys and reveals the quality of freedom. Anything done either because it is necessary or because it is useful is precisely not an expression of freedom since its value is determined from something outside of it.

Via this teleology, Aristotle posits all active ways of life as purposed for achieving the highest good: the freedom of contemplation. Again in *Politics*, Aristotle explains that legislation should ultimately aim at achieving “leisure and peace” (1995: 286/1333a30), which he further associates with wisdom (1995: 288/1334a11). Contemplation, understood as the stillness and quiet of *skholē*, has no purpose outside of itself.⁵ Wonder is simply for the sake of wonder (Benardete 1978: 214). It is the “essentially speechless state of contemplation” (Arendt 1958: 302) that is pursued for the sake of itself. As the highest mode of being, all other activities must be purposed towards making possible this contemplative life. As such, these activities (including labour, work, and action) appear as necessary for the achievement of contemplation as an external end. The degree of freedom within these activities, especially action, is therefore disregarded.

The notion of contemplation as an end in itself derives from the philosopher’s regard for the eternal against the uncertain realm of worldly, human affairs. It is therefore on the basis of this experience of the eternal that the relationship between philosophy and all other possible modes of life is reconfigured. In her deconstruction of the philosophical bias against politics, Arendt distinguishes between the ceaseless persistence of life and nature according to the principle of necessity, the relative permanence and immortality achieved by human beings through the construction of a durable world, and the realm of the changeless and eternal which can only be experienced in the mode of the *vita contemplativa*. The eternal transcends the

⁵ According to R.F. Stalley’s explanatory notes on Aristotle’s *Politics*, *askholia* (literally, absence of leisure) refers to any activity undertaken by necessity and which is a means to some other end (Barker 1995: 403). *Skholē*, on the other hand, is not simply inactivity, but that which is an end in itself. This distinction therefore makes possible the conflation of the activities of the *vita activa* and the disregard, Arendt believes, for the freedom inherent in action and appearing to a degree in work and labour.

relatively permanent world and immortal nature, escaping all transformation into thought, language, action, or recollection (Arendt 1958: 20-21). Understood against the sight of the eternal, the striving for immortality within the realm of difference and opinion seems a futile pursuit (1958: 20). It is precisely the concern with the eternal and immutable, a concern that can only be addressed through the cessation of all activity and escape from worldly relations, which is the distinguishing principle of Plato's *theôria*.

Arendt further maintains that Plato was the first to experience the eternal and the immortal as “inherently contradictory and in conflict” (Arendt 1958: 18). For Plato, the striving for immortality remains contained in and constrained by the physical, tangible world. It remains blind to a truth that is precisely outside of the world of human affairs, opinions, and particularities. The eternal, explained in his doctrine of ideas (*eidōs*) or Forms, transcends these boundaries (Lobkowitz 1967: 7). It discloses the certain, perfect forms as absolute and universal standards for judgment of the good, the beautiful, the just, etc. The primacy given to this experience thus becomes the measure against which the *vita activa*, and especially political action, is evaluated.

Contemplation, understood as the experience of the eternal pursued for the sake of itself, informs the relationship of the philosopher to the *polis* and the perception of politics as such. On the one hand, the essential differences between the modes of being within the *vita activa* are dismissed vis-à-vis its distinction from the *vita contemplativa* (Arendt 1958: 15). Politics as action becomes a necessity which is subordinate, along with all other activities, to the superiority of contemplation. On the other hand, Arendt identifies an “inner affinity” between the contemplative experience of the eternal and the activity of fabrication (1958: 301). This provides the impetus for the construal of politics as making, wherein the experience of sovereignty dictates the freedom and uncertainty of human affairs.

2.2 Politics in the guise of fabrication

Under the criterion of *skholē* and *askholia*, the distinction between the *vita contemplativa* and the *vita activa* conceals the significant differences among the ‘active’ but otherwise distinct modes of being. These differences are essential, Arendt believes, in understanding the particular relations and capacities accompanying each modality. Conflating these differences allows for the

conceptualisation of politics, originally experienced in and as action, in the mode of work. The introduction of fabrication into the realm of politics is a crucial issue in Arendt's argument, as well as the argument of this thesis. I therefore quote her at length on this point:

Plato, and to a lesser degree, Aristotle, who thought craftsmen not even worthy of full-fledged citizenship, were the first to propose handling political matters and ruling political bodies in the mode of fabrication. This seeming contradiction clearly indicates the depth of the authentic perplexities inherent in the human capacity for action and the strength of the temptation to eliminate its risks and dangers by introducing into the web of human relationships the much more reliable and solid categories inherent in activities with which we confront nature and build the world of the human artifice (1958: 230).⁶

Arendt attributes the introduction of the principle of making into the political realm to the experience of *theôria* as speechless wonder at the eternal. It is this regard for the eternal that, she believes, emerges in and converges with the mode of fabrication.

Both contemplation and fabrication involve the “beholding of something” (Arendt 1958: 301) as an “idea” or model whose permanence makes possible the contemplation thereof (293). In the activity of work, the craftsman holds an image in the mind, perceives its shape, and creates an object in accordance with the image as a blueprint. This unchanging model thus directs fabrication from the outset, but also provides the standard for judging the completed product (1958: 302). The model for fabrication corresponds further with that of contemplation insofar as the model is “given to” the human mind. It is not a product of the fabricator, but derives from the realm of the eternal. According to Arendt, Plato believes the subsequent making of the object actually “spoils the excellence of what remained eternal” (1958: 303). In a manner then, contemplation becomes possible with the “conscious cessation of activity, the activity of making” (1958: 303). Just as contemplation serves as the first step in the fabrication process, so the halting of fabrication may initiate or culminate in the experience of contemplation.

Coupled with this “inner affinity”, Arendt identifies a persistent philosophical frustration with the haphazardness, uncertainty, and unpredictability inherent in politics as action (Arendt

⁶ Although Aristotle values *praxis* as a free activity, he does so within a teleological model that Villa (1996) argues, in line with Arendt, in effect instrumentalises politics. Teleology purports to explain all activities in terms of an ultimate end or purpose. And although Aristotle conceives of *praxis* as self-fulfilling, or for the sake of itself and thus its own end, it remains only meaningful in relation to a “higher” end, such as the achievement of the good and virtuous life (1996: 45). This coheres with the instrumentalism that Arendt identifies with the sensibility of work.

1958: 220). As the sharing of opinions by a plurality of actors, action provides, for Plato, only instability, unreliability, and discontent (Dossa 1989: 20). This frustration, Arendt argues, is in almost all historical occasions answered with the attempt to substitute action with the activity of work (1958: 220). The capacities of work alleviate this frustration since work entails the isolated craftsman who holds the correct image in the mind, controls the activity in its entirety, and effectively achieves the predetermined end. Politics as contentious discourse over the state and affairs of the city fails to provide certainty in questions of what constitutes a good government or city, and also proves insecure and unpredictable in the implementation of any such conceived standards. The model for politics that is derived from the faculty of making is therefore that of “one-man-rule” (1958: 221), or rule by a sovereign master in pursuit of a particular end. This transformation of politics is problematic for several reasons.

First, Arendt contends that both Plato and Aristotle envision politics on the basis of the experience of the household, where the master rightly rules and manages over its affairs (Arendt 1958: 223; Barker 1995: 68). Their respective works also provide evidence that the practice and purpose of politics is taken from the model of the household. As a result, the political community thus comprises the master or *architekton* (Barker 1995: 35) who knows what to do, and those who do not know but obey and execute orders (Arendt 1958: 222-3).⁷ It is the master who alone accesses the image of the proper household or political community and thus knows what must be done. This is problematic for Arendt in terms of her adoption of the Greek division between public and private, wherein the activities of the household are wholly private and thus pre-political (1958: 27-32). I elaborate on this point in Section 4.4 of this chapter.

“Stability, security, and productivity” (Arendt 1958: 222) are the achievements of politics in the mode of making, and which politics as action cannot provide. In other words, under the rule and guidance of the philosopher-cum-fabricator, the realm of human affairs can achieve the principles and virtues apprehended through contemplation.⁸ In contemplation, the philosopher

⁷ According to Strauss and Cropsey, in *Politics*, Aristotle actually disagrees with Plato on specifically this issue. It is thus argued that Aristotle distinguishes between the *polis* and “kingship, household management, and the rule of a master over slaves” (1987: 134). However, in light of further reading, Aristotle’s conception of the best regime appears to take on the form of an aristocracy (147). As shall be discussed later, all forms of rule and sovereignty are problematic for Arendt and contradict her understanding of political action.

⁸ Although beyond the range of this work, it would be interesting to compare Plato’s and Aristotle’s understandings of the relationship between politics and philosophy, especially since Aristotle is more attentive to *praxis* as the

achieves the highest knowledge, knowledge of the Good in its absolute and eternal form.⁹ Similarly, the sovereign ruler is conceived of as a philosopher-king (Plato) who receives in his mind the image of the Good and applies it to the realm of politics (Villa 1996: 83; Taminiaux 1991: 113). This idea of the Good thus becomes a rule or standard for behaviour against which human actions are ordered and judged. Accordingly, the philosopher-king “applies the ideas as the craftsman applies his rules and standards” (Arendt 1958: 227).

In this effort to literally “make” a city or a community of good citizens, Arendt identifies the principle of instrumentality. Although this principle is effective in the building of a world and the things therein, and thus important, in the political realm it means the possibility of using all and any means to achieve a particular end (Arendt 1958: 229). The sovereignty and instrumentality of the political ruler threatens the appearance and participation of political citizens, and thus politics and freedom as such. This point shall become clearer in the elucidation on the differences between action and work.

Suffice it to say here that the introduction of the concept of rule into the realm of politics not only reshapes the relation between political actors who, in their sharing of opinions as equals, are now organized according to the division of rulers and ruled. It is also through this concept that freedom is defined in terms of sovereignty, and the activity of beginning, for Arendt an essential aspect of action and freedom, is understood in terms of ruling or commanding (Arendt 1958: 224-5). Arendt thus thinks against this philosophical bias of the certainty of the eternal ideas and the reliability of the principles of making.

In the next section, I examine the concepts and categories of Arendt’s thought as it is set out in *The Human Condition*. I begin with a brief discussion on Arendt’s emphasis on the conditions of human existence, followed by an outline of the specific characteristics that Arendt attributes to labour, work and action respectively.

political faculty. Nevertheless, it is relevant to note Aristotle’s insistence that the theoretical knowledge acquired in contemplation cannot direct the political sphere; it is *phronesis* or prudence, the practical capacity of deliberation that can take account of the uncertainty and volatility of human affairs.

⁹ Arendt also points out that Plato’s conception of the ultimate idea or standard varies in terms of his concern with the philosopher and with the political citizen. In the *Symposium*, for example, he is not concerned with political philosophy and describes the ideas as *ekphanestaton*, what “shines forth most”, understood as the beautiful (Arendt 1958: 225). Only in the *Republic*, a text specifically concerned with politics, does the idea of ‘the Good’ take precedence. According to Arendt, this signals a move away from the role of the philosopher and to the role of the philosopher-king, the philosopher who must return to the realm of worldly affairs, but does so in order to rule over others according to the idea of the Good.

3. Arendt's interpretation of the *vita activa*

3.1 The conditions of human existence

I confine myself, on the one hand, to an analysis of those general human capacities which grow out of the human condition and are permanent, that is, which cannot be irretrievably lost *so long as the human condition itself is not changed* (Arendt 1958: 6; my emphasis).

Arendt describes human existence as conditioned existence (1958: 7-11). The conditions of human existence inform and transform the capacities we develop and the dimensions of existence available to us. In other words, Arendt dismisses any notion of an essential human nature based within a particular capability or as the sum of all human capabilities (1958: 10). All we can say of human existence, she argues, is that it is a conditioned existence.¹⁰ Arendt therefore qualifies each particular human activity, or mode of being, by reference to the particular conditions that make such activity possible.

For example, natality and mortality comprise the condition of life and are basic to all modalities available to human beings described by Arendt (Arendt 1958: 8). The fact that we are born and that we die inform the limits of our being (we cannot deny our own existence without destroying it, and we cannot escape our own mortality). But this fact also informs our manner of being and the sensibilities that we embrace. Labour, for instance, denotes the birth and life of the species and situates us as biological beings within the grips of life. The desire for immortality, on the other hand, underlies the activity of work, the erection of a durable world, and hence the condition of worldliness. Finally, even though Arendt identifies human plurality as the primary condition of action, this capacity is also ontologically rooted in natality in a more fundamental way than even labour. Every birth is the beginning of an unpredictable and irreplaceable person who enters the world as a free beginning.

Within the bounds of the human condition, Arendt therefore situates the different capacities or modes of human being. Nevertheless, she also argues that we are never conditioned “absolutely” (Arendt 1958: 11). There remains a dynamic movement between condition and capability: a condition affects the possibilities of the human being, whose engagement with or exercise of such a possibility may alter the original condition or foster an entirely new one. For

¹⁰ For a comprehensive discussion on Arendt's perception of the human being in terms of a conditioned existence, see Roodt (2005: 118-9).

example, Arendt addresses the loss of the condition of worldliness and the advent of modern worldlessness. In terms of the question of this thesis, the relationships between the conditions of life, worldliness, and plurality attest to the possible interrelatedness of action and work. I therefore explore the activities of labour, work, and action and their respective conditions.

3.2 Labour for life¹¹

Arendt admits that the separation of labour and work may seem, to modern understanding, unfounded. In defence thereof, she provides evidence of the distinction by citing Locke who spoke of "the labour of our body and the work of our hands" (Arendt 1958: 79). She also references several European languages, where she identifies the distinction between *ponēin* and *ergazesthai* in ancient Greek, between *travailler* and *ouvrier* in French, and between *arbeiten* and *werken* in German (1958: 80). These terms express not only two conceptual categories, but two different modes of being or experiences of the world. Arendt further attributes to each respective modality the underlying condition that, to an extent, defines this experience. Thus, the experience, attitude, and mentality of the labourer are conditioned first and foremost by life. This informs the labourer's experience of the world, of freedom, and of others.

The condition of life imposes upon the human being the experience of necessity in the most fundamental way. In this mode, life remains the primary concern. The need to survive as a purely biological organism constitutes the naturalness of human life. And it is as *animal laborans* and its capacity for labour that human beings attend to this need and demand for life. But this need can never be fulfilled completely and thus labour is ruled by the principle of necessity (Dossa 1989: 52).

Just as the experience of life coincides with that of necessity, so the activity of labour coincides with that of nature. "Nature does not develop, become, or progress" (Dossa 1989: 52). It has no beginning or end. It is cyclical and interminable; the perpetuation of an unchanging life (Arendt 1958: 98). Similarly, from the point of view of the *animal laborans*, labour and life have

¹¹ Although the faculty of labour forms an integral part of Arendt's interpretation of the *vita activa* and her understanding of action and work, this study focuses primarily on the relation between action and work. It may be argued that labour does not acquire a fair account, but since it is in the worldliness of action and work that a dependence appears, the worldlessness of the *animal laborans* suggests that this faculty stands at a greater distance from both work and action. Where pertinent, however, the role of labour will be addressed.

no final, ultimate end or *telos* (Villa 1996: 26). There is nothing beyond nourishing the body for continued existence that compels the labourer. This fact reiterates the perpetual demand of life that cannot be fully satiated once and for all. It also elucidates the process character of labour. Labour entails a never-ending process of acquiring and consuming the basic goods for survival (such as food). Because all things produced by the *animal laborans* are simply consumed or “swallowed up” by the life process, new goods are always needed (1996: 26; Arendt 1958: 87, 96-100).

Arendt again finds evidence in language: “the world “labor” understood as a noun, never designates the finished product, the result of laboring, but remains a verbal noun” (1958: 80). In other words, we can say that one labours, one is a labourer, there is labour to be done. This marks one of the main distinguishing factors between labour and work: the term “work” may designate the activity as well as the end product, which is characterised precisely by its endurance beyond the activity. The results of labour, however, only feed back into the activity and leave nothing behind except the continuing life process. In contrast to work, labour simply re-produces life in a changeless, repetitive way. The persistent, cyclical experience of need, labour, and consumption illuminate the extent to which the labourer is held hostage by life and nature.

From this experience, the labourer understands freedom only as a freedom from necessity. This relation to necessity also explains why the Greek philosophers never gave much thought to the activity of labour. Distinguishing between modes of being on the basis of freedom, Plato and Aristotle relegate this activity to the lowest ranks. Aristotle even differentiates between the slave who is “by nature” so, and the artisan who is only so due to circumstance (Lobkowitz 1967: 29). The slave cannot escape the life of labour and remains interminably in service thereof. Although Arendt does not differentiate amongst those involved in labour, her interpretation appears similarly negative.¹²

The *animal laborans* cannot escape, transform, or transcend the realm of life or necessity and thus experiences no distinct past or future. The same needs weigh upon the life and body of the organism in the present as it has in the past. The future is known, but only as an “extension of

¹² In fact, Arendt does not simply dismiss the activity of labour as insignificant within the *vita activa*. She also does not suggest that some human beings remain “above” the realm of life. As biological beings, we are all naturally called to heed the demands of life.

the present” (Dossa 1989: 54). It may be mentioned that inevitable, physical death certainly suggests a future and an end. But for the *animal laborans*, it is life in general and no particular individual life that matters.

In the mode of the *animal laborans*, human beings relate to one another as members of a species. It is for this reason that Arendt relegates labour to what she calls the private sphere. The experiences of need, pain, and satiation cannot be shared. The burden of life can only be felt through one’s own body. The *animal laborans* is therefore imprisoned within the privacy of the body and the subjectivity of experience (Dossa 1989: 53). In relation to others who share the same condition of life, labourers also only appear to others as members of the same species, as biological life.¹³ In other words, labour discloses no agent, and each individual human being is deprived of appearance. Speech itself remains an instrumental tool, irrelevant for anything more than the communication of needs (1989: 52-4). The *animal laborans* is thus faceless, anonymous, thoughtless, and powerless.

It is only through the mode of being of *homo faber*, who works and produces a durable world, that it becomes possible to transcend the *animal laborans*’ state of anonymity and necessity, and to achieve a sense of individual identity. Although the mode of work entails its own difficulties and limitations, it is through work that human beings are able to erect a world that resists the interminable, repetitive cycle of natural life.

3.3 Work, fabrication, *poiēsis*

Arendt contrasts labour to the activity of work, often using the terms work and fabrication interchangeably. In this thesis, work and fabrication are also described and understood as production and construction, building and creating, often expressed by the Greek term *poiēsis*. All these designations refer to the activity of making (Lobkowitz 1967: 9; Villa 1996: 22). Thus, any productive activity, in other words any activity that results in the accomplishment of an external object, falls within the realm of work. In addition, this mode of being is characterised by the principles of instrumentality and durability that spring from and simultaneously realize the condition of worldliness.

¹³ Arendt differentiates between natural or biological life (*zōē*) and human life (*bios*) (1958: 97). The former, she explains, is characterised by process. The latter is that which occurs between life and death and is characterised by being in the world. It also comprises events that may be told as a story (see Chapter 3, Section 3.2).

The human being as *homo faber* builds an artificial world against the forces of nature and necessity. The modality of work differs from labour precisely in the human being's relation to nature and necessity. *Homo faber* does not adhere to the rhythm of the natural life-cycle. Rather, *homo faber* utilizes, transforms, and destroys nature. The ends produced through work are specifically not natural; they are not given to human beings by nature (Villa 1996: 27). The products of work, such as tables, buildings, roads, and works of art, to name a few, are imposed on nature. For this reason, Arendt insists that there is an inherent violence in the activity of work. *Homo faber* destroys nature in order to create an artificial environment for human existence (1996: 27; Dossa 1989: 56).

The destructive character of work in part derives from the instrumental attitude of the producer. *Homo faber* understands all natural and worldly material as means towards further ends. Any necessary means are therefore appropriated, valued, and justified on the basis of the purposed end. The successful achievement of such a predetermined goal reveals the productivity and reliability of this mode of being. *Homo faber* moulds the things of the world according to a preconceived template. This ability to construct a world of useful and durable things furthermore characterises the sovereignty of the maker. *Homo faber* approaches all of nature and the world as “lord and master” (Arendt 1958: 144; Dossa 1989: 55).

The “success” and reliability of this attitude of sovereign rule appears in the achievement of a durable world. *Homo faber* constructs a “human artifice” that stands between and separates the human and nature (1958: 136-7). This artifice transcends the repetitive cycle of nature through the quality of durability (Villa 1996: 27). The products of work constituting this world are thus not immediately consumed as in labour, but are used up over time. Arendt introduces the condition of worldliness to describe the human experience of and relationship to the relatively permanent world. This permanence derives from the desire to overcome human mortality and the demands of necessity.

Striving for immortality, contra the concern for the eternal, is a striving for “endurance in time, deathless life on this earth and in this world” and a result of man's inescapable mortality (Arendt 1958: 18). Against the backdrop of the ceaseless persistence of nature, individual human beings confront their own morality. However, through the experience of a durable world that stands against nature's cyclical order, this human existence imparts linearity, cutting through and

standing against the repetition of mere life and the “temporal cycle of nature” (Taminiaux 1997: 200). Whereas the *animal laborans* disappears within the movement of nature and life, the enduring continuity of a stable world makes individual human appearance possible. The human as *homo faber* transcends the anonymity of life and realizes his/her individual separateness from nature and the species in the fact of his or her own mortality (Dossa 1989: 55). *Homo faber* is thus driven by the desire to create something lasting, something which will endure beyond his or her individual lifetime.

The ability to create an “objective” world also helps *homo faber* to transcend the extreme subjectivity of the *animal laborans* (Dossa 1989: 57).¹⁴ Recall that the *animal laborans* achieves immortality through the life of the species and has no further sense of past and future by which to demarcate the life of the individual human being. Within the condition of worldliness and through the activity of work, however, human beings gain awareness of permanence and change against the eternal character of nature. While the *animal laborans* is entirely private and unworldly (1989: 53), worldliness denotes the condition of *homo faber*.¹⁵ This awareness is not only the result of *homo faber*’s experience in and of a durable world though. It is inherent in the activity of work itself.

Work or fabrication is a linear process with a definite beginning and end. It is both teleological and utilitarian as it is entirely informed by the end result which it aims to achieve. In other words, fabrication originates in the perception of a model or idea which regulates the process. It concludes in the production of the idea in a durable object and world of durable things (Taminiaux 1997: 27). Every aspect of the process is therefore a means toward that end, and the process is completed in the achievement of that end (Arendt 1977: 212; 1958: 143; Villa 1996: 27). Because *homo faber* is guided by an exterior, predetermined goal, the freedom achieved in this mode (freedom from necessity and the demands of the body) is only that. *Homo faber* remains subject to the utilitarian sensibility defining the work activity. The category of means and ends thus determines *homo faber*’s choices and world.

¹⁴ “The *natural* condition of man is as a member of the species, a condition with no individuality and utter subjectivity. It is only the creation of *artificial* conditions, artifice and affairs, which permits individuals to stand apart” (Knauer 1980: 726).

¹⁵ The condition of worldliness is comprised of a durable, fabricated artifice, and a sense of its durability and commonality (see Chapter 2, Section 2.3 for elaboration).

It is significant to note the extent to which Arendt also acknowledges *homo faber's* concern with public appearance. As builder of the world, *homo faber* is inherently concerned with that which appears. The public realm makes possible the display and confirmation of the work activity (Dossa 1989: 57). Although it is only the products of work that *homo faber* submits for public appearance, it is on the basis of an objective concern with the world that s/he does so. This concern with appearance indicates that *homo faber* is not only subject to the standards of utility, but also embraces certain standards of beauty and excellence (Arendt 1958: 173; Dossa 1989: 58). But the concern with appearance does not seem to suggest a different type of work activity. The purpose of or engagement with the achieved end may vary in terms of use objects or works of art, for example. But the activity of production and the experience of *homo faber* are always underpinned with the utilitarian regard for the end. Thus, a concern with beauty does not necessarily circumvent the primacy of the desired end.

Arendt further maintains that this instrumental mentality that brought the world into being cannot also give meaning to this world (Arendt 1958: 156-8). In other words, the fabricating activity undermines the very meaning it makes possible. As soon as a particular end product is made, that end simply becomes a means to a further end, and that end a means to a further end, and so on (1958: 154, 158; 1977: 212-3). Taminioux expresses this inherent complexity as the inability of work “to take into view that which it constitutes, namely the world” (1997: 27). In other words, the attitude inherent in *poiēsis* both creates and destroys the durable, stable world, especially as a space of appearance and meaning. Even though the capacity of *homo faber* makes it possible for human beings to overcome the incessant experience of necessity, and to achieve relative permanence and thereby transcend mortality, it can provide neither freedom nor meaning. I conclude with a quote by Dana Villa that suggests that freedom remains beyond *homo faber*:

Keeping labor and work distinct and judging them in terms of their relative self-sufficiency are essential, then, to the establishment of a hiatus between the realms of freedom and necessity. The latter is limited by the nexus of instrumentality created by work. But the world created by artifice is not, in itself, a space of freedom; nor is the activity that creates it self-contained. Indeed, measured against this standard, the distance between labor and work, between necessity and instrumentality, diminishes...only action...can lay claim to intrinsic meaningfulness, to self-containedness, and hence to freedom. (1996: 28)

4. *Praxis*, political action, freedom as beginning

4.1 Action and the condition of plurality

The Greek notion of *praxis* informs Arendt's conceptualisation of the activity and mode of being of action, as well as her understanding of politics and freedom. For Arendt, *praxis* corresponds to the condition of plurality: "the fact that men, not Man, live on the earth and inhabit the world" (Arendt 1958: 7). Arendt further identifies plurality as the combined conditions of equality and distinctness. We are each equally unique and able to distinguish and communicate ourselves as such (1958: 176). Appearance and performance in word and deed therefore constitute the exercise of political action (or action as such).

In this final section, I examine the various aspects of action and the condition of human plurality. The relationship between the possibilities of action and meaning on the one hand, and the condition of plurality on the other, is a pivotal point in Arendt's theorisation. The potential dependencies and interdependencies between activities and conditions of human existence come to play specifically in this relationship between plurality and action. It is important then to uncover the characterisation of action as rooted in the condition of human plurality, as well as the distinctness and equality that define this condition. As Arendt explains in *The Human Condition*:

Action would be an unnecessary luxury, a capricious interference with general laws of behavior, if men were endlessly reproducible repetitions of the same model, whose nature or essence was the same for all and as predictable as the nature or essence of any other thing. Plurality is the condition of human action because we are all the same, that is, human, in such a way that nobody is ever the same as anyone else who ever lived, lives, or will live (1958: 8).

This equality and distinctness coheres with Arendt's understanding of freedom. Freedom, she maintains, appears in the human being as beginning and as a unique person capable of beginning something altogether new.¹⁶ Also characterised by non-sovereignty, freedom appears in the equality of those who relate as peers rather than rulers and ruled (Arendt 1958: 32-33). This equality (*isonomiē*) is an artificial equality achieved only in the political space of action (1958: 32n.22, 175). Political actors are therefore "free equals" (*homoioi*) only insofar as they are free from necessity and the inequalities of rulership (1958: 41, 33). Consider as example the legend

¹⁶ See Section 4.3 on freedom.

of Arthur and the Knights of the Roundtable. Although perhaps entirely unequal in wealth, strength, and talents, when the Knights met for deliberations they did so as absolute equals reflected in the round table itself.

Arendt finds evidence of the plurality inherent in *praxis* in the term's Greek and Latin roots. She derives *praxis* from the Greek verbs *archein* and *prattein*. *Archein* she translates as "to begin," "to take initiative," "to lead" or "to rule" (Arendt 1958: 189). The corresponding Latin term, *agere*, "to set something into motion", emphasizes action as beginning (177). *Prattein* she translates as "to pass through," "to achieve," and "to finish" (189, 222). And in the Latin, *gerere* similarly means "to bear" through to the end. For Arendt, these terms refer to a single act, and both *archein* and *prattein* are now designated by the English verb "to act" (177).

If, however, it appears that these two parts may be enacted separately by different actors, it is simply a reflection of the fact that we exist alongside others (the fact of our plurality) whose help we need in reacting and "co-acting." *Praxis* is composed of both beginning and completing *simultaneously*. It is performance and interaction. To begin is to appear to others whose simultaneous appearances to the beginner form the reaction. This reaction completes the beginning and constitutes action as a self-contained whole. In other words, action is only possible due to the fact that we live with others and appear to others.

Arendt further explains that Plato divorces the two modes of action (*archein* and *prattein*) so that the beginner retains complete control over the activity (1958: 222). Historical evidence of such a re-conceptualisation can also be identified in language. *Prattein* and *gerere*, according to Arendt, now signify action, while *archein* and *agere* signify "to rule" or "to lead" (1958: 189). The beginner has become a sovereign, ruling over those needed to complete a task. The involvement of others is not as free persons with their own inputs, but as mere aides to the task and aims of the ruler. In such a view, however, the leader or initiator assumes the role of *homo faber* who has full knowledge of the end goal and the means to achieve it. Politics thus becomes "the mere "execution of orders"" (1958: 223), and the good politician is the one who knows how to command and instruct. Again, Plato's concern is with the "difference of opinion and uncertainty" (Taminiaux 1997: 46) of those who do not have the higher, theoretical knowledge of the "right aims". This inevitably undermines, Plato believes, the attainment of the Good in terms of the ideal political and social order.

Arendt's conception of action is, on the other hand, precisely one in which there is no such guideline or predictable outcome, nor is there any kind of rule over any aspect of the process. Action is, as I discuss in Chapter 3, essentially unpredictable and uncontrollable. In Arendt's view, it is the interaction of a plurality of human beings who begin and perform together. That we need others as co-actors rather than as subordinates or leaders is essential in retaining the equality and non-sovereignty that should, according to Arendt, accompany our appearances. It is also only in the realization of plurality in action that we are authentically human. "To be among men" (*inter homines esse*) is to be among other human beings qua human beings (Arendt 1958: 7). It is to live the most human life.

We are still, however, left with an extremely vague notion of what actually constitutes action or the content of action. If there is no particular end that our actions aim toward, then how and on what basis do we participate with one another? What do we begin and complete?

I address this question as follows: First, it is our own authentic appearances and human relationships that provide the substance or content for action. Since action is self-contained performance, it is the act or event of appearance itself that is the "end" of action. Beginning and completing are the same insofar as it is *in* action and not as a result of action that human beings appear as such. And since appearance is always appearance to others, action is disclosive of human beings in their plurality. Moreover, it is also human being as freedom, understood as beginning, which comes to expression. What is essential is therefore not what we begin (although this is certainly not insignificant), but *that* we begin.

Secondly, as constitutive of politics as such, our actions express our concerns with the shared, public world. I elaborate on this point in Chapter 2. The rest of this chapter elucidates action as performance, disclosure, and beginning. I conclude with a brief look at how Arendt's conception of action indicates a notion of politics and freedom as non-sovereign beginning, as well as the essential public character thereof.

4.2 Action as appearance and performance

The exercise of action is possible only insofar as human beings appear to one another in their equality and distinctness. Thus, action necessitates the acknowledgment of human plurality. But action also articulates and elucidates that plurality. This elucidation occurs in actors'

performances in word and deed that disclose their unique identities. This disclosive capacity of action illuminates the ‘nature’ of action as appearance and performance. On this basis, Arendt understands action as an activity that is wholly self-contained in and as the moment of appearance.

As a self-contained activity, *praxis* has no purpose outside of the appearances and performances of actors.¹⁷ Its meaning and significance is contained within the act itself. This self-containedness of *praxis* is best understood in relation to *poiēsis*. In *poiēsis*, the craftsman holds in his or her mind the image or template which comprises the principle (*archē*) guiding the process of work (Taminiaux 1997: 36). The goal (*telos*) or purpose of work lies beyond the activity itself and appears only in the completed product. Work is thus undertaken always and only “in order to” achieve “this or that end”, which remains outside of the maker and the process of making. Action, on the other hand, “is *energia* (“actuality”)...there is no distinction between the process and the end, the original aim and the outcome” (Dossa 1989: 9). Borrowing Aristotle’s notion of *energia* (Arendt 1958: 206), Arendt’s view of *praxis* conveys that which is for the sake of itself and meaningful in itself (Taminiaux 1997: 38). Neither achievements nor motivations give meaning to an act.

Taminiaux therefore concludes that *praxis* retains an inner affinity between its principle (*archē*) and goal (*telos*) (1997: 36). This may be interpreted as an indication that appearance and performance form the *telos* of action. However, according to Villa, Arendt altogether rejects Aristotle’s understanding of *praxis* as set forth within the framework of teleology (1996: 47). Even if the means and end of action are one and the same, within the categories of teleology, “the end retains a logical priority and distinctness” (1996: 46). In Aristotle’s thought, it is the “good life”, comprised of good character, virtue, justice, and happiness that constitute the ultimate end of action. In terms of such an end or aim, the exercise of action becomes only a means towards living well or *eudaimonia* (1996: 47; Taminiaux 1997: 38). Villa therefore

¹⁷ Roodt, however, insists that Arendt’s “positive valuation of appearance” indicates that appearance is specifically “not a self-contained occurrence” (2005: 122-3). Appearance is only possible by virtue of plurality; appearance is always appearance to others. She then goes on to note that “appearance is a kind of *praxis*; it is to actively step onto the world’s stage, to make oneself known to others” (123). Although this may seem to contradict Villa’s insistence on action as self-contained appearance, I do not believe this is the case. First, Villa’s focus here is on the difference between that which has an end outside of itself and that which does not. *Praxis* as appearance is self-contained since it fulfils its ‘purpose’ through and as appearance, and only concerns appearance as such. Furthermore, Arendt makes clear that action is impossible in solitude: the notion of *praxis* necessarily presupposes the presence of others.

concludes that Aristotle's teleological framework encompasses the principles of *poiēsis* and instrumentalises *praxis*. The self-containedness of *praxis* as conceived by Arendt, however, entails the performance and disclosure of human beings in their plurality and freedom. This marks authentic human appearance and genuine politics, not as the intrinsic goal of action, but simply as action. Arendt's insight into this self-contained, a-teleological aspect of *praxis* illuminates the significance of appearance as the disclosure of human beings in their distinctness and equality.

In action, we appear to one another qua human beings (Arendt 1958: 176). Although we appear physically, displaying our exterior attributes, we have the potential to appear authentically in speech and action (Arendt 1978a: 52; 1958: 50). It is only through *praxis* as performance and interaction that we disclose our otherwise inexpressible identities. This identity refers to *who* a person is rather than *what*. Nationality, ethnicity, occupation, familial position (mother, wife, daughter), economic or social class, physical capacities, talents and weaknesses, all these things refer only to what a person is (1958: 179). To believe that *who* one is may be summed up in such labels disregards the fact that, although human beings are conditioned beings, we are never conditioned absolutely (1958: 11). According to Arendt, *who* one is exceeds all such definitions and constructions (1958: 179). Because *who* one is cannot be translated into definite language, it is only in appearance in word and deed that this identity is revealed.

At an inter-disciplinary conference on identity and belonging, for example, one of the presenters provides a list of his own identity traits, consciously choosing "what to reveal and what to hide" (Prinsloo 2010: 141). He tells us that his identity includes, among others, "being white, male, an Afrikaner, a South African, HIV+, 50 years old, educator, researcher, dying, being reborn, an atheist" (141). Although these identities constitute what the presenter, Prinsloo, calls a "temporal construct" (147), *who* he is transcends every single one of these and appears only in the course of the presentation and discussion itself. This *who* remains open, exceeds definition, and is even understood differently by each of the other participants. It is not itself a construct, but a subtle uncovering. And it is precisely the presence of a plurality of distinct others who can see and hear him that this *who*, as a unique some-body, a particular within a plurality, is disclosed. In this manner, action as reaction becomes significant.

Authentic appearance is only possible because I appear to others who simultaneously appear to me. As such, it is rather the appearance to others that establishes meaning. The meaning of an act or the identity of the actor can never be known to the actor him or herself (Arendt 1958: 197).¹⁸ The revelation of self is specifically and only a revelation to others. It is only by being with others that action can be revelatory at all (1958: 180). Action therefore discloses both human distinctiveness and human plurality.

It is also for this reason that Arendt emphasizes the significance of speech.¹⁹ Without speech, actions appear almost anonymous, with no identification with or by a distinct human being. The distinctness of each actor appears and is understood in the words accompanying and identifying his or her deeds (Arendt 1958: 175). “It is the who attached to the act that gives the act its meaning” (Siemens 2005: 109). Stated otherwise, it is not what is done that is valued or meaningful, but the person who does. Thus, political speech is not a means of communicating interests and motivations, but is a revelation of the unpredictable and irreplaceable persons whose actions and words reveal but never fully define *who* they are (Arendt 1958: 178-9). Speech also characterizes politics as interlocution. Neither command nor violence constitutes genuine politics. Only the exchange of opinions through dialogue discloses the actors and comprises politics as the realisation of human plurality.

The theatrical language that Arendt employs to describe the political activity also reiterates this conception of politics as appearance and performance. Instead of enlisting a range of moral principles by which the appearing and performing actor may be regarded, Arendt embraces greatness or excellence (from the Greek concept of *aretē*) as the standard by which actors distinguish themselves (1958: 48-9).²⁰ The principle of greatness does not indicate victory

¹⁸ This disclosure cannot even be the wilful purpose of action.

¹⁹ Action as speech also indicates the ability to find “the right words at the right moment”, the activity of “talking back and measuring up to whatever happened or was done” (Arendt 1958: 26). Here the relationship between the political actors and the world comes forth. Action appears as the capacity to react to the situations and occurrences of the world and to take a stand in relation to it. This point is addressed in Chapter 3 on action as *amor mundi*.

²⁰ Arendt has often been criticized for suggesting a political theory devoid of moral content, or disregarding any moral responsibility on the part of the political actors. Although the question of morality does not fall within the immediate concern of this thesis, it is important to note, albeit only provisionally. Arendt scholarship presents a diversity of interpretations and arguments both for and against a moral dimension of her political theory. One of the key points of contention is Arendt’s insistence on excellence, greatness, and glory. As a self-contained performance that is for the sake of itself, the only measure for public action that Arendt seems to allow is this appearance in excellence (Villa 1996: 55; Dossa 1989: 95; Siemens 2005: 110; Kateb 2000: 139).

or success (1958: 205). Rather, it refers to that which is deemed extraordinary, unique, and distinct from the ordinary. In this way, it reiterates the significance of the appearance and disclosure of the actor in word and deed. Arendt therefore appeals to the passion to present and measure oneself against others, as was the practice in the Greek *polis* (1958: 194).

The human “urge toward self-display” (Arendt 1978a: 21, 29) coheres with the equality and distinction that defines human plurality. What appears among actors who regard themselves as equals is the uniqueness of each. One has, by virtue of being human, the “impulse to reveal, to enhance, to distinguish oneself” (Siemens 2005: 109-110). The actor’s performance is driven by a “striving for excellence” (Arendt 1978a: 200) as the desire “to be the best among men” (Dossa 1989: 93). Although a relation and interaction between equals, politics acquires what Arendt calls “a fiercely agonal spirit” where individuality is disclosed and regarded in terms of its greatness (1958: 41).

This effort to distinguish oneself from others has been interpreted by Arendt scholars in various degrees. Rather than suggest mistaken interpretations, however, such differences point to the conceptual ambiguities and contradictions in Arendt’s work. Benhabib, for example, appropriates from d’Entreves a distinction between the “expressive and communicative models” of action, which Benhabib describes in terms of an agonal and narrative model (1996: 124). Whereas the latter reflects the embeddedness of actors within a web of relationships, the former describes the manifestation of actors in heroic performances of great and noble deeds (125). Benhabib also interprets the agonal model as the manifestation of “an antecedent essence” (126).

Moreover, Arendt dismisses as irrelevant both motives and consequences in action. This leads George Kateb, for example, to argue that Arendt’s theory results in a “moral inattentiveness” (2000: 139) that posits political action as a celebration of greatness without any moral limits or restraints. Others (Siemens, Villa, Dossa), however, note that Arendt’s emphasis is on the performance of action and the capacity of freedom as beginning. And although this appears to be an immoral conception of action, they argue that Arendt does not necessarily remove all standards and measures from this sphere. In fact, Arendt only rejects ordinary standards of morality, which are based on the notion of goodness and applicable in the realm of everyday life and behaviour, and to the individual self (Dossa 1989: 91; Siemens 110; Villa 1996: 55). According to Dossa (1989: 91), Arendt’s rejection of the standard of goodness derives from her critique against Plato’s introduction of instrumental thinking into the realm of politics. The idea of ‘the Good’, he explains, demands that political action be evaluated in terms of what it is “good for”, which of course opposes Arendt’s understanding of action as “for the sake of itself”.

Although the question of the moral standards, limits, and content of political action will be addressed in further footnotes as necessary, I am of the opinion that Arendt does provide some grounds for a kind of ethical stance required for genuine political action. The relationship between action and plurality indicates that genuine political practices must be informed by the fact of our being with others. The condition of human plurality therefore seems to provide the limit to action as freedom and performance. It is a sense of human togetherness that informs and respects appearances, and that accepts others as distinct equals (Hansen 1993: 59).

She further opposes this essentialism to a more constructivist view of human identity suggested, she believes, by the narrative model (126).

Villa, however, maintains that an actor's identity is "coextensive with" and never prior to his or her actions (1996: 90). Consequently, he reinforces the performance model and the self-containedness of action.²¹ Siemens, on the other hand, highlights the relational source of agonal action. He describes, for example, the relations of conflict or tension with others that compel an actor to assert and define him or herself (2005: 114). He therefore concludes, in agreement with Villa, that the unique *who* that appears in action does not refer to any underlying identity or given self (Siemens 2005: 109).

Without issuing a critique on any of these positions, the manifold interpretations and understandings again reveal the tensions and difficulties arising out of Arendt's method of drawing distinctions in general and her explication of *praxis* in particular. It is important to recall Arendt's main intention to rethink *praxis* as distinct from *poiēsis*. To better understand the significant differences between these two modes of being, we must turn to Arendt's own words. Action as performance and appearance, as disclosure of the unique identities of the actors, cannot be viewed separately from Arendt's understanding of action as freedom, and freedom as non-sovereign beginning.

4.3 Freedom as non-sovereign beginning

Freedom...is actually the reason that men live together in political organisation at all. Without it, political life as such would be meaningless. The *raison d'être* of politics is freedom, and its field of experience is action (Arendt 1977: 145).

Arendt's aim in *The Human Condition* is not only to recapture action as a human possibility distinct from that of work, labour, and contemplation, but also to redefine freedom in terms of genuine political action. According to Arendt, freedom has, like *praxis*, been traditionally conceived through the lens of the philosophical bias favouring contemplation. This transforms

²¹ Still, both Villa and Benhabib argue against a communicative model (especially as it is conceived by Habermas) that presupposes agreement or consensus as the aim and purpose of action (Villa 1996: 70; Benhabib 1996: 125). Villa thus emphasises the "initiatory or performative dimension" of action as "incessant discourse" (Villa 1996: 71), while Benhabib rethinks the communicative model as a narrative recounting.

the notion of freedom, as an aspect of human relationships, into a belief that freedom resides in sheer inner experience (Hansen 1993: 54).

Arendt therefore thinks against the tradition of political theory and philosophy that understands freedom as the free exercise of the will and sovereign command of the self. The will, Arendt argues, is in fact incapable of exercising absolute command over the self. She describes this conflict as one between the ‘I-will’ and the ‘I-can’ (Arendt 1978b: 36-8; 1977: 161). The ‘I-will’ may be undermined by the ‘I-cannot’ or the ‘I-do not’, which marks the very worldliness of the self. However, the experience of this conflict has resulted, Arendt believes, in an understanding of freedom as the liberation from the self and other selves through the achievement of sovereignty (Hansen 1993: 56). The sovereign individual is thus set against the community and the experience of politics. The effort to liberate the self through the power of the will becomes an effort to remove the self from the world (1993: 55). Arendt’s move against a notion of inner freedom therefore entails a rejection of freedom as a “freedom *from* politics” and the uncertainty of human affairs (Arendt 1977: 145-8).

Arendt instead understands freedom *as* “the participation in public affairs” (1990: 32). Constituting genuine politics, freedom involves the capacity to deliberate as equals (Benhabib 1996: 159). More specifically it entails the sharing of words and deeds among a plurality of distinct individuals. Arendt does, however, acknowledge a negative concept of freedom in the form of liberation. Human beings can be liberated from necessity, the threat of others, or even oppressive governments (Arendt 1990: 234). And although she admits that liberation is a prerequisite condition for freedom, the two are not equivalent (1990: 25-9).²² In fact, the distinction between freedom and liberation must take heed of the relationship between freedom and necessity.

Arendt asserts that freedom in and for political action requires freedom from the demands of life and necessity. However, mastering necessity is not a guarantee of freedom, nor does it

²² Arendt’s notion of politics is therefore not about the institution of a state system that protects the individual right to self-preservation, as is conceived throughout the Western political tradition. Although beyond the scope of this paper, it is interesting to note the apparent agreement throughout political thought (see Descartes, Hobbes, Locke, Mill, Smith, and Rousseau, amongst others) that it is the purpose of the state to protect the individual desire and power for self-preservation, prosperity and happiness (Strauss & Cropsey 1987: 188, 432, 464, 476, 564, 652, 739, 798). This responsibility of the state is coupled with the responsibility of the citizens to exercise due care over the self, be it through reason’s command over the passions, or through self-restraint and respect for the right to self-preservation by others.

comprise the content of freedom as such (Dossa 1989: 66-7). A concern with necessity, and any attempt to master necessity, reflects a concern with life and consumption (1989: 67; Arendt 1958: 71). Thus, the elimination of necessity results in the liberation of the activity of labour and consumption. Furthermore, this only serves to conceal the difference between freedom and necessity (1958: 71, 121). The difference that Arendt seems to refer to here is the difference in activity. If the sustenance of life has become entirely pain-free and effortless, the force of necessity (which does not itself change) is no longer perceived. The fact that we are not free in the endless pursuit of consumer goods is thus hidden. As a consequence, the activities that do in fact constitute human freedom, namely the deliberation and dialogue of political action, are also not known as such. What makes the experience of genuine freedom all the more difficult in this case is the fact that Arendt characterises it in terms of human non-sovereignty. In action as interaction with a plurality of others, human plurality imposes itself on the supposed sovereignty of those involved. This interpretation further contradicts the very manner in which freedom and politics have generally been conceived.

Arendt insists that freedom requires freedom from rule in all its forms. As a political experience, this indicates that a sovereign ruler is just as much enslaved as those over whom s/he rules. To be free is to be free from the inequalities present in all forms and positions of rulership (Arendt 1958: 32-3). Thus, the exercise of freedom is possible only within relationships that are specifically non-sovereign. No one rules or is ruled in authentic political action. In other words, the notion of freedom as sovereignty destroys the political space constituted by human plurality. It denies the reality of the human condition by positing the individual as a sovereign that commands itself through the power of the autonomous will (Arendt 1977: 161-2). But in the exercise of politics, in the realm of human affairs, our non-sovereignty surfaces in the fact of human plurality and in freedom as beginning.

“Initium ergo ut esset, creatus est homo – ‘That there be a beginning, man was created’” (St. Augustine, as quoted in Arendt 1990: 211). The fact of human natality, of being born into the world, forms the ontological grounds of Arendt’s understanding of freedom. Every birth is a beginning: the beginning of someone who was not there before, and the beginning of someone with the capacity to begin something new in the world (1990: 211; 1977: 150). Stated otherwise,

because we are each, through birth, the beginning of a new and unique someone, we retain the ability to begin as an exercise of human freedom.²³

As a capacity that comes forth and is exercised only as action, this initiation of something new does not require successful achievement of particular aims, nor does it indicate sovereign command over a worldly phenomenon (thing, situation, event, or even person). Arendt remains committed to human plurality, to the fact that we exist alongside others as distinct equals capable of beginning. This understanding of freedom also coheres with that of action as appearance and performance. Although political actors are able, by virtue of natality, to begin new processes, freedom as beginning shines forth in the actual appearance of the person in action. The event of birth marks the appearance of the unique person in the world, disclosing the person as a beginning. Similarly, the appearance of the person on the political stage, that is, to others in their equality and distinctness, discloses the person as a unique, unpredictable, and irreplaceable beginning.

In other words, it is precisely as beginning that *who* a person is remains essentially unutterable. We are each what James Mensch calls, “excessive” (2007: 34). Each person “always has something more to say” and we cannot determine this on the basis of what he or she has already said or done (2007: 35). Thus, every word and deed holds the potential for the new (Arendt 1977: 166-7). And this potential reverberates with the condition of plurality. Comprised of our equality and distinctness, human plurality springs from the fact of natality (Arendt 1958: 9, 176-8). We are all equally distinct insofar as we are all intrinsically beginnings.

Since action entails the simultaneous appearance of political actors to one another, each actor appears and is understood within a network of beginnings. The role of such a network in the exercise of disclosive interaction suggests that *who* one is may be understood relationally. Herman Siemens, for example, notes in his comparison between Arendt and Nietzsche that free

²³ The most exemplary form of this beginning, in terms of action as politics, appears in efforts to begin a new political community. The American “founding fathers” are exemplary political actors who experienced the meaningfulness of action and freedom in the deliberation with others, and thus desired to preserve this capability and opportunity for the future (1990: 34-5). Hence, the revolutionary spirit and experience is about beginning something new (1990: 232). And it is this experience of freedom that informs the foundational framework of the new beginning, and thereby delimits a space for freedom (Arendt 1990: 234-5).

However, the act of foundation as the establishment of a new government suggests the regulation of political practices and the subjection of future action to the authority of this foundation. The preservation of a space for freedom therefore marks one of the paradoxical elements of human being. This will be further illustrated throughout the course of this dissertation.

action and disclosure requires a “dissolution of subjectivity” in which dynamic and contingent identities form out of relations and interactions (Siemens 2005: 113-4, 120). In other words, there is always re-action and resistance arising out of the fact of plurality, and which affect each agent in an indeterminate and unpredictable fashion. George Kateb similarly notes that the “newness of every human being shows itself in a political relationship that is itself not only new, but also proceeds by improvisatory creativity” (2000: 135). This plurality and non-sovereignty of actors, coupled with the disclosive capacity of their actions, reveal politics as much more than governance or even mere beginning.

The final characteristic that Arendt attributes to political action coheres closely with the condition of plurality. She argues that politics depends on and is constituted by the delineation of a public space for the exercise of action and the appearance of freedom. Understanding the significance of this public space is essential in grasping the degree to which Arendt’s schema may suggest a dependence of *praxis* upon *poiēsis*. Although this will come to light only in Chapter 2, I introduce here Arendt’s distinction between public and private insofar as it further divides the activities of the *vita activa*.

4.4 Action in the public space

The delineation between public space and private space forms a structural frame or boundary for Arendt’s distinction between activities. She finds evidence of this division in the social organization of the Greek city-state where the activities of the household (*oikia*) are separated from the public spaces of the *polis*²⁴ and the *agora* (the marketplace). The basis for this distinction, she tells us, is that some things, by virtue of their being, must be hidden and protected against the demands of the public. Other activities, such as *praxis*, must appear in public in order to be at all (Arendt 1958: 73).

It may be tempting to simplify the public/private division into a strictly spatial designation, whereby labour and work necessarily occur behind the walls of the home and workshop, and only action is suited for the public world that begins as soon as one literally steps outside. However, such an over-simplification disregards the phenomenological depth of this

²⁴ While the term *polis* may generally refer to the Greek city-state, in Arendt’s work it also more specifically refers to the arena or meeting place of the citizens.

distinction. Publicness does not involve mere appearance, as everything, by virtue of being, appears (Arendt 1958: 50; 1978a: 19). The distinction instead reflects a difference in the concern with public appearance itself, which in turn informs the revelatory capacity or content of appearance. Recall that in labour, what appears is necessity, our biological sameness, and the life of the species. This is markedly different from the appearance of the unique individual as an unpredictable beginning. Arendt thus attributes to each particular activity its “proper place”, accounting for this spatial designation on the basis of disclosure.

Before elaborating on Arendt’s spatial characterisation of labour, work and action, it is important to address a relevant point made by Seyla Benhabib in *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt* (1996). Benhabib admits the usefulness of drawing distinctions and constructing “ideal types” as models to understand social reality (1996: 131-2). However, she argues that Arendt’s delineation between public and private suggests a “phenomenological essentialism” according to which each human activity can only properly reveal itself in its particular place (either public or private) (1996: 124, 142). Arendt’s boundaries furthermore imply, Benhabib believes, that any particular activity corresponds to only one mode of being. In fact, Benhabib rightly shows the extensive and complex overlap of activities, whereby what appears as labour may also entail elements of action or work (1996: 131). Making a meal, for example, may be a form of *poiēsis* or an expression of love. And the workplace, although a private space in Arendt’s schema, may provide workers with the opportunity to exchange opinions on matters outside of their tasks and responsibilities, thereby becoming to an extent a public space. This also coheres with Arendt’s own admission that the public, political space can become unpolitical when the principles of rule and command are imposed upon it. In such a case, the publicity that defines the political space is entirely abolished.

I do not deny the difficulties emerging from Arendt’s method of distinction, nor the possibilities for overlap, convergence, or displacement of activities and capacities. However, the thrust of Arendt’s work is not to categorize and classify each particular situation and activity in terms of a particular mode of being. It is, however, to illuminate the possible ways in which human beings engage with and experience the world and one another. She therefore does not list within each mode a set of applicable activities. Although her distinctions make it possible to do so, such a list would simply miss the point. It is what appears and what is disclosed that matters.

And this disclosive capacity (in line with the public/private distinction) adheres not simply to a strict inventory of disclosive and non-disclosive activities. Rather, it corresponds to the *attitude*, as Martin Levin remarks, that constitutes the human being's relation to the world, to one another, and hence, to disclosure itself (1979: 523).²⁵

In other words, it is not the activity of labour or the labouring class as such that Arendt assesses in her analysis of labour. It is rather the attitude or mentality intrinsic to labour in which only life and necessity matter (Dossa 1989: 52-3). Whereas the attitude of the *animal laborans* concerns life, and that of *homo faber* revolves around utility and durability, *homo politicus* is concerned with the public space of appearance as such, springing from a sense of human togetherness. Again, it is the disclosive element, what appears, that is the basis for Arendt's delineation between activities and their spatial designation. I return now to an examination of the private and public spheres as an exemplification of the manner in which the inherent attitude, content, and revelatory capacity of each activity imparts a degree of privacy or publicity upon the activity.

Arendt's distinction between public space and private space therefore begins with an emphasis on plurality, on our being-with-others and living together in a world "which directly or indirectly testifies to the presence of other human beings" (Arendt 1958: 22). (The public space is therefore constituted by the condition of plurality and appears in the web of human relationships.) In terms of the privacy of labour, it is simply not disclosive in this manner. In fact, in terms of our most human attributes (plurality, particularity, equality, and freedom), labour remains the least disclosive of all modalities of being.

The activity of labour is therefore consigned to the private sphere insofar as it is bound up with life and necessity (Dossa 1989: 86, 62). As stated previously, labour points the single labourer inwards, towards his or her own physical existence and survival. In this manner it is strictly "self-referential." The physical exertion of labour is felt only within and by the solitary body. Again, this does not imply that the labourer is in fact literally isolated from all others. Others may be present, but the experience of existence through labour remains wholly private. To the extent that labour may point towards others, it does so only in terms of the life and

²⁵ Dossa calls Arendt's modalities "ideal types", "non-human figures" or "portraits...of the distinct *sensibilities* which impel" each of them and, he argues, which "threaten, in different ways, the ideal of the public realm and the primacy of action" (1989: 59).

survival of the species. Hence, other human beings only appear and are related as members of a single species. Even the birth of a newborn is relevant only insofar as it prolongs and ensures life. This is markedly different from the appearance of plural actors and the disclosure of the ontological aspect of natality as beginning.

The public realm is therefore designated for that which exists outside the subjectivity of the labourer and the interests of private individuals. Arendt uses the ancient Greek *polis* as an example. The rise of the city-state heralded the establishment of a public space ruled not in accordance with the order of the household, but rather according to the notion of political equality. The Greek citizen thus acquired, “besides his private life a sort of second life, his *bios politikos*” (Jaeger, as quoted in Arendt 1958: 24). In this public life, private matters (such as the need for survival or socio-economic equality) are of no concern, never mind if these matters concern every person.²⁶ Rather, the activities of the public realm concern public appearance and are therefore about the public realm itself. I elaborate on this point in Chapters 2 and 3. As an introductory examination of the public and private distinction, this albeit vague characterisation illuminates Arendt’s contention that life as such does not and should not matter in the public realm (Arendt 1977: 154, 183). The public appearance of the needs of life in the guise of the labourer is threatened by its very publicity. The condition of privacy, which Dossa describes even as a “physical necessity and physical urgency” (1989: 59), therefore protects and nurtures life by shielding the labourer against public appearance (Arendt 1958: 183).

This need for privacy also affects the modality of fabrication and determines the manner of appearance and disclosure of *homo faber*. During the activity of fabrication, a particular hierarchy is at work and is continually disclosed throughout the process. The relationships established between fellow workers remain subservient to the purpose of their being together in the first place: the production of a particular thing. *Homo faber* confronts the predetermined end and the necessary means in the mode of the sovereign craftsman. What is disclosed is not human

²⁶ The question of the moral content of Arendt’s notion of action must again be addressed. Arendt adamantly denies the political validity of socio-economic concerns. In fact, as Kateb notes, Arendt even attributes the failure of the French Revolution to the attention given to questions of poverty (2000: 140). Arendt’s defence of this position is clear: the force of necessity, felt in the experience of poverty as well as in the compassion and pity for such misery, destroys the desire for freedom and replaces it with a desire for life and happiness (1990: 112-3). As shall be elucidated in Chapters 2 and 3, totalising the interests of life only serves to undermine the durability of the world. This, in turn, emasculates that which grounds Arendt’s ethic: the sharing of that which is outside of each individual person (see Reshaur 1992: 723-30 in this regard).

plurality, but the ability to effectively produce a stable and durable thing. Everything and everyone involved appear only within an instrumental relation, as means necessary to achieve the desired end. The successful achievement of this goal is therefore dependent upon the role of the maker as an “isolated” sovereign. The public appearance of *homo faber* engaged in work exposes the process to a plurality of competing views and opinions. And such deliberation only serves to undermine the expertise and effectiveness characterising this mode of being.

The experience of *homo faber* is not entirely private though. The objects produced through work are intended for public appearance, to be displayed and viewed, bought, sold, and exchanged. This concern with public appearance relates back to the desire for and capacity to produce durability. As will be analysed in Chapter 2, *homo faber*’s relationship to the world as public space suggests a relationship between or even dependence of *praxis* upon *poiēsis*. Such a possibility, however, must take into account Arendt’s conception of the public realm as the space of action and the appearance of human plurality.

The nature of the public space must, in other words, be understood in terms of human plurality. Human beings only appear authentically in the acknowledgement of their equality and distinctness, and by virtue of the presence of others. The attitude or mentality accompanying the exercise of action is a sense of togetherness, of human plurality, and a concern with public appearance as such. In the public space, and in public action more specifically, it is this togetherness that matters, rather than the life of the species or any particular instrumental aim. Whereas the *animal laborans* experiences only life and nature, and *homo faber* perceives the world as a series of “in order to” relations, the political actor encounters a world shared with other human beings and open to the appearances of others in their plurality.

In the following chapter, I examine more closely the nature of the public space of appearance. On the one hand, Arendt provides a view of this space as an intangible space of relations arising out of human plurality and a sense of togetherness. On the other hand, she also seems to suggest that this space appears in, and as part of, the durable, fabricated world. It is the public space as durable world that, I argue, suggests a possible problematic dependence of *praxis* on *poiēsis*.

5. Concluding thoughts

The purpose of this chapter is to elucidate the main principles and characteristics of the activities of action, work, and labour in the thought of Hannah Arendt. Arendt's primary aim is to rethink politics as the interaction between equal but intrinsically distinct human beings who disclose themselves to one another in word and deed. Political action illuminates the condition of plurality, but also entails freedom as non-sovereign beginning. Arendt therefore reformulates the understanding of freedom as a political experience of human plurality and hence of non-sovereignty. But freedom also refers to the human capacity to begin something altogether new, which she derives from the entrance of each unique person into the world through birth. Finally, Arendt describes political action as necessarily public, emphasising once again the disclosure that occurs in the authentic appearances of individuals to one another.

In this formulation of political action, Arendt accentuates the differences between action and the activities of work and labour. Labour is conditioned by life, and thus entails the principle of necessity. Worldliness is the condition of work, and the principles of work comprise utility and durability. That Arendt emphasizes the differences between labour, work, and action reflects the rationale behind her thought. She thinks against the conflation of activities in the *vita activa* that occurs in the Greek origins of the Western philosophical tradition. That Plato posits contemplation above all other modes of life allows for a disregard for the qualities of action and the introduction of the principles of work into the realm of politics. However, Arendt's schematization poses certain challenges for the task of rethinking the relationship between the activities so delineated. One of the main challenges comes forth in the location of action in a public space of appearance.

Chapter 2 examines the extent to which this public space entails intangible relationships as well as the tangible, durable world. Necessitating a space within the durable and thus fabricated world implies that *praxis* relies on the faculty of *poiēsis*. In other words, Arendt's own attempt to reclaim the authenticity of human being in *praxis* seems to suggest a dependence of actors upon the faculty of *poiēsis*. And this is problematic considering the essential differences between these two faculties that Arendt elucidates. One must therefore ask how to situate political action as freedom within the durable, fabricated world.

Chapter 2:

World as durable public space

...the term “public” signifies the world itself, in so far as it is common to all of us and distinguished from our privately owned place in it. This world, however, is not identical with the earth or with nature, as the limited space for the movement of men and the general condition of organic life. It is related, rather, to the human artifact, the fabrication of human hands, as well as to the affairs which go on among those who inhabit the man-made world together. To live together in the world means essentially that a world of things is between those who have it in common (Arendt 1958: 52).

1. Introduction

Chapter one concluded with a look at Arendt’s designation of action as an intrinsically public activity. Political actors appear and disclose themselves in a public space of appearance. That the public space of appearance entails the durable, fabricated world, and that this world affects the possibilities of action, is the primary thesis of this chapter.

I begin with an examination of Arendt’s understanding of ‘world’ and an in-depth look at her characterisation of the public space of appearance. I then ascertain the extent to which the public space of appearance relates to and is constituted by the durable world. I do so by way of evidence provided in Arendt’s texts, as well as acknowledgement thereof throughout Arendt scholarship. In doing so, the relationship between the condition of plurality and the exercise of action will be further elucidated. What is noteworthy and potentially problematic in this relationship is the significant impact of the world as a durable, shared context on the realisation of plurality (and hence on the possible exercise of political action). The relationship between action and world is complicated by the fact that it is through the faculty of work that human beings build a durable world. The shared world, comprising to an extent the content of action, both arises through work and conditions the possibilities of appearance and interaction in the first place. Thus Arendt appears to suggest a dependence of action upon the efforts and results of work. However, keeping in mind the essential differences between the activities that Arendt emphasizes (see Chapter 1), this has problematic implications for the possibilities of action.

2. The concept of world

2.1 Heideggerian influences

I begin with the Heideggerian influences on Arendt's notion of 'world'. The understanding of 'world' that Arendt appropriates from Heidegger forms the starting point from which she further integrates his view of authentic and inauthentic modes of being into her own distinction between action and work. Grasping the world as a context of relations and work activities has implications for the relation between action and world, as well as between action and work. I am heavily indebted to the work of Dana Villa for elucidating the influence of Heidegger's philosophy on this particular aspect of Arendt's thought. I therefore make extended reference to his book, *Arendt and Heidegger: The Fate of the Political*. Since a full examination of Heidegger's thought is beyond the scope of this thesis, however, I refer the reader to Villa's text for a complete discussion on the topic.

The world, according to Heidegger, is neither a container in which humans exist, nor an external environment that surrounds human life. Rather, the world is a fundamental existential structure of human being. Heidegger utilizes the phrase "Being-in-the-world", as well as *Dasein* or "there-being" to describe this ontological aspect of human being (Villa 1996: 121).

This primordial Being-in-the-world constitutes an experience of the world as a "pre-categorical 'thereness'" (Wolin 2001: 210). Such a pre-categorical or pre-theoretical experience discloses the world as a totality of relations rather than as something cognitively known (Villa 1996: 121). The human being is therefore not constituted by knowing the world (Descartes), but rather by existence as Being-in-the-world.²⁷ The world is also not simply the space in which the human appears, but rather comprises a network of relations between tools, people, contexts, etc. The human being is therefore always in the world alongside and in relation to others and various entities (1996: 121).

As an ontological structure of the human, Being-in-the-world presupposes an ontic situatedness. Heidegger employs the notion of "facticity" to describe this Being-in-the-world.

²⁷ This reflects Arendt's effort to think against the metaphysical tradition that elevates the contemplative pursuit of absolute answers above and beyond the world of appearances. To understand, as will be elaborated in Chapter 4, encompasses a continuous worldly effort and experience, rather than the acquisition of the proper truth. As also noted by Roodt (2005: 163), this indicates that "world" is not the "true world of Platonic metaphysics nor its opposite", the apparent world. It is "the world of appearances". It is important to note that Roodt is in fact referring to Nietzsche's notion of "world" in a comparative analysis of Nietzsche and Arendt. Both argue for the world of appearances experienced from a variety of perspectives but never as a whole.

The human being is thrown (*geworfen*) into a world of practical involvements, tools, moods, language, and relationships (Wolin 2001: 174). Arendt similarly asserts that each person is born into a world of relations and narratives, which we each enter through birth and depart through death (Arendt 1958: 55). This thrownness (*Geworfenheit*) of the human being informs the possible ways *Dasein* understands itself, as well as the activities or modes of being that *Dasein* takes up. Being-in-the-world means being-in a context of relations that functions as a horizon for the possibilities open to *Dasein*.²⁸

Heidegger further describes the primordial set of relations and accompanying mode of being into which the human is thrown in terms of instrumental or equipmental relationships (Villa 1996: 121). How we experience the things of the world is not as objects “present-at-hand” but “in terms of their function” within the context of relations (1996: 121). A hammer, for example, is what it is due to the functions that it fulfils within a set of “in order to” engagements, and not because of the particular properties it holds as object (1996: 121).²⁹ Consequently, this characterization of the world corresponds to the activity of work and is in fact the world of work (*Werkwelt*) (Taminiaux 1991: 117; Villa 1996: 122).

Arendt takes this point up from Heidegger and attributes this instrumentality to the mode of being of *homo faber*. Her critique of instrumentality and work (on the one hand) against her espousal of political action (on the other) also draws from Heidegger’s distinction between

²⁸ For Heidegger, “human existence, at its most fundamental level, is nothing other than the “disclosure of Being”, albeit through different “historical ways of Being-in-the-world” (Villa 1996: 124). *Dasein* as there-being is its own “there”, the clearing or space of disclosure that is this disclosedness of Being. As such, Heidegger further understands *Dasein* (or human being) as “an open structure of possibility” or “structure of projection” (Villa 1996: 125). *Dasein* as possibility denotes being thrown into a range of possibilities, but also the ontological freedom of disclosedness, “the freedom of the “there”” (Villa 1996: 126). Authentic disclosedness is therefore a disclosedness that transcends the mode of everydayness, affirms thrownness, and maintains the openness for possibilities (Villa 1996: 131-3). Authentic understanding is an understanding of itself as thrown yet open disclosedness. “The mode in which authentic disclosedness becomes actual” is resoluteness (Villa 1996: 134). Resoluteness refers to the resolute surrender to openness and uncertainty, but through the making of “concrete choices, commitments, and actions” (Villa 1996: 134).

In other words, “Authenticity in Heidegger’s sense is a certain way of taking up what is given yet “dimmed down”, the creative appropriation of contents and possibilities that are encountered *within* our lifeworld yet which, in their codified, reified, or clichéd forms, ceased to signify” (Villa 1996: 135). It is breathing new life into what is already given and thus making it one’s own.

²⁹ Only when the hammer breaks, when there is a disturbance in the pre-theoretical experience of the world, what Heidegger calls “practical circumspection”, does the hammer appear as “something present-at-hand as sheer object” (Villa 1996: 121-2). In practical circumspection, the world as a context of use (a series of “in order to” relations) is “passed over” or concealed.

authentic and inauthentic being (Villa 1996: 130). However, Arendt makes a crucial turn against Heidegger with regards to this distinction.

For Heidegger, certain activities and understandings are “genuinely disclosive” of *Dasein* and thus constitute authentic being or understanding. Authentic understanding is “disclosedness that knows itself to be such” (Villa 1996: 131). In other words, as thrown projection, *Dasein* simultaneously grasps its situatedness, its Being-in-the-world, and the “fluidity” or openness of its possibilities (1996: 131). Authentic disclosedness takes up its possibilities as its own and thereby affirms its “thrownness or contingency” (1996: 132-3). Inauthentic understanding, in contrast, is a result of one’s preoccupation with the daily activities of the work world.

“Everydayness,” a combination of equipmental and interactive relations with entities and others, is a “fallen” or inauthentic mode of being for Heidegger. Wolin describes this mode as a “falling away from one’s self” and understanding one’s self in a manner that is “world-laden” (2001: 225-8). “The horizon phenomenon of world, like the context of use itself, gets passed over in everyday “absorption” in our activities” (Villa 1996: 122). This point must not be taken to mean that inauthentic being does not disclose at all. Rather, Heidegger’s distinction refers to an opposition between “a disclosedness that grasps itself as such and a disclosedness that forgets itself” (1996: 129). Absorbed in the everyday world, *Dasein* grasps itself via the mode of being of that with which it is involved (Taminiaux 1991: 117). In other words, it sees itself as something *vorhanden*, as a “what” or an object present-at-hand (1991: 117).³⁰ Authentic understanding or being is one that wrests itself out of this preoccupation within the everyday. It is not, however, something that hovers above the world or which creates its own world. Rather, it is an activity and understanding that resolves to “breathe new life into the familiar” (Villa 1996: 132).

Arendt appropriates this authentic/inauthentic distinction into her own contrast between action and work. Work constitutes an inauthentic mode of being, primarily due to its inherent instrumentality which undermines appearance and meaning. Authenticity is thus for Arendt also about “genuine disclosure”. However, she does not attribute authentic disclosure to a resolute

³⁰ A thing present-at-hand (*vorhanden*) “maintains its status as a thing in its relationship of manifesting another thing” (Taminiaux 1991: 63). But ready-to-hand (*zuhanden*) is characterized by the manifestation of a deeper reference, which is “usefulness for”. But being handy “for this or that end” (*zuhanden*) presupposes being present-at-hand, it presupposes that beings “stand by themselves before a hand actually takes hold of them” (117). This makes it possible for *Dasein* to grasp its own Being in terms of *vorhanden*.

turn inward, such as in Heidegger's view of interiorized authenticity. It is rather in action as the performance of human distinctness and equality, of freedom as beginning, that human beings appear authentically. Arendt therefore embraces plurality as *the* condition of political action and the disclosure of human being. It is only in the appearance *to others*, a wholly public appearance, that authentic disclosure and understanding is possible.

It is in her retention of the disclosive capacity and significance of plurality and political action that Arendt thinks against Heidegger. Both understand Being-with-others, "the fact that men, not Man, live on the earth and inhabit the world" (Arendt 1958: 7) as the realm of human affairs and the sharing of opinions (Villa 1996: 140). Heidegger argues, however, that in Being-with-others, *Dasein* becomes absorbed in "the public interpretation of the world" that remains within the everyday mode of comportment (1996: 128). Human plurality or "publicness" amounts to a kind of "idle talk", an inauthentic, everyday understanding of "the they" that conceals rather than reveals *Dasein* (1996: 127-8).³¹

For Arendt, however, Being-with-others designates the plurality that constitutes human being. Our being-with-others indicates thrownness: we are born into a world and by virtue of the presence of others experience our frailty and non-sovereignty. In addition, it is also precisely in this plurality that freedom as beginning, and *who* one distinctly is, may appear. It is also through the appearances of others that alternative ways of Being-in-the-world are disclosed. Finally, it is also only through appearance within this plurality, Being-with as appearing-to others in political action that we are able, as human beings, to acquire distance from everyday "preoccupations", enter "a true "space of disclosure"...manifest our disclosive capacity and become free for the world" (Villa 1996: 139). Only through our co-appearances do we open up a space of disclosure and are confronted with possibilities of meaning. Thus, when we heed our plurality, we bring into existence what Arendt calls the public space of appearance.

³¹ Heidegger does not posit fallenness or everyday preoccupation as a mode of being that is altogether negative and must be eliminated. As mentioned in Footnotes 1 and 2, authentic existence remains situated or thrown into the world of the everyday and the given. It does not transcend this world into some external realm above. Rather, authentic *Existenz* moves through "a dialectic of transcendence and everydayness" (Villa 1996: 128).

2.2. World as public space of appearance

The space of authentic disclosure emerges in Arendt's thought in the notion of the "public space of appearance". The significance of the public space reiterates that authentic disclosure and understanding is made possible by the condition of plurality. This space arises through the realisation of human plurality, characterised by equality and distinctness. In this realisation, a public space opens up and the world, previously experienced only instrumentally, can become meaningful. The condition of plurality also coincides with the power potential that Arendt ascribes to human beings. This potential is rooted in a sense of being in the world *with others* as a sense of togetherness. It thus entails a respect and care for authentic appearance and the public spaces of appearance.

Recall from Chapter 1 that plurality indicates that each human being is both equal to and distinct from all others. "We are all the same, that is, human, in such a way that nobody is ever the same as anyone else" (Arendt 1958: 8). This notion of equality does not pretend that human beings are or should be equal in their physical attributes, economic well-being, heritage, or any other such quality. Rather, it indicates an equality on the basis of beings who appear and present themselves as they are, "without claims to [any] privileges and advantages" (Dossa 1989: 88). For Arendt, such appearance is authentic since one is not undertaking a task of instrumental use or for survival (Villa 1996: 138). Rather, one appears for the sake of appearance only. Distinctness also does not simply mean that each human being is different from another, but that each human being can "express this distinction" and "communicate himself [or herself] and not merely something" (Arendt 1958: 176). This communication of oneself, as distinct and as beginning, occurs only when one appears through word and deed among others as equals. It is only through the presence of others who can see and hear and confirm one's appearance that authentic appearance is possible at all.

The interrelatedness of *praxis*, the condition of plurality, and the public space of appearance is significant. *Praxis* entails the sharing of words and deeds by equals as the authentic disclosure of human beings. The condition of plurality reflects the fact of our distinctness and equality, but only results in action when this plurality is itself realised. This entails a respect for appearance (as disclosure and distinctness) and a sense of togetherness (in equality and, as I will show, in the commonality of the world). The public space of appearance

comes into being with the advent of *praxis*. The realisation of plurality therefore holds the potential for a public space to arise in the words and deeds of human beings.

For this reason, the public space of appearance emerges “where people are *with* others and neither for nor against them – that is, in sheer human togetherness” (Arendt 1958: 180). This is not to be confused with mere togetherness though. Arendt is adamant that the attitude or relation underlying the advent of public appearance and disclosure is a respect for the appearances of others as equals, a sense of our togetherness. Only in the activity of action does this Being-with-others appear as such and is not co-opted in the taking up of a particular task (as in work, for example). The public space of appearance is therefore kept in existence through action and speech. The sharing of plural perspectives and identities forms a “fragile network of relations” and beginnings (Roodt 2005: 206, 163). Publicness means that within the web of relations, competing opinions, perspectives and identities appear in and constitute the public world.

This public space of appearance and relation does not remain a constant reality though. Arising out of action and speech, the public space remains intangible and ephemeral (Arendt 1958: 199). Action appears and exists only for the duration of the performance. Similarly, the public space itself only comes into being during the engagement of political actors, the sharing of words and the performing of deeds. Both action and the public space of appearance comprise a temporary, transient actuality.

However, it is also not simply action that ensures the continued transformation of the world into such public spaces, or which ensures it in the future. Rather, it is the power potential residing in the fact of plurality, which makes political action a possibility in the first place, that does so (Arendt 1958: 199-201). This power potential refers to the power of human togetherness that informs and respects appearances. And it is this power of human togetherness which makes the space of appearance a possibility and a reality.

Power, as conceived by Arendt, does not refer to strength, force, or violence. While these are measurable and materially-bound, power is simply the “potentiality in being together” (Arendt 1958: 201). It is neither acquired nor possessed (Hansen 1993: 120). Nor does it express human sovereignty (1993: 124). Because power springs from human plurality it limits individual sovereignty. In fact, the acknowledgement of human non-sovereignty fosters the realisation of

human togetherness as a power potential. We do not become sovereigns over ourselves or others when we combine ourselves together in action. Recall from Chapter 1 that Arendt understands action as the combination of beginning and completing. It is not the rule of a strong leader over others, but co-action. We therefore empower ourselves through the experience and actualisation of a non-sovereign freedom that is only possible through public appearance. In other words, public, political action grows out of the power potential of being together, and also energizes this potential into a power that opens and holds together a space of appearance (Hansen 1993: 124; Arendt 1958: 200, 204).

Finally, a sense of togetherness, and its power potential, is rooted in the ontological condition of Being-in-the-world-with-others. But it is also the physical organisation of living together that contributes to this sense. Arendt is clear on this matter:

The only indispensable material factor in the generation of power is the living together of people. Only where men live so close together that the potentialities of action are always present can power remain with them, and the foundation of cities, which as city-states have remained paradigmatic of all Western organization, is therefore indeed the most important material prerequisite for power (1958: 201).

The relation between human togetherness, power, and plurality on the one hand, and the tangible world on the other is significant. In the next section, I show how certain aspects of Arendt's schematization suggest that the public space necessary for *praxis* also entails the tangible, durable world. And this world is attainable firstly through the activity of fabrication. The shared world, comprising to an extent the content of action, both arises through work and conditions the possibilities of appearance and interaction in the first place. Thus Arendt appears to suggest a dependence of action upon the efforts and results of work. I begin with the significance of the public space as durable world.

2.3 World as durable public space

Arendt's continual references to the public realm "as the common world" suggest that this public world in which we appear and act is not simply an intangible space of appearance. Closer examination of what Arendt understands by the term 'world' shows that, although it entails human appearance and plurality, it is characterized foremost by the durability achieved through work. In fact, according to Villa, Arendt focuses extensively on this durable and fabricated

aspect of the world (1996: 122). It is also by virtue of its durability that the world relates human beings to one another, offers a shared concern, and thus opens up a public space of appearance.

The significance of the durable world for the possibilities of action has not gone un-noted in Arendt scholarship. The texts under examination here reflect only a small portion of the literature, and the question of the relation between *praxis* and *poiēsis* does not comprise the central argument or purpose of any of their work. However, the public world of action and the durability of this public world are specifically addressed and therefore shed light on a possible dependence of *praxis* upon *poiēsis*.

Arendt defines the “public” as “the world itself” which “is related...to the human artifact [and] the fabrication of human hands” (1958: 52, 204). Furthermore, the world is an environment of durable things and use objects. It is distinguished from nature insofar as the things of the world are used and not consumed. A chair, for example, endures beyond the use we make of it, whereas a loaf of bread does not. In addition, the objects that constitute the world “guarantee the permanence and durability without which a world would not be possible at all” (1958: 94).

I must interject here and qualify this notion of “permanence and durability”.³² The world is permanent insofar as it withstands the devouring needs of life and the immortal sway of nature. It is also permanent because it lasts beyond the mortal lives of individual human beings (Arendt 1958: 18-19). It is thus a tangible durability that exists and persists “objectively,” that is outside of the needs and interests of the human subject. It is also the capacity to produce such an enduring world that allows human beings to build a home within “everlastingness” (1958: 19). But the world is never truly immortal or entirely permanent. It provides only relative endurance. Still, its existence marks the human’s striving for immortality through the advent of durable constructs. This striving must not, however, be confused with a concern with the eternal, which remains the task and activity of the philosopher (See Chapter 1, Section 2.1). The eternal transcends the relatively permanent world and immortal nature, escaping all transformation into thought, language, action, or recollection (1958: 20-21). It is that which can only be experienced in the mode of the *vita contemplativa*.

³² In terms of the definition provided here, I use the words “permanence,” “relative permanence,” “endurance” and “durability”, and sometimes even “immortality” or “perseverance” interchangeably to refer to this specific characteristic or quality.

The fact that the world is not a world unless it possesses this quality of durability is significant. Worldliness means that an artificial environment of tangible constructs exists (Arendt 1958: 7). Any phenomenon can therefore be described in terms of its worldliness on the basis of its relative permanence within this environment (1958: 96; Villa 1996: 192). Worldliness also describes the condition of work. According to Arendt, it is the activity of work that designates “the capacity to fabricate and create a world” (Arendt 1977: 206). It is therefore significant that Arendt insists that “the existence of a *public realm*...depends entirely on permanence” (Arendt 1958: 55; my emphasis). The public space of appearance, although always a human potential, needs a world that stretches beyond the present into the past and future (1977: 206).³³

In relation to action, “the world created by *homo faber* (what Arendt calls the “human artifice”) is *not* a different world from that inhabited by human beings qua political actors” (Villa 1996: 137). Thus, the intangible space of appearance remains part and parcel of the constructed world. It does not appear “above” or “beyond” this physical environment. It is, according to Dossa, “structured space”, space in the “architectural sense”, and thus “*literally the “work” of homo faber*” (1989: 86; my emphasis). Arendt declares that “the public realm, the space within the world which men need in order to appear at all, is therefore more specifically “the work of man”” (1958: 208).

In his work on Arendt, George Kateb situates the space of appearance more specifically and defines “the organization or frame or form for freedom, for the action which expresses or manifests or embodies freedom, [as] the polis or city or public space or public realm: it is the world, in the sense of a worldly place” (1977: 147). And according to Villa, “it is the world, that “relatively permanent home for man” created by *homo faber*, which makes politics possible by serving as “the common meeting ground of all” ” (1996: 34). That the public space is not merely an intangible in-between generated through action requires further examination into the relationship between action and the durable world.³⁴

As stated in Chapter 1, the durable world stands between the mortal human and the eternal re-occurrence of nature (Arendt 1958: 134-5). It is via this durability that human beings

³³ Consider also Arendt’s statement: “If the world is to contain a public space, it cannot be erected for one generation and planned for the living only; it must transcend the life-span of mortal men” (Arendt 1958: 55-6).

³⁴ Although this point may seem to contradict the previous designation of the relationship between *praxis*, plurality, and public space, it actually further elucidates the significance of the realisation of plurality as a worldly experience.

transcend the anonymity and meaninglessness of mere life. The things of the world gain “relative independence” from “the voracious needs and wants of their living makers and users” (1958: 137). Standing apart from such desires and interests, an object endures in and constitutes the world into which human beings are born. This objectivity of durable things provides both stability and a sense of reality.

Consider the contrast between world and nature. The persisting, cyclical movement of nature provides only a sense of life and necessity. This condition reveals the human being simply as biological, or as Roodt defines it, “undifferentiated life” (Roodt 2005: 132; Arendt 1958: 137). The condition of worldliness however, denoting the durability and stability of the world, provides relatively fixed reference points (Biskowski 1993: 879; Knauer 1980: 727). Such ‘markers’, sitting around the same table, for example, reveal human beings as differentiated or individuated. Because the table exists independently of those around it, and especially if it is not an object of ownership, it exceeds private interests and appears as something objective and held in common. It is by virtue of this commonality that the table relates those sitting around it. But it is also the presence of others that confirms the table as something real and something in common.

Hence, it is through others’ confirmation of the world and of one’s own appearance in it that one is assured of reality. As Dossa explains, just as labour confirms one’s “private, bodily reality”, so the objects that comprise the durable world confirm “an ‘independent,’ public and tangible reality” (1989: 57). This independent reality or objectivity is confirmed by the presence of others who look upon the same object and affirm its enduring existence and identity. Thus, the publicness of the durable, fabricated world means that it not only withstands the experience of biological life and natural processes, or the interests and possessiveness of private individuals that use it up. The world also constitutes a shared context or enduring point of reference that relates and separates people.

As a shared context, the world cultivates a concern with that which transcends private, subjective experiences and individual life-spans (Arendt 1958: 51). Concerned with that which is outside of each of us and shared by all of us, our actions and views become publicly relevant and

significant (1958: 51, 137).³⁵ In other words, as an objective context or enduring point of reference, the world reveals the multiple perspectives from which human beings view and experience it (1958: 57-8; Mensch 2007: 36). To stay with the table example, each person enjoys a different angle of the table owing to his or her different physical location and characteristics, as well as the distinctiveness of the human being as such.

Moreover, the different perspectives of this world, by virtue of our different positions in it, give us, not a unified and complete view, but one that reveals this world as constituted by the multiplicity of opinions of it (Roodt 2005: 163; Arendt 1978a: 38). Thus it is possible for human plurality to appear in our appearances in and engagement with the durable artifice. Arendt describes this as the appearance of “sameness in utter diversity” (Arendt 1958: 57), which I interpret as the simultaneous appearance of the commonality and objectivity of the world, and our being in the world in and as a plurality. The enduring world therefore provides the space and impetus for the appearance of individuals, the formation of relationships, and the undertaking of tasks that surpass the repetitive and endless activities of labour and consumption. As a result, it is of significant import to the sense of togetherness necessary for the realisation of plurality in action.

On the one hand, the durable world provides a common ground as a “structured space” or arena for action (Biskowski 1993: 879; Kateb 1977: 142). It is the stage for the performances of great words and deeds. On the other hand, the durable world also provides political actors with a shared concern. Recall from Chapter 1 that action is meaningful because it is wholly self-contained: a disclosive and initiatory performance without any reference to ends and means. Engaging in action “for the sake of itself” “produces” meaning, but neither as a means to an end nor an end itself (Arendt 1958: 154). There is no underlying purpose or content of action beyond the appearance of actors and the advent of meaning that occurs in this moment of disclosure. However, in action as public appearance, human beings affirm the significance of the public space as a space for appearance in word and deed.

But it is also through such disclosive action that the common, durable world emerges in the public spaces of appearance as more than the instrumental environment experienced in work.

³⁵ The common world prevents us from falling into our own subjectivity by retaining the focus or concern of our opinions on that which is outside of each of us, and yet shared by all of us. It is the subject matter, the shared world, which is of relevance and thus importance.

Unless transformed into a meaningful, “human world” through the exercise of public action, the world remains a “cluster of objects”, a mere “artifice of things” (Dossa 1989: 79-80). When revealed as more than a series of “in order to” relations, the world is placed in a new light and endowed with meaning beyond its physical qualities (Villa 1996: 138; Arendt 1958: 204).³⁶ In this manner, the world appears in the web of human affairs as the space for the disclosure of identities and pluralities. This meaning derives from the appearance of the world in the initiatory and disclosive interaction of actors who are concerned with the public space.

Thus, the durable world as a public space of appearance provides a shared concern for political actors, as well as the content of their words and deeds. In disclosing care for this space, actors necessarily are concerned with the durable world. What is important to keep in mind, however, is that even though actors may be concerned with the world as a shared, public space, the performative, self-contained nature of action must be retained. It seems, however, that as long as action and the public space articulate one another, and as long as the durable world and the public space articulate one another, action may be concerned with the world and remain “for the sake of itself”.

Finally, the capacity of actors to illuminate the world as meaningful demonstrates the interrelatedness between action and world. The more particular content of this illumination and relationship is examined in Chapter 3. It is important, however, to grasp what makes such illumination possible in the first place: the persistence of a durable world that provides a common context and concern for human beings. The shared world thus cultivates respect for the public appearances of human beings. It also makes meaning, as a public (i.e. political and worldly) experience, possible. The fact that the durable, fabricated world provides stability and common references that reveals or actualises plurality shows that the world conditions human existence. Hence, the relationship between the world and the condition of plurality must be further examined.

³⁶ To an extent, this idea reverberates with Heidegger’s understanding of authentic disclosedness as the creative appropriation and making one’s own that which is already given (see Footnote 2). However, for Arendt the crucial factor remains action as an engagement *with others*.

3. The condition of worldliness

In Chapter 1, human existence is described as conditioned existence. Human existence is conditioned by life through the force of necessity, as well as by the presence of other human beings. The manner in which human beings engage with the fact of plurality itself further conditions human existence. Finally, the world as durable artifice is also “felt and received as a conditioning force” (Arendt 1958: 9). Even those things that are made by human beings and that comprise this world become conditioners of human existence.

In other words, the mode of being that we take up, so to speak, and through which we experience this tangible in-between, is in part determined by the worldly network of relations and context of activities and understandings into which each human being is born. The shape of this world and the interests so generated impact our relationships and the modes of being that appear as available possibilities. In his analysis of Arendt and Heidegger, Villa contends that

The central question for Arendt is whether the world built by *homo faber* provides a stage for authentically disclosive (revelatory) action, or remains simply the site for productive comportment (Villa 1996: 139).

In other words, it is the durable world “originally disclosed through work” (Villa 1996: 139) that conditions the appearances and relationships of human beings. It shapes the concerns of actors and affects the realization of the conditions of action. This is problematic considering Arendt’s characterisation of the faculty of work.

This is not a problem for James Knauer though. In his article, “Motive and Goal in Hannah Arendt’s Concept of Political Action”, Knauer argues that the possibility and meaning of action is not determined by the character of the worldly artifice, nor by the particular worldly interests that relate human beings in the first place (1980: 729). Action necessarily transcends these facets through the manifestation of principles and meaning (1980: 721).³⁷ This point is taken up further by Villa. According to Villa, action occurs within the fabricated world, but also necessarily precedes and exceeds it (1996: 266). This is due to the ‘nature’ of action as freedom and beginning. The exercise of spontaneous and initiatory action always remains a possibility

³⁷ See Chapter 3 Section 2.1 for an elaboration on the nature of principles.

(1996: 266).³⁸ Knauer's and Villa's arguments therefore suggest that the possibilities of action are retained due to the ontological being of the human being as freedom and beginning.

Benhabib makes a similar point with regards to the distinction between the “two phenomenological dimensions of the public realm”: the public as space of appearance and as common world (1996: 128). By common world she has in mind shared values, background beliefs, and references. The commonality of these elements, she argues, is in fact dependent upon sociohistorical conditions. Although the nature of the institutional public space does impact and change the “more fundamental structures of human life”, the space of appearance is for Benhabib always a possibility, “under whatever sociohistorical conditions, in whatever epoch” (1996: 128). She therefore draws on Arendt's own elucidation of this space as one that “precedes all formal constitution of the public realm and the various forms of government” (Arendt 1958: 199; quoted in Benhabib 1996: 128).

However, Benhabib recognizes that despite such a clear definition from Arendt, the notion of the public remains somewhat vague throughout her work. In the vein of Heidegger, Arendt argues that the possibilities of the human being as freedom always presuppose a worldly existence. Coupled with her insistence that human existence is always conditioned, the experience of particular, tangible conditions in the world may in fact affect the possible activities or modes of being taken up by human beings at a particular time and place.

In Chapter 1, for instance, the example of the Knights of the Roundtable was given to illustrate the kind of equality that Arendt defends in the exercise of action. However, it is by virtue of the tangible shape of the table as round that this equality acquires a space for actualisation and thereby achieves a worldly reality. Although the Knights themselves must also have a respect for one another as equals, the table plays a role in the exercise of this principle. The fact of plurality itself must, therefore, be acknowledged and desired. As I have shown, Arendt also suggests that the opening up of spaces of appearance depends on the realisation of human plurality and a sense of togetherness.

³⁸ For Arendt, the human being is much more than the modes of being or functions in the world; human being is beginning and therefore may transcend limiting worldly conditions. But my aim is not to question action as possibility in its entirety. Rather, I take the worldliness of action and human plurality as a starting point for understanding the relationship between *praxis* and *poiēsis*. And it is in the worldliness of action that one may uncover the tension inherent in this relationship.

Consequently, it is important to examine the impact of the condition of worldliness upon the *realisation* of plurality, regardless of whether a formal public realm exists or not. Knauer in fact contends that “*This transcendent quality of action* depends, as we have seen, on the existence of a political association, which is to say, it *requires the realization of plurality*” (1980: 729; my emphasis). Thus, he acknowledges that the actualization of the possibility for action still remains dependent upon appearance in the worldly space.

Insofar as action corresponds with the condition of plurality, the *experience* and *actualization* of human plurality is essential for the possibility of acting and beginning in the first place. This actualisation or realisation of plurality occurs in the appearance and acknowledgment thereof. It entails the recognition of our being equal yet distinct individuals who share a world. In other words, it comes forth in a sense of togetherness and understanding of the significance of authentic appearance to one another. As will be illustrated in the rest of this chapter, this actualisation remains conditioned by the common context, which is shaped by the durable, fabricated world.

For example, Knauer admits that “human plurality can only be realized in public, and this realization requires the combined aspects of the common world as artifice and affairs” (1980: 729).³⁹ In addition, Knauer’s elucidation of Arendt’s notion of ‘world’ further indicates a possible primacy granted to the role and influence of the fabricated artifice in the actualization of plurality. I quote him at length:

The common world...exists in two aspects, the world of human artifice and the world of human affairs, and the latter can arise only when men are related by that artifice. The human artifice is composed of those durable products of man the maker, *homo faber*, and it is not to be confused with the articles made for consumption by *animal laborans*...It is *homo faber* who alone can create that objective aspect of the common world within which human action becomes a possibility (1980: 726).

³⁹ Hansen (1993) similarly argues that “the basic condition of plurality” is “worldly space” (1993: 64). And, “the actualization of plurality in all its manifestations as a living reality, and not just as a possibility, requires the achievement of another state of affairs: ‘worldliness’” (64-5). The implication is thus that this world either allows us to appear as distinct and plural beings, or it does not (73). In addition, Kateb remarks that the illumination of human existence and reconciliation with reality requires that one know others and that one is known by others. But “for this knowing and being known to be possible, there must be a worldly place, sustained by a common commitment to worldliness, in which men are expected to act – and do act, by word and deed” (1977: 148).

It is clear from this passage that the appearance of plurality, a requisite for action, depends at least to an extent on whether the durable, *fabricated* world allows human beings to appear authentically and as a plurality of equally free and unique beings. Although I do not contend that this is what Arendt unequivocally suggests, her view of the *vita activa* and the human condition in general is certainly open to such an interpretation. This is problematic in terms of Arendt's characterisation of *homo faber* and the faculty of work. It is therefore necessary to assess the role of *homo faber* in the construction of this world.

4. Possibilities and actualities

4.1 Engaging the world of *homo faber*

That *homo faber* builds the common, durable world requires a closer examination of Arendt's characterization of this mode of being. It has already been noted how the durable world and the things therein provide a common context wherein human beings appear. The table, for example, is such a shared reference point that both relates and separates. In this manner, the durable world provides spaces of appearance, depending on the type of activity, attitude, or mode of being through which humans engage the things and spaces of the world. I am primarily concerned with the ways in which the possibility of public, intangible spaces of appearance, rooted in a sense of togetherness, human plurality, and the actualisation of our power potential, are conditioned by the physical spaces of the world environment.

I consider this question on two fronts: first, I consider the potential of indirect "public" spaces in the durable world, based on the general task of *homo faber* to produce and organize the world. Since potential public, political spaces remain worldly phenomena, it is important to see how the durable world and its contents inform how we may appear, the reason we may enter a public space, and on what basis we may interact. I then examine *homo faber*'s relationship to the public space of appearance in particular, based on Arendt's characterisation of the work activity. Examples of how the durable, fabricated world affects the modalities, relationships and appearances of human beings illuminate the significant impact of this capability.

It is the task of *homo faber* to construct the durable world. This capacity and responsibility includes but is not limited to the fabrication of tools and instruments, and the foundation and organisation of cities. Although *homo faber* does not produce tools and

instruments primarily to assist the life process, the *animal laborans* makes use of such things in order to gain a degree of freedom from necessity (Arendt 1958: 151, 236). The fact that the products of work may be utilised to address subjective needs beyond their objective purpose does not necessarily reflect on the mentality of *homo faber*. Still, it does indicate that the experiences of the durable world in the modes of labour, work, or action are at variance with one another. To a degree, political actors not only confront a durable, fabricated world, but also one that becomes a world of tools and instruments in the life process.

Moreover, *homo faber* approaches the world in terms of durability and purposefulness. The world and the things therein are experienced and understood as a series of “in order to” relations (Arendt 1958: 154). *Homo faber*, in other words, understands produced ends as purposeful and useful, or as means to further ends. One example of such a conditioning instrument is the automobile. The car fulfils the function of transport and has infiltrated almost every recess of the earth. It serves subjective needs and demands of life, but also remains an object useful for a variety of functions. However, the car extends the spaces of the private and, as a result, in potential public spaces human beings are rather separated and isolated. The experience of the car also turns attention inward, towards the self and its aims, purposes, and destinations. For this reason, the relations inspired by the automobile does not necessarily provide a common reference point or shared concern. In fact, Arendt even states that “insofar as *homo faber* fabricates use objects, he not only produces them in the privacy of isolation but also *for the privacy of usage*, from which they emerge and appear in the public realm when they become commodities in the exchange market” (1958: 163; my emphasis).

It is also important to acknowledge that it is not just the things of the world, but also the underlying constructs and frameworks that derive from the work of *homo faber*. It is in the mode of *homo faber* that human beings organize and construct the physical spaces of the world through the foundation of towns and cities. The design and construction of cities is not necessarily distinct from the fabrication of tools and instruments. I name these separately only to point out certain avenues by which the fabricated world and the activity of work relate to the public space of appearance and the activity of action. The construction of cities thus entails the architectural design of buildings, the layout of roads, and the division of functional locations (for example, most cities demarcate a business district distinct from residential areas). Here, human beings are

related to one another through proximity and activity, both of which assist and shape the establishment of a community.

In this regard, Arendt makes reference to the Greek *polis* and its attention to and separation of private and public activities and spaces. The Greeks specifically designated a public, political space distinct from the *agora*, or marketplace.⁴⁰ Both of these were also separated from the private spaces allocated for the household activities of labour and consumption. These places refer not only to the activities that are proper to politics, economics, and life, or the context of relationships that arises in the practice of any one of these. Rather, they refer to tangible spaces and divisions built into the city itself.

In the organization of cities and in the practice of living together, human beings communicate their values, activities and relationships through the erection of tangible, durable spaces. Recall from Section 2.2 that Arendt describes the foundation of cities as “the most important material prerequisite for power” (1958: 201). Through such “organized living”, human beings become familiar with possible modes of being, as well as with shared concerns.

The organisation of the Greek city-state manages the principles and needs of both private and public activities. For Arendt, the Greeks are exemplary in their separation of the demands of life and the purpose of politics. But this principle itself requires institutionalisation in order to foster new life in the realm of the private, and to protect the appearances of freedom and excellence in the realm of the public. The potential for a public space is, in other words, not realised through mere living together, where the experiences of labour and life are also shared. The potential for this space is realised only through a sense of political equality and a respect for appearance on the basis of the commonality of the world. In this way, the division of activities along the public/private division protects the inherent qualities of life, the durability of the common world, and the possibility of political action.

The Greek example shows how the foundation of a community or city reflects the experiences and principles of those living together, but also how the institutional framework further conditions the relationships and experiences of the community. A more contemporary example of how such institutional structures not only inform human worldly experiences but

⁴⁰ Arendt notes that “*Before men began to act*, a definite space had to be secured and a structure built where all subsequent action could take place” (Arendt 1958: 194; my emphasis).

may actually influence the possible realisation of plurality is that of school policies. Arendt's view of the role of education shows how the environment of children to an extent affects the respect for others as distinct equals in future adults.

Education and school experiences constitute a large part of a child's upbringing. The educational system is also a central aspect of the artificial environment established by human beings. Schools inculcate the values and principles of its community and to an extent may shape the future citizens according to these values. In her article, "The Crisis in Education", Arendt examines how it is to an extent in school and through schooling that children come to know and understand the world into which they are each born. However, Arendt is adamant that the manner of this education must respect the factual reality of the world in order to preserve its stability and durability. In doing so, children may become familiar with the world as a common and stable reference point.

But children are also exemplary of the constant entrance of new life into the world. For this reason, Arendt argues that it is also the responsibility of schooling systems to provide a private space for life and growth (1977: 192-3). Thus the division between the public realm and the private realm again appears in Arendt's understanding of education.

No child can be expected to step into the public light, to make him or herself known, without first coming to terms with the world and taking a stand in relation to it. It is therefore the task of the school system, Arendt believes, to nurture life and to protect children from the public light that in fact threatens life. But there is an inherent paradoxical complexity to this responsibility. In its privative character or capacity, the schooling system should not be used to manipulate the possibilities of the future in order to achieve a desired political state or retain a present one (Arendt 1977: 173-4). Even though it is the task of educators to preserve the stability of the world, they must also cherish the freedom and plurality inherent in new life. But the realisation of this plurality is not only affected by the content of education (which may or may not be regulated according to the dominant ideology). It is also the more subtle organisation of the entire school experience that may do so.

Consider school dress codes. It is primarily at school where children engage with one another and come to know one another. The manner of their interaction is conditioned by what the environment emphasizes. Thus, in school systems with a dress code, knowledge develops

strictly out of modes of interaction such as conversation or play. Without a shared dress code, though, identities often come wrought with worldly positions, reflecting economic and social differences. This worldly position, or *what* one is, may then take primacy over *who* one is or is becoming. In other words, it is not only in the content of education that an understanding and experience of the world develops. It is also not simply political organisation that affects the possibilities of political action rooted in the realisation of plurality. Other aspects of human living together also affect or condition political life.

Thus, the physical and social structures in which we live affect what aspects of the human condition we recognize, develop, or stultify. We may be plural beings capable of free action, but through our world we may accentuate other features of human existence such as social standing or biological needs. And even though human plurality is an ontological condition of being human (a life divorced from others is not a human life), the realisation thereof may be nurtured or neglected in our experiences of the world and others. In sum, the world, as a condition of human existence, certainly affects and is affected by the activities of human beings.

Arendt provides further examples of how the physical organisation of the tangible environment affects human beings in her critique of the conditions of worldlessness and world alienation. Through this critique, however, she also reveals the importance of the condition of worldliness and its quality of durability for the possibilities of political action.

Worldlessness coheres with the mode of the *animal laborans*. The activity of labour is characterised by the impact of necessity felt through the physical demands of life and survival upon the body. Through this experience, the *animal laborans* is ejected from the “publicity of the world” and “thrown back upon itself” (Arendt 1958: 118, 115). If human beings live entirely private lives, in the mode of the *animal laborans* for instance, then they are limited to the subjectivity of their own experiences. The commonality of the world and the different perspectives thereof remain concealed from sight and are thus undermined (1958: 58). The result is a situation of worldlessness, or the lack of a common world with others. Consequently, the world as a shared context constituting the condition of worldliness is central to the formation of relationships between human beings outside of the mode of labour. The relations possible for the *animal laborans*, as discussed in Chapter 1, are based either in the sameness of the species, or in the sphere of the family and household.

However, the experience of a common world or shared reference points, as stated previously, relies on the advent of durability through the work of *homo faber*. It is the relative permanence of the world that distinguishes it from the experience of life and the repetitive cycle of nature. It is also this durability that underlies the experience of the world as a shared concern by political actors. Hence, if the relative permanence of the world itself is either lacking or in doubt, then potential public spaces are threatened by worldlessness as an ensuing political phenomenon (Arendt 1958: 54).

Arendt's notion of world alienation, on the other hand, reveals the manner in which changes in the organisation of the world itself allows the principles of life to overwhelm the durability and potential meaningfulness of the world. World alienation occurs in conjunction with what Arendt calls the "rise of the social." This development entails, in short, the formation of society in the image of the family (Arendt 1958: 39-40); the infiltration of the public, political space by society and its interest in life (41); the concomitant decline of the common world and the spaces of appearance (209, 257); and the transformation of political action and distinction into behaviour and equalization in order to sustain the life process (40-45).

In Arendt's view of this development, the emergence of society into the public space begins with the "tangible loss of a privately owned share in the world" (1958: 257). The process of expropriation⁴¹ deprives certain groups of people of the property that both gives them a place in the world and protects them from the pressures of life (254-6). Thus the alteration of the physical organisation and experience of the tangible world transforms the condition of the world and the sense of togetherness therein. The result is the establishment of a "labouring poor" on the one hand, and the accumulation of wealth and capital through labour, on the other (1958: 256). This is the first step in world alienation.

In the second stage of world alienation, the family as an important social unit is replaced first by various social groups and finally by society as a whole (Arendt 1958: 40, 256). The structure of society is, however, based upon that of the family. The relationship between members of the group is that of ruler or "household head" over ruled. The equality inherent in society is also not that of the plurality of political actors appearing to one another. It is not the

⁴¹ This process occurred in England and Europe in the early Middle Ages, and Arendt regards it as the start of the modern age (1958: 61).

world as a durable, public space that is held in common and that forms the content of interactions and relationships. Because life is the underlying principle and interest held in common, members of society are equal and anonymous under this one interest (1958: 46-9). It is the life process and the survival of the species that informs society's "sense of togetherness".

In this condition of modern world alienation, the world does not necessarily fail to exist. It does, however, disappear in the experiences of "mass man". Just as the world is disclosed as a series of "in order to" relations in the work world, the world of a labouring society becomes a source of consumption and entertainment, revealing only life itself. The problem with mass society, Arendt explains, is that nothing tangible gathers them together (1958: 52-3). And in "The Crisis in Culture," she provides a scathing critique of this modern condition where life feeds unencumbered upon the things of the world.

The effect of this development upon the tangible and potential public spaces of appearance is important. Dossa describes this situation as the infiltration of the public realm by necessity (1989: 68). The freedom that should accompany entrance and appearance in the public is restrained by the domination of economic needs and pursuits. Martin Levin similarly understands this as the emasculation of the public by the social. This results not in a different kind of public, but simply in "private activities displayed in the open" (1979: 524; Arendt 1958: 134).

Richard Sennett, once a student of Arendt and now a prominent sociologist, has also examined in detail the transformation of the public world in general and of the faculty of work in particular. In *The Fall of Public Man*, Sennett shows how the transformation of trade and consumption in the late 19th century impacted the public realm. For example, the rise of the department store, with fixed prices and large volumes, creates the passive observer and buyer. Moreover, buyers are encouraged to invest personal meaning in objects. This public space thus becomes one of personal and passive experience, rather than a political (interactional) and world-focused one. In other words, the tangible public spaces that, although designated for exchange, hold the potential for human appearance and interaction, instead further undermine this potential.⁴² Interestingly, Sennett's more recent work, *The Culture of the New Capitalism* and

⁴² Kearney and Adachi (2010) provide another contemporary example of how the external environment affects human relationships and one's sense of self in a similar manner. They use Lacan's notion of the Symbolic Order and the production of identity to make sense of the role of information technology. Advanced Information and

The Craftsman, focus on the capabilities and responsibilities of *homo faber* in the fabrication of a world and the realisation of a meaningful human life.⁴³

In the most extreme instance, such as the experience of totalitarianism, the potential for realising human plurality and opening up public political spaces is almost entirely undermined. Mensch observes that, following the collapse of such a totalitarian state, the resulting society is left without a common context (2007: 43). “The state-approved context has vanished, but the individuals that remain *have no practice* in presenting one another with the alternatives that could replace it” (2007: 43; my emphasis). The final result is the inability to express difference to one another, to recognize “how their interpretations of a given situation both exceed one another and overlap” (2007: 44).⁴⁴ It is, simply put, the destruction of civil society. Of course, the reality of the totalitarian experience has shown that human beings are able to overcome such extreme limits, to open new spaces and begin again. However, the point to note here is that the worldly environment affects the possibilities not merely available, but acknowledged and lived by a particular community or human beings in general.

That Arendt describes our contemporary condition in terms of world alienation and the rise of the social does not negate the importance of an enquiry into the relationship between action and work or action and the durable world. Both worldlessness and world alienation call attention to the impact of the physical organisation of human existence upon the appearances and

Communication Systems (AICS), as the technological integration and interrelation of the globe, provides a new form of public space that overcomes spatial and temporal boundaries in terms of communication. AICS, through media, marketing, information access, etc., transmits, according to Kearney and Adachi, particular cultural constructions all over the globe (192). However, as an avenue for interaction, the experience of and engagement through AICS is infiltrated by the interests of powerful multinational corporations. The use of AICS is therefore penetrated by a consumerist ideology that pervades the process of identity-formation and one’s sense of self. In other words, users internalize the consumer identity as part of their own. This affects their relationships with others, their attitudes towards the public space, and, as Kearney and Adachi point out, undermines their capacity for autonomous decision-making (194). Or in Arendt’s terms, ‘public’ appearances are laden with this consumer attitude that undermines the actual disclosure of oneself.

⁴³ This may be understood as a response to the modern context of worldlessness or world alienation as described by Arendt. In both these works, Sennett focuses on the capacity and mentality of proper craftsmanship as the desire and ability “to do a job well” (2008: 9).

⁴⁴ As Biskowski notes, “without the enduring point of reference the world gives us, one belief system indeed becomes just as good as any other. We become ensnared in utter relativism” (1993: 882). Under totalitarianism, the world disappears and with it, the “sense of reality, the community’s common sense, and everyone’s capacity for good judgment” (882). “Their former means of orienting themselves is replaced by the inherent distortions of a single perspective without the reality check provided by the dialogical presence of other perspectives” (882).

What is therefore important is not only the ontological fact of beginning and the condition of plurality, but the establishment of the “habit of associating” to engender a concern for others and what is shared with others (Benhabib 1996: 71).

relationships between human beings. The durable world and the condition of worldliness similarly affect the possibilities of political action. In fact, the durable world is crucial in forming a sense of togetherness and making possible authentic human appearance and being.⁴⁵ This, however, suggests that the mode of *homo faber*, as the builder of this durable world, is perhaps more significant than that of political actors. In addition, Arendt's characterisation of work and the attitude of *homo faber* to the world and the public space of appearance also appear to undermine plurality and action.

4.2 Engaging the world as *homo faber*

The relationship between *homo faber* and the public space of appearance is the point of departure in this final analysis. This is a crucial distinguishing factor between action and work since the mentalities of *homo faber* and the men of action toward the public space are altogether different. As interaction, free politics must be public in order to be at all. The actor therefore appears in this space, and only through this appearance and the reciprocal appearances of others is a reality shared and confirmed.

Homo faber, on the other hand, does not trust plurality (Arendt 1977: 214). The work activity is therefore not open to the perspectives and opinions of others, which may undermine productivity. This reiterates the sense of sovereignty that accompanies this mode of being. *Homo faber* possesses the knowledge of the desired end in the form of a mental image. This predetermined goal is non-negotiable within the work process itself. And it is this image, rather than the opinions of those who are involved, that guides the process.

⁴⁵ If human existence is conditioned existence, and if the capacities of work and action depend on the specific 'state' of this 'condition,' we must ask whether this can or has changed. As Arendt states in *The Human Condition*, "I confine myself...to an analysis of the general human capacities [action, fabrication, labour, judgment] which grow out of the human condition and are permanent, that is, which cannot be irretrievably lost *so long as the human condition itself is not changed*" (1958: 6; my emphasis). However, if *The Human Condition* illuminates what Arendt calls 'world alienation,' this implies a possible destruction of the condition of worldliness, which would necessarily affect the conditions of plurality and natality. And, even if the ontological conditions of plurality and natality cannot be extinguished, the possibility remains that these can become hidden from human sight completely.

In such a situation, our ability to judge the world, to observe and render our approval or disapproval, is dislocated not only from an experience of the world as a durable space, but also from that which gives it meaning, namely, a place within a plurality of equals who are able to recognize one another as such. The concluding significance of this study is thus to motivate a renewed commitment to the appearance of human plurality and worldly durability. In other words, a common durable world as the location of meaning, but a meaning conveyed only through the ceaseless efforts of distinct yet equal individuals to show a care worthy of remembrance.

It has been noted that Benhabib suggests an overlap of activities. This implies that political interaction could possibly arise during the production process. But to what extent does the politicisation of the work activity retain the characteristics and principles of action and work? In such an event, the conflation of action and work may undermine the nature of each. The exercise of action and freedom, for example, is only possible within relationships that are non-sovereign. The initial work experience, however, entails the relation of ruler and ruled (primarily of the maker over him or herself), thus undermining the potential for a genuine political space. Although *homo faber* engages with others through speech, this is merely “an exchange between productive and creative individuals” whose speech is “primarily utilitarian” (Dossa 1989: 57). *Who* we each are is therefore supplemented with what we make and accomplish. Moreover, in the politicisation of work, the underlying principle of utility may itself come into question.⁴⁶ But this would only reveal the inherent meaninglessness thereof. As Arendt asks, quoting Lessing, “what is the use of use?” (1958: 154). It therefore seems that work cannot become political *and* retain utility as a concern. But it is through this mentality that *homo faber* is able to fabricate the things of the world.

Stated otherwise, it is not in their political capacities that human beings build a worldly artifice with durable things in it. It is within the specific mode of *homo faber* that human beings are effective and productive. *Homo faber*'s relation to the world is thus to produce and preserve it as a relatively permanent artifice. The advent of durability confirms the reliability of the work activity and the sovereignty of the maker. Coupled with the distrust of plurality, this suggests that *homo faber* may produce a world that is conducive to or maintains the continued experience of fabrication. Hence, the craftsman preserves a world of relations based on the context of production, use, and exchange. And the human relations preserved in such a worldly context are those of master to workers (in the activity), of merchants and traders, etc. On what basis, then,

⁴⁶ Although the activity is meaningful in itself, actors must still be interacting on the basis of some shared, worldly concern. Such concern ultimately focuses on what should or should not appear in the world as a public space of appearance. This encompasses questions on meaning and beauty (see Chapter 4), according to which the principle of utility cannot be justified.

Recall that *homo faber* cannot instil meaning in goods. S/he cannot distinguish between utility and meaningfulness, or “in order to” and “for the sake of” (Arendt 1958: 154). When utility is regarded as an end in itself, it becomes subject to the test of meaningfulness. But the unending circle of the means-end mentality cannot provide a justification for utility as an end; it is meaningless.

may *homo faber* attend to the appearance or actualisation of human plurality? Or in respect of the utilitarian mentality, to what end would *homo faber* designate a public space for political action?

Working from Arendt's definition of "public" as the authentic appearance and disclosure of human beings, such a space must be directly purposed for the realisation of plurality and the exercise of political action. But the attitude of *homo faber* in general, and the distrust of plurality in particular, suggest that *homo faber* may conceive of a public space on entirely different terms than that of political actors. In the mode of *homo faber*, a public space of appearance is first of all understood as a place for the appearance of fabricated goods. Public spaces within the durable world are therefore conducive to the appearances of things. Such spaces are not intended for the authentic disclosure of identities and the sharing of opinions, but rather for the exchange of expertise and products on the basis of interest. Consequently, *homo faber* leaves the privacy of the work activity and enters this public market as merchant and trader (1958: 163).⁴⁷ In fact, according to Arendt, *homo faber* relates to other people primarily through the process of exchange (1958: 160). The appearances of those involved in such activity thus remains inauthentic in both Arendt's and Heidegger's terms. Entering this space means doing so as producers, traders, buyers and consumers, but not as free and unique persons (1958: 209).

The relegation of the public space to a place of exchange not only affects human appearances and relations, but also devalues the things being exchanged. The value of a product may now only be determined in relation to some other thing. It is a commodity with no objective value in itself (Arendt 1958: 165; Villa 1996: 137). However, prior to such devaluation, the standard according to which *homo faber* constructs a world of things remains utility or instrumentality (1958: 152). This entails functional existence in the world. It encompasses Heidegger's notion of "everydayness." A use object is therefore always understood within the framework of means and ends, of what it is useful for ("in order to"), and escapes the possibility of meaning ("for the sake of"). Although the fabricator is concerned with ends, the meaningfulness of such ends remains always beyond him or her. The result is that *homo faber* conceives of "man the user" as the ultimate end (1958: 155).

⁴⁷ The developments in production and manufacturing, and the transformation of objects from things of use to commodities for exchange are of course important. However, within Arendt's view of *homo faber*, the things of use are informed by an experience of the privacy of usage (1958: 163), and things of exchange are influenced by but also reiterate a public relation based on private interests.

This indicates that the reason to build a space conducive to the exercise of action would first have to answer the question of usefulness. Such activity cannot be understood, in the mode of *homo faber*, as meaningful in itself and therefore done for the sake of itself. Within the utilitarian framework, every end can only be engaged as a means to a further end. But to consider the occurrence of political action as a necessary “end” for which a space must be designed or erected is not only beyond the capacity of this mode of being (because it distrusts plurality). It also undermines the very notion of political action as something meaningful outside of the means-end calculus. The appearance of human beings understood in terms of usefulness undermines the sense of togetherness that accompanies and actualizes human plurality and action.

And yet, the public spaces directly acknowledged and formed through the capacity of *homo faber* are permeated by the attitude and principles that Arendt attributes to this faculty. But Arendt also insists, as I have done, that *homo faber* is primarily concerned with durability. This concern reflects and is addressed through the desire and capacity to cherish and preserve the world against the constant onslaught of necessity. It stands opposed to the desire and capacity of political actors to begin something new in the world. I return to this relationship between preservation and beginning, or permanence and freedom, in Chapter 3.

What is also essential, though, is that *homo faber* builds a durable world, and yet remains intrinsically destructive of that same durability. When use itself becomes the content of meaning, the intrinsic value of all things, as well as of possible reference points, is destroyed (1958: 155). Arendt makes no effort to deny or eliminate the paradoxical nature of this human capacity. It is perhaps rather a noteworthy indication of the potential interrelatedness of action and work, to which I also return in Chapter 3. The concern with durability in the public space of appearance is, however, revealing of a further principle of work: beauty.

The relative durability of things attests to their ability to withstand the consuming life process, but also to withstand the encroachment of instrumental interests that slowly use things up. In other words, produced works are not merely intended for exchange or utility, or understood in terms of their use value; they are also regarded on the basis of beauty. Although I will address the notion of beauty in more depth in Chapters 3 and 4, a few important points must be noted here.

First, Arendt tells us that objects are necessarily evaluated in terms of their relative beauty by the mere fact of their appearances in the world (Arendt 1977: 206). When designated as beautiful, such objects transcend their function as use objects and are “removed from the processes of consumption and usage” (1977: 206). This need for “removal” reiterates the fact that such objects, for example works of art, also require a public space for appearance.⁴⁸ To protect artworks as public things against the private interests underlying ownership and exchange, art requires that we build and designate public spaces into the structures of our actual world. These may include museums, temples, or any public place where the work is protected against private desires and use (1977: 215).

However, a public space utilised for the protection and appearance of works of art is not necessarily a public, *political* space wherein human beings appear and act. The existence of the former does not guarantee the latter. Even in producing beautiful works of art, *homo faber* remains concerned with the appearance of preconceived ideas within fabricated objects, rather than the appearances of human beings. In other words, a concern with beauty does not necessarily circumvent the primacy given to the desired end. One must therefore ask whether the appearances of beautiful objects realize human plurality and make possible political action or not. Before this question can be investigated, it is important to take stock of the relationships between the capacity of action, the capacity of work, and the durable world.

5. Concluding thoughts

Arendt’s portrayal of the relationship between the durable, fabricated world and the possibilities of action suggest that the world built by *homo faber* is a central influence on such possibilities. The exercise of action and freedom require first the realisation or actualisation of the condition of plurality. Plurality indicates that human beings are, by virtue of natality, all the same in so far

⁴⁸ It is significant that, in terms of *poiēsis*, Arendt accords the same utilitarian faculty to artists as to other producers. She appeals to both Greek and Roman attitudes towards artists (although not to art) as unworthy of citizenship or cultural esteem (1977: 212-213). In “The Crisis in Culture”, she elaborates on the growing involvement of artists in political and therefore public matters, which has become a reality since the demise of proper politics. But the artist also does not trust the public space because s/he works within the sheltered spaces of the private realm (214). Artists, then, have an inherent distrust of the engagement with plural others. This has problematic implications for the type of relations with others that the artist understands him or herself to have. Arendt does, however, distinguish between the artist and the art work. The art work is closer in kind to the political actor than the artist. The art work also needs public appearance in order to fulfil its proper being (215). Thus, works of art and political actors appear together in the public space. I discuss the relationship between actors and artworks in Chapter 4.

as each person is a unique beginning. However, the realisation of this condition requires a sense of togetherness that acknowledges the contingency and non-sovereignty of our being in the world, and which respects the authentic appearances of human beings. When such plurality is actualised, human beings open up a public space of appearance through the sharing of words and deeds.

Furthermore, through its durability, the world becomes a common context or reference point for human beings. As such, it provides shared interests and concerns. The things of the world relate and separate human beings, and may thus cultivate a sense of togetherness. However, the durable world is, on the basis of Arendt's own elucidation, foremost a fabricated world. The importance of a durable, *fabricated* world to the realisation of plurality and the exercise of political action and freedom therefore suggests that the faculty of work may be particularly significant in determining the possibilities of action. However, this is problematic for several reasons.

First, the attitude and mentality accompanying the mode of being of *homo faber* appears to be contrary to that of action. *Homo faber* builds the world and the things in it through an instrumental approach and understanding. The world as a public space is also understood as a space for the appearance of durable, fabricated objects. The world, in other words, seems to challenge rather than protect and preserve the possibilities of political action. Second, in reference to the significance of durability, the role of *homo faber* as the builder of the durable world appears to take precedence over the capacities of political actors.

Finally, Arendt seems to give political actors few ways in which to effectively care for and engage with the tangible, durable world. Recall from Chapter 1 that action involves appearance and performance. It is meaningful as a self-contained activity, without purpose or function beyond appearance itself. Moreover, the notion of freedom as a non-sovereign activity of beginning seems to limit the possibilities of political actors engaging in the world.

In the next Chapter, I explore further the relationship between political actors and the world. Arendt's concept of *amor mundi* confirms that political actors are in fact concerned with the durable, fabricated world. However, I also look at Arendt's portrayal of action as inherently frail. The capacity of political actors to effectively care for the durable world and the public space of appearance again comes into question.

Chapter 3:

The relationship between *praxis* and *poiēsis*

1. Introduction

The significance of the shared durable world emerges in the relationship between *praxis*, plurality, and the public space of appearance. Political action requires a sense of togetherness and a respect for the appearances of others as equals. These two conditions also, however, rely on the sharing of the durable world as common context and concern. In light of the discussion on this relationship in Chapter 2, it is necessary to ask how *praxis* may be a mode of engagement with the durable world without being wholly dependent upon or undermined by *poiēsis*.

Before doing so, it is also important to note that Arendt's effort to highlight the essential differences between the activities of the *vita activa* does not suggest that these must remain wholly detached from one another. As particular sensibilities or ways of approaching the world, it is not likely that Arendt intends for there to remain a distinct line between them. Since Arendt's emphasis is on the primary significance of action, it is also easy to assume that she intends for action to be at the top of a hierarchy. But this cannot be the case. It is an oversimplification that reduces the tension between activities through the sovereign rule of one sensibility over the others. And this is exactly what is impossible in the realm and exercise of proper action as freedom. One cannot, therefore, dismiss the critical differences between activities in favour of a perceived unity or harmony of an integrated hierarchy. In what follows, the relationship between *praxis* and *poiēsis* is considered in light of the tensions and contradictions between them.

I begin by examining Arendt's notions of *amor mundi* and acting from principle as these illustrate the extent to which political actors are in fact concerned with the durable world. This is followed with a brief overview of the frailty that Arendt ascribes to action,⁴⁹ as well as her suggested solutions to this frailty inherent in the faculty of action itself. Promise-making and forgiveness are two specific actions that allow actors a degree of power over the unpredictability and irreversibility of their deeds without undermining plurality and freedom. However, Arendt

⁴⁹ These aspects primarily emphasize the performative characteristics of action. Thus, combined with the fragile characteristics of action as unpredictable, irreversible, and boundless, Arendt seems to give political actors few ways in which to effectively care for and engage with the tangible, durable world.

also resorts to the faculty of remembrance, to an extent an aspect of fabrication, to salvage action. It is specifically through remembrance, she argues, that human relationships, events, and beginnings become a meaningful part of the human world. But remembrance as fabrication seems to reiterate the problematic dominance of *homo faber*. I conclude with a discussion or reformulation of the relationship between *praxis* and *poiēsis* in light of the role of remembrance and the tension between freedom and permanence.

2. Acting in and for the world

2.1 *Amor mundi* and acting on principle

Arendt conceptualises the relationship between political actors and the world in terms of *amor mundi* or love for the world. *Amor mundi* encompasses a care for the public spaces of political action and authentic human appearance, as well as for the durable world which holds us in common and orients our activities. As a care for the world as a space for the mutual appearances of actors but also as a shared context, *amor mundi* opens the question of human association.

Human beings must first tend to the world primarily experienced as strange. Each person is born into the world as a newcomer, a stranger or outsider (Hammer 2000: 86; Roodt 2005: 207). The world is therefore not yet a home. But it is not simply through the creation of an objective and durable environment, through the making of a house for example, that the world becomes a home (Villa 1996: 93; Hammer 2000: 86). We do so rather through a care that engages the world “as a horizon of meaning” (Villa 1996: 93). This care is expressed most clearly in political action on the basis of *amor mundi* and worldly principles. This kind of engagement transcends the functionality of the world and the instrumental activity of work. The world thus becomes meaningful through principled action.

Principles inspire and fuel action (Biskowski 1993: 870; Kateb 2000: 147). And it is in the manifestation of principles that action as public appearance, performance, and beginning translates into care for the world. Arendt utilizes the term, *principium*, defined by St. Augustine as the beginning of the world, to describe this engagement with the world as meaningful (Arendt

1958: 177n.3; 1990: 212-3).⁵⁰ In such engagement or principled action, a particular principle informs and determines the experience and meaning of the world.

Care for the world is therefore not an emotional or sentimental love, but a principled choice. As Kateb explains, “the moment I act politically I am not concerned with me (the good) but with the world” (2000: 144). More precisely, political actors are motivated by the possibilities of appearance and immortality to express that which they believe should appear and remain in the public world. Principles are therefore not motives or interests deriving from the private individual. Rather, they “inspire [the individual]...from without” (Arendt 1977: 150-1).

Principles are also not goals to be accomplished, nor are they exhausted in the process of expression (Arendt 1977: 151). The display of a principle is unlike the accomplished goal that denotes the end of the process of *poiēsis*. In *poiēsis*, the aim is fully actualised in the end product. However, principles manifest in *praxis* as performance, where the only “aim” of the activity is disclosure itself. Knauer explains the difference thus: “While all action is likely to involve an element of purposiveness, it is not in virtue of that purposiveness that it is action in Arendt’s special sense. In fact, A is action properly so-called insofar as by manifesting P, *the meaning of A transcends the pursuit of G*” (1980: 726; my emphasis). In other words, action is meaningful in relation to the principle that emerges in the words and deeds of the actor, rather than in any specific aim or content.

The difference between the principle and the content of an action stems from the nature of action as performance. Principles may include honour, courage, or equality, but also fear, distrust and hatred (Arendt 1977: 151).⁵¹ When we act from a particular principle, such as honour for example, it is actualized in our words and deeds. We do not pursue honour, but act

⁵⁰ In *On Revolution*, Arendt states that principle and beginning are coeval; the principle validates the beginning, saving it “from its inherent arbitrariness” (Arendt 1990: 212).

⁵¹ According to Kateb, “acting from the principle of fear or distrust or hatred manifests freedom”, but it also “helps to destroy the very relationships or procedures that provide the frame or setting for one’s future speech, for the continuation of authentic politics, the politics of freedom” (2000: 138). As noted in Chapter 1 (see Footnotes 20 and 26), Kateb is in fact extremely critical of the moral laxity that he reads in Arendt’s notion of political action.

But that Arendt allows for principles of anger and hatred does not necessarily indicate the lack of any kind of limits or standards for political action. The fact that principles should derive from *amor mundi* as love for the world confirms this. To care for the world is to care for that which is outside of the self, and thus about that which is shared with others. As Dossa explains, morality as normally understood is about the self, not about human relationships, which is Arendt’s political concern (1989: 91). It is the fact of human plurality that entails a respect for the appearances of others. As will be shown in Chapter 4, the choice of principles and the greatness of performances may be balanced by the role of spectators who judge appearances for the world.

honourably in all that we do. Care for the world *as action* means that principles are manifest through lived example (1977: 243).⁵² The principle of goodness, for instance, appears in the exemplary words and deeds of Jesus, and courage in the life of Achilles (243). Arendt also insists that courage is “indispensable” for the exercise of action (Arendt 1977: 154). Although *amor mundi* motivates the political actor to enter the public realm (1958: 41, 56), it is courage that emerges with the public appearance of the actor. In other words, it takes courage to step out of the protection of the private and into the light of the public where it is not life but the world that matters (1958: 36).⁵³ And since the emphasis of such action is on the appearance of principles through performance, public action indicates a care for public appearance.

It also, however, takes courage to speak and “insert one’s self into the world” (Arendt 1958: 186) without ever truly knowing who one discloses. The political actor risks both life and identity in the pursuit of worldly principles. But it is only in doing so that the unique identities of the actors are disclosed. According to Kateb, the articulation of one’s principles is in fact an “expansion” and “filling” of one’s self (2000: 138). He further describes this self as a worldly self, where “one does not play oneself; rather one enacts one’s commitment and thereby shows who one is” (2000: 138). Rooted in public appearance, this self is not understood in terms of inner desires or motives (Kateb 1977: 149). Only that which appears in the world constitutes the worldly self. Thus, a principle can neither transcend the world nor the unique identity of the actor, but rather reveal these as they stand together. Knauer similarly clarifies that, “By showing what one stands for, one reveals who one is” (1980: 725).

However, the disclosure of a *who* always remains rooted in the ontological condition of natality and the capacity of beginning. The disclosure of the actor through the manifestation of worldly principles is each time a beginning. For Arendt, to step into the public world is itself a kind of second birth that actualizes freedom. In short, principled action, regardless of the particular content, expresses freedom *as principle*. Arendt states directly that, “with the creation of man, the principle of beginning came into the world itself, which, of course, is only another way of saying that the principle of freedom was created when man was created but not before” (1958: 177). This principle also “lays down the law” for the actions that follow (Arendt 1990:

⁵² The only form of persuasion of an ethical principle or a philosophical truth, “without perversion or distortion”, is through lived example (Arendt 1977: 243).

⁵³ “The courageous man thrives on risking his life for something more permanent than himself” (Dossa 1989: 87).

212). In other words, all action is guided by the principle of freedom. And all principles manifest freedom to some degree (Kateb 2000: 138). The capacities to act, to enter into the public world, to choose a principle, and to begin a process, all point to human freedom as beginning. Love for the world through principled action therefore amounts to a care for public appearance and freedom.

And yet the world, composed of both human association and artifice, is the *sine qua non* of principles. This is evident in the roles of both the common world and human plurality in kindling and illuminating principles. Firstly, a public self or principled action appears only by virtue of the presence of others. It is only through our appearances *to others* as equals that our concern with and efforts in the world appear and can be meaningful. It is also only through the presence of others that we are assured of the reality of our own appearances and are motivated to act. Furthermore, by virtue of this public appearance, principled action as lived example inspires others to act and care for the world, not because it benefits the self, but because it benefits the shared world. In other words, principled action involves “a free being standing up in public for the sake of some principle of human association” (Knauer 1980: 725).

The concern with human association asks how we should live together, as well as how the world should look and sound. The world relates or separates us on the basis of our worldly principles. These concern the objective world as it is shared and as it appears, rather than subjective interests, qualities, or needs. Our answers to this question of what should appear in the public space of appearance, and what should constitute the durable world, appear in our actions and produce the relationships that bind us together. Thus, even *who* one is can only be understood by others in light of the one thing held in common: the world (Knauer 1980: 725). It is love for the world that determines to whom and to what I belong (Roodt 2006: 206). Although actors rely on and care for human plurality, fellow actors evaluate actions and performances on the basis of worldly principles, or in the interest of the public world.

Fellow actors therefore consider the principles embodied in one another by whether the lived examples are worthy of the public world. To care for the world is to be oriented to that which is outside of ‘I’ and ‘us’. It is a care for that which is *inter-est*, or between us (Arendt 1990: 86; Arendt 1958: 182). Such a concern is also a concern with that which will outlast our momentary appearances and mortal lives.

A concern for human association is, as Grace Jantzen claims, a commitment to the lives of those who will inhabit this world after us (1998: 152). It is a respect for the “constant influx of newcomers” (152). In other words, in public action, we are not concerned only with our immediate fellow actors or our immediate, shared context. In fact, in acting and reacting, in appearing to one another and expressing worldly principles, we are necessarily thinking beyond ourselves. This includes the private, individual self, as well as those who I presently relate to. It is a care for the future of the world that inspires men and women to act (Arendt 1958: 57, 182). Arendt makes clear that, “if the world is to contain a public space, it cannot be erected for one generation and planned for the living only” (1958: 55). Action therefore illuminates a worldly concern and as such reaches out over generations into both past and future.⁵⁴

It is also often only through the mediation of the durable world that actors appear to future newcomers. It is through the durability of the world that our actions and principles can transcend our mortality and temporality. Such permanence does not simply provide a means by which to save action from its own transitory nature though; it even inspires it. The Greek *polis* is a case in point. “Men initially entered the public realm because they wanted something of their own or something they had in common with others to be more permanent than their earthly lives” (Arendt 1958: 55). In other words, they did not simply act for recognition, but for the possibility of being a part of determining and making the world, of adding to the human artifice. Thus, care for durability is also a primary principle informing action as care for the world.

It may therefore be concluded that principled action entails the principle of freedom and beginning, as well as the principle of permanence. But how may the desire for freedom as beginning coincide with a desire for permanence? This paradoxical aspect of political action in the world is also not neatly assuaged by the capacities of action either. The manifestation of *amor mundi* in lived principles reiterates action as performance and appearance to others. Every appearance and disclosure of care is as ephemeral as the words that constitute it. Moreover, the distinction between action and fabrication seems to leave political actors with few ways to care for the world in an effective or productive manner. The exercise of action thus remains

⁵⁴ “My worldly existence always forces me to take account of a past when I was not yet and a future when I shall be no more” (Jaspers, as quoted in Arendt 1978a: 193).

threatened by the problematic relation expounded in Chapter 2. This is further magnified by the frailty that Arendt ascribes to action.

2.2 The frailty of *praxis*

Unpredictability, irreversibility, and instability are the prices to be paid for action as freedom. As the most authentic mode of human being, action is paradoxically also the most fragile. Arendt's actor has the ability to initiate something new, to say the unexpected, and to do the excellent. However, no actor can control or direct his or her actions beyond acting itself. A closer look at this fragile aspect of action will elucidate Arendt's concept of *praxis* as freedom, as well as reiterate the complex relation between *praxis* and the durable world.

In Chapter 1, *praxis* is characterized by the public sharing of words and deeds between individuals as equals. Action as interaction entails and reveals freedom as the capacity to begin something new in the world. It also entails and reveals human plurality, which further illuminates freedom as non-sovereignty. Action as interaction is therefore not only performance, but also a process of action and reaction. An actor's words and deeds inspire reactions in others who remain wholly unpredictable. The initiated process and the reactions that follow remain subject to the fact that all actors have the capacity to begin by virtue of being equally free and unique persons (Knauer 1980: 724). No person's input or reaction can be predetermined or wholly expected. Each human being is also born and acts into a world and web of relationships that surpasses the knowable framework of the immediate actors.

Since action instigates further actions and begins processes, one may argue that reactions are merely effects of prior causes. But if actions were merely effects within a causal relation, then these could be determined on the basis of what the first cause (or first action) initiates. Since each actor has the capacity to act anew and do the unexpected, reactions in the form of a particular word or deed can never be entirely known beforehand.⁵⁵

It is precisely because phenomena embedded in human affairs cannot be determined from prior "causes" that they remain inexplicable and even incomprehensible (Vollrath 2000: 167-8).

⁵⁵ As such, any insinuation of a causal relation is derivable only through hindsight. The application of a causal relation, however, indicates the human apprehension in the face of the contingency that Arendt believes defines human being and freedom.

The meaning of a political event, for example, transcends all past “causes,” and “this past itself only comes into being with the event itself” (2000: 168). Arendt explains: “Only when something irrevocable has happened can we even try to trace its history backward. The event illuminates its own past, it can never be deduced from it” (as quoted in Vollrath 2000: 168). Words, deeds and events emerge “from a darkness” into the light of the public (2000: 169). In this light an action appears as a new beginning originating in the public appearance of the actor. It is specifically this public appearance that marks the origin or beginning of the action or event. Prior thoughts, interests or conditions that may have motivated an action remain submerged in darkness, thereby retaining the “originative quality” of the appearing action (2000: 169).⁵⁶

The tendency to see necessity and causation in action processes, Arendt considers history as an example, conceals the fact that the events and deeds that constitute them are arbitrary and haphazard (1977: 238). It is an “existential illusion” to believe that things *necessarily* happened as they did. To embrace such illusion is to pursue certainty and security at the cost of human non-sovereignty, the capacity for beginning, and plurality. For Arendt, arbitrariness is the worthwhile price of freedom (1977: 238). Furthermore, the unpredictability of consequences adheres with the understanding of action as an activity taken up for its own sake (Arendt 1958: 154-6). Political actions are meaningful in and as a moment of appearance. However, this still means that human beings as political actors are doomed to be sufferers of the unknown consequences of their actions (1958: 233-4).

Given the unpredictability of action and interaction, this mode of being is also quite unreliable for instilling a particular change in the world (Arendt 1958: 244; Arendt 1977: 84). Actors’ words and deeds may instigate change, but the eventual effects thereof are beyond the control of the initial actors. It is for this reason that Plato does not want to concede the future of a political community to the unreliable and unpredictable process of deliberation as the sharing of views. This would amount to making questions of politics subject to both opinion and fortuitous experience. It is therefore because of the frail and unproductive aspect of action that Plato divides the components of action into beginning and completing. Only then can control be exercised over the realm of human affairs and a “proper” political government and city-state can

⁵⁶ Only that which appears publicly and thus can be confirmed by others constitutes reality.

be realized (See Chapter 1). Without this control, Arendt's political actors are further subject to the irreversibility of action.

Once set into motion, an action process comprised of further reactions and unpredictable consequences cannot simply be reversed. There is no objective thing or material product, as in *poiēsis*, which can be destroyed in order to undo a particular event or appearance. What action 'makes' extends no further than relationships (Arendt 1958: 191). Consider action as speech. Speaking in the public, political space means that one's words are immediately heard. "There is always the possibility of the unexpected word" (Birmingham 2006: 33), but once spoken, the actor cannot simply recant his or her words. Each actor then indeed becomes a sufferer of what he or she unintentionally initiates, and of *who* he or she unknowingly discloses.

Finally, action is boundless. Although the realm of human affairs acquires a degree of stability through the institution of laws and territorial boundaries, action retains the capacity to "force open all limitations and cut across all boundaries" (Arendt 1958: 190). Again, the processes of action and reaction do not necessarily remain within a particular "graspable framework of circumstances", but stretch the web of relationships in unpredictable and boundless ways and directions (1958: 190). The boundlessness and haphazardness of human affairs and political phenomena therefore disclose an open future. And it is this openness of the future that further invigorates human beings into action (Dossa 1989: 82).

Together, boundlessness, unreliability, irreversibility, and unpredictability accompany an actor's entrance into the common world. Actors engage the world in transitory and fragile ways. The extent to which actors may be able to care for the world as a durable public space, to instil change or realize decisions remains limited by the actor's role as sufferer rather than executor, as performer rather than maker. Action is therefore not directly effective in the world. This point is taken up as a crucial limitation to Arendt's notion of politics by Arendt scholar, Mary Dietz. Dietz specifically reformulates the relationship and distinction between action and work in order to assuage what she describes as the purposelessness of action politics.

2.3 Dietz's notion of instrumental action

In "The Slow Boring of Hard Boards," Mary Dietz argues that Arendt's notion of *praxis* as a political theory must be practically viable. Dietz, however, finds Arendt's characterisation of

praxis inadequate as a mode of politics due to its purposelessness. This argument reverberates with my own thesis that the delineation of action in terms of ephemeral and fragile appearances and performances suggests a limitation to action's effectiveness in the tangible world.

Dietz approaches this fragility from Arendt's characterization of the activity of work.⁵⁷ According to Dietz, Arendt's notion of action is inadequately purposeless due to Arendt's narrow and negative conception of work and instrumentality. Her aim is therefore to salvage what she believes to be the positive aspects of instrumentality, the emancipatory possibilities of work, and the purposefulness of action. Through an examination of Simone Weil's view of work as purposeful performance, Dietz develops her own notion of "methodical action" that incorporates a positive instrumentality. In doing so, Dietz integrates and overlaps the modes of activities in order to arrive at what she sees as a practically useful theory of politics. In this section, I examine Dietz's argument in order to determine whether her suggestion is viable in lieu of certain elements that I believe are vital in Arendt's schema.

According to Dietz, Arendt views both purposefulness and instrumentality negatively and in association with the activity of work. Arendt's *homo faber*, she explains, violently dominates and manipulates nature (1994: 877). Nature must be conquered, while the world remains a mere "construction site" where the sovereign maker deposits the products of work. All work activity is also evaluated on the basis of successful production of a particular end or the achievement of a particular solution (877-8).

The instrumentality that Dietz attributes to Arendt's *homo faber* further indicates that everything is understood only within the means-end framework. *Homo faber* asserts control over all means in the aim toward a particular end (877-8). In a work process fully controlled and routinised, no relations are possible amongst those involved. Everything involved in the process becomes mere means toward a particular end, but each end is also understood only in terms of its function as a further means. According to Dietz, Arendt's admonition of this aspect of work informs her negative understanding of all types of instrumentality.

⁵⁷ My argument approaches this issue from within Arendt's theory, showing that *praxis* requires a durable public world. Dietz on the other hand begins with the fact that a political theory must be applicable in the modern world, and more specifically in our post-1989 political context. Thus, for Dietz, the relevance of Arendt's theory depends on its coherence and applicability. I, however, address the issue as an inherent problem or contradiction within the theory itself. In other words, even though Arendt may also argue that the exercise of the kind of *praxis* that she defends is not necessarily a real possibility, especially considering the modern context (see Chapter 2, Section 4.1), her move to recapture the elements of action may still be tested conceptually, especially with relation to work.

Dietz further argues that it is on the basis of this view of purposefulness and instrumentality that Arendt distinguishes action from work. Actors remain free from the domination of any given ends. This comes forth in the notion of freedom as the capacity to begin something wholly unprecedented, as well as in the non-sovereignty that underlies human plurality. This purposelessness also appears in Arendt's view of political action as self-contained performance. Taking up a purposeful, goal-oriented task, which characterizes work, therefore conceals individual identities, undercuts the significance of appearance, and destroys the possibility of meaning.

It is on the basis of this purposelessness of action that Dietz raises the question of political efficacy. In her emphasis on the differences between action and work, Arendt seems to deny political actors purposeful and effective participation in the world. She even dismisses legislation and administration as aspects of work rather than as proper politics (880). But these activities constitute for Dietz significant day-to-day political "work". She is adamant that, even if Arendt's task is simply to salvage human appearance and freedom as non-sovereignty, as a political theory it should be tested as a viable alternative to the contemporary experience of "politics". She is therefore hesitant to accept a politics that

cannot entail the *practical* confrontation of the situation [of automatism] that threatens the human condition most. Within the space of appearances, Arendt's citizens can neither search for the best specification of the problem before them nor, it seems, pursue solutions to the problem once it is identified, for such activities...[are] *homo faber's* prerogative (1994: 881-2).

Dietz concludes that politics must involve a degree of purposefulness in order to be able to properly respond to the challenges of the world.

In addressing this challenge, Dietz finds in Simone Weil's notion of *homo methodus* a more positive and useful view of work and instrumentality. In Weil's understanding, work is the process of responding to the world as a range of challenges and obstacles (Dietz 1994: 876). The fabrication process is an action process of problem-oriented strategizing. Tools are also not instruments of domination but of "navigation" (876-7). A sailor, to borrow from Weil's own example, does not dominate the sea, but manages the difficulties of the sea in a methodical manner (877). However, the sailor has no specific destination; it is not the completion of the task that matters. Rather, it is the task itself, the methodical process of problem identification and

application of a particular strategy that is significant. Solutions may fail, as long as one engages in the process of responding to and engaging with the world and the challenges presented. Arendt's insistence that the activity of work remains concerned wholly with the end product therefore undermines this experiential aspect of the process.

But Weil's formulation is not free from criticism either. Dietz recognizes that Weil's *homo methodus* strategizes and arrives at a solution independently from others. If, for example, a work team faces a particular problem, each member would develop his or her own solution, and together they would enact the best solution "unanimously" (1994: 878). In other words, although Weil provides a more positive account of instrumentality, she does so at the cost of the freedom and plurality present in Arendt's notion of political action. For Weil, human freedom appears in the capacity of the individual as Cartesian subject to act purposefully and with full control of the self (877). In Arendt's schema, it is through deliberation and *reaction* to one another that "solutions" may be developed together. Action is specifically not about acting as one (Canovan 1983: 109-110), but about acting and reacting, both to the world and to others as distinct equals. Even though Weil's approach focuses on the work process as a positive interaction between *homo methodus* and the world of tools and obstacles, it does not seem to posit a different relationship between the human beings involved than in Arendt's delineation of work.

Dietz does not, however, defend Weil's schema as an alternative to Arendt's. Rather, she integrates certain elements of both. For example, she utilizes Weil's positive account of work and the notion of purposefulness as engagement rather than domination. She then integrates this position with Arendt's notion of action as non-sovereign, plural and meaningful deliberation. Thus, Dietz proposes a notion of politics as "methodical action" in which problem identification occurs in the continuous and simultaneous process of "knowing and doing" (1994: 880). Action becomes purpose-driven insofar as a particular challenge is identified and reacted to *in a methodical manner*. It is not successful achievement of purposes that matters though. And the response is not a routine application of a solution or "repeated blueprint" (880). Rather, every challenge requires a new analysis, through discussion and deliberation, of what can or should be done. Similarly, every implementation may bring new challenges that require an openness to the unpredictable and the ability to improvise. Finally, Dietz argues that, whereas Arendt's notion of politics is "more about the spectacular appearance of personal identities in a public realm," in

methodical action it is the purposes that actors pursue that matter (881). Thus the category of means and ends can be utilized as a mode of thinking in which purposes are identified and pursued without “violent objectification” of all else present (880).

The kinds of purposes that Dietz has in mind here are distinct from the presentation of principles discussed earlier. Dietz specifically rejects the notion, as proposed by Biskowski, that it is in the presentation of principles motivated by *amor mundi* that actors communicate purposes (Dietz 1994: 885n.24). Worldly principles comprise only the “substantive ethical content” of action but not any kind of “substantive cognitive content” (885). This distinction seems to reiterate two aspects of the world: the world of appearances for which actors care through the display of principles, and the world as a tangible reality comprised of cities, laws, and technology, for example.

That action concerns the world as a durable public space was discussed in Chapter 2. It is relevant here since it supports Dietz’s argument that Arendt’s political actors have no practically effective capacity in the world. However, to suggest a methodical action that allows for the pursuit of purposes without an emphasis on successful achievement of ends may also not be up to the task. Without such achievement, the challenge for efficacy (which motivates Dietz’s project) is not met. Dietz insists, however, that the process of discussion and application of solutions will still be meaningful. But the kind of methodical thinking proposed may require that the results of the process inform the method considered in future challenges. In other words, within the mode of instrumental strategizing and “acting” in pursuit of purposes, the failure to achieve a set goal may itself be interpreted in terms of instrumentality. Although one could continue to deliberate on ways in which to achieve a particular purpose, at some point the deliberative process itself must also be evaluated on the basis of achieving said purpose. A new, perhaps less deliberative method may be considered the next time a challenge arises.⁵⁸ Although Dietz attempts to retain the freedom that carries through the entire process of action and reaction,

⁵⁸ If the achievement of a particular purpose is not important, what value remains of the instrumentalisation of action? The difficulty in any attempt to relate or integrate action and work comes forth in the contradictory principles of each. How does one move between the principles of action (freedom, appearance, for the sake of itself) and work (utility, durability, reliability, in order to)?

an instrumental attitude or way of thinking without the achievement of results may not be able to sustain itself or the action process.⁵⁹

On the other hand, Dietz's argument rightly suggests that Arendt's method of distinction draws the lines between activities too deeply. Her argument is therefore invaluable in terms of its illumination of the interrelatedness of the modes of activities possible for the human being. But Arendt does indicate that there must be a degree of interrelatedness between activities.⁶⁰ What she moves against, however, is the tendency to elevate one particular capacity or mode of being above all others. In fact, her criticism against the mode of being of *homo faber* is not a criticism against all instrumentality. This is a necessary method of world-building. It is the *universalisation* of utility and the domination of this mode of being over all others that is problematic (Arendt 1958: 157). Furthermore, by emphasizing the produced end, as well as *homo faber's* concern with the end, Arendt, I believe, calls attention to the principle and significance of durability. It is through the ability to achieve relative permanence that *homo faber* is distinguished from the *animal laborans* and free from the pressures of life. And it is by virtue of a durable artifice composed of durable, fabricated ends that human beings share a common world. In other words, the work activity and instrumentality do in fact have their "place" in Arendt's schema.

Any integration of action and work must therefore preserve freedom and plurality, which Dietz acknowledges, but also durability. This again reiterates the significance of both principles of freedom and permanence. Dietz's reformulation preserves the purposeful attitude of *homo faber*, but neglects the significance of the produced end in Arendt's project. The methodical pursuit of a particular purpose in response to a worldly condition does not, therefore, necessarily provide political actors with a more effective or productive avenue of caring for the world. Finally, although Dietz rightly elucidates the need to integrate action and work, Arendt does in

⁵⁹ It may of course be noted that Dietz's formulation takes account of the unpredictability and fragility of human life that appears even in the efforts of *homo faber*. Often we achieve the purposes we aim towards, but sometimes we fail to do so. Although this point is essential and I return to it at the end of this chapter, the manner in which Dietz integrates action and work remains problematic.

⁶⁰ The *animal laborans* relies on the capacity of *homo faber* to produce a world that withstands the demands of life and necessity (Arendt 1958: 236). *Homo faber* in turn depends on the political actors to give meaning to the world. And political actors similarly rely upon the fabrication of a durable artifice in order to sustain a sense of a shared world.

fact provide, in the capacities of promise-making and forgiveness, avenues by which human beings can balance the purposelessness, unpredictability and irreversibility of human affairs.

3. Action's inherent durability

3.1 Promises and forgiveness

Rather than compromise the qualities of action, Arendt identifies promise-making and forgiveness as actions through which political actors can manage the frailties of human affairs. The power to make and keep promises and the power to forgive are both ways to balance the unpredictability and irreversibility of *praxis*, and yet both are also actions in Arendt's sense of the term (Arendt 1958: 246).

The two faculties belong together in so far as one of them, forgiving, serves to undo the deeds of the past, whose "sins" hang like Damocles' sword over every new generation; and the other, binding oneself through promises, serves to set up in the ocean of uncertainty, which the future is by definition, islands of security without which not even continuity, let alone durability of any kind, would be possible in the relationships between men (Arendt 1958: 237).

Through making and keeping promises, human beings are able to act into the future. Never made alone or to oneself, a promise entails the combining of forces in a mutual pledge between equals (Arendt 1990: 182; 1958: 245; Mensch 2007: 42). It is never the sovereign will-power of an individual that commands and thereby acts as a force into the future. Although this is possible, it does not constitute action. Only in the choice to conjoin with others as equals can one bind oneself to a promise and still participate in action as freedom. Arendt calls it the "power of reciprocity and mutuality" (1990: 181). The relation between individuals that inspires a shared promise originates in the condition of plurality and a sense of togetherness.

A promise is a commitment to a particular, chosen purpose, goal, obligation or responsibility (Arendt 1958: 245-6).⁶¹ Such a commitment among political actors produces a

⁶¹ It is in *amor mundi* in general, and the capacities of promise-making and forgiveness in particular, that we are introduced to the ethical demand that Arendt places upon human beings (Arendt 1958: 237-8). These capacities are based specifically on relationships with others. Still, Kateb rightly points out that human beings could easily commit themselves to any kind of purpose, that Arendt gives no real moral limitation to what may be an acceptable social contract (2000: 143).

However, forgiveness and promise-making also indicate the requirement of a judgment. It is to impart a decision: that this shall come to an end, either through punishment or forgiveness; or that this shall be and we shall ensure it through mutual promise and commitment. That there are no further limits except the possible reaction of others in the future in fact retains the freedom and responsibility of the initial actors. Again, it is Dossa who points

bond on the basis of a shared purpose.⁶² Making promises does not, however, provide the ability to make or guarantee the future. The making and keeping of promises to one another provides a way to secure only certain aspects of an uncertain future. In this way, the faculty of promise-making does not circumvent action as freedom. It is specifically through our relations with others who are free and unpredictable that we realize our individual lack of sovereignty (Hansen 1993: 63). And it is precisely due to the recognition of this lack that we form covenants and bind ourselves together (63).

Furthermore, insofar as we can keep promises, we can also break them. The capacity to lie is just as much an expression of human freedom as is the capacity to bind ourselves through promise (Arendt 1977: 245). Thus, even though we may join ourselves together to a shared cause, the future still remains largely unpredictable. Thereafter it is the power of forgiveness that allows actors to reconcile themselves with the irreversible and unpredictable course of events that remains a fact of the human condition (Arendt 1958: 237).

Forgiveness frees an actor from the past and from the consequences of his or her deeds. S/he is free for the future so that s/he can essentially begin again. In this manner, to forgive someone is to give back to that person his or her life as distinguished from the persistence of unpredictable consequences. In German, to forgive, *zu vergeben*, derives from *geben*, to give. It indicates this idea of “giving-back” as the heart of forgiveness.

An act of forgiveness also interrupts the continuing process of action and reaction that actors initiate but cannot control (Arendt 1958: 240). It takes into account the unpredictability and irreversibility that accompanies our embeddedness in a web of relationships and the pre-existing world. In other words, forgiveness acknowledges that the results of our actions and efforts may not cohere with our initial intentions. This also reveals Arendt’s point that we are forgiven, not for what we have done or tried to do, but for who we are. We are beginnings, but always in a world and among a plurality of others and circumstances beyond our control. Who we each are encompasses our relation to this world, the principles that we disclose, and the promises that we make. Forgiveness therefore makes it possible for us to bear the suffering of

out how the faculty of forgiving is an ‘ethical’ faculty for Arendt because “it does not outlaw any action as immoral *a priori*” (1989: 94).

⁶² The purposefulness implicated in the binding together in mutual promise may answer Dietz’s demand for a more purposeful action. However, as an action, this remains inherently fragile. And, as will be discussed in Section 3.3, even this manner of political action suggests a relation to the faculty of work.

our “failures” and to begin again (Hansen 1993: 221). This tragic dimension of human being points both to the capacity for beginning and to the non-sovereignty accompanying the condition of plurality.

Again this is possible since the act of forgiveness remains an action in Arendt’s terms. Forgiveness expresses *amor mundi* as reconciliation with the world that confronts us.⁶³ It focuses on the past (Weigel 2002: 320) and expresses a principled stand taken in relation to it. But it also opens the future through the initiation or introduction of something new. As action, the act of forgiveness is itself wholly undetermined (Hansen 1993: 63). It appears as an unpredictable new beginning and is an exemplary act of freedom.

However, the act of forgiveness, like the act of promising, is only a reality in the presence of others who see and hear and confirm the given release from the past. For Arendt, one can only be forgiven by someone else, and one is only forgiven for the sake of *who* one is and not what one did (Arendt 1958: 241-3). Thus, forgiveness is only possible if actors appear and are disclosed. This supplement for the frailty of action therefore points us back to the realisation of plurality within the public, durable world.

In other words, as components of action, the power to make and keep promises and the power to forgive maintain the same dependencies and frailties of action thus far discussed. As ‘solutions’ for the frailty of action, both capacities reiterate the intangibility that accompanies action understood as appearance and performance. Both capacities are also, as Hansen describes, “immensely frail. All hinges upon the possibility of a political community which incorporates plurality” (1993: 64). Although Hansen affirms the need for reciprocity and solidarity, he still argues, and I concur, that Arendt advocates the primary need for a public world. This public world consists, once again, of intangible relationships and bonds, as well as of the durable, fabricated environment underlying the web of relationships. In other words, although Arendt celebrates and insists upon retaining the frailty of action as an aspect of freedom, she also seems

⁶³ While we can react to the past with a sense of umbrage or vengeance (Kristeva 2001: 79), when guided by a love for the world (*amor mundi*), it is often (although not always) forgiveness that opens new possibilities for the future of the world. Thus it is through *amor mundi* and forgiveness, rather than revenge and resentment, that we reconcile ourselves to the world.

to seek a counterpart to it.⁶⁴ A further vital example is her turn to the faculty of remembrance, an aspect of work, as a third ‘saving grace’ of action.

3.2 Meaning through narrative remembrance

Arendt’s continual reference to the role and significance of remembrance suggests that the frailty of action needs to be supplemented in some way. Beyond promise-making and forgiveness, it is through the faculty of remembrance that human relationships, events, and beginnings become a meaningful part of the human world. In this section, I address the link that Arendt makes between the appearance of meaning (a provision of *praxis*), and the faculty of remembrance. I then consider the extensive and explicit evidence across Arendt’s work that remembrance is in fact an aspect of *poiēsis*. Although remembrance reiterates the centrality of public appearance of actors to one another, it also emphasizes the significance of durability achieved through work. Hence, I conclude that Arendt once again appears to advocate a dependence of *praxis*, now with regards to the advent of meaning through remembrance, on the faculty of *poiēsis*.

Arendt associates the appearance and advent of meaning with *praxis* since it is an activity in which one partakes purely for the sake of itself (1958: 154). However, she also argues that it is only in stories told retrospectively that the meaning of an actor’s words, deeds, and even unique identity actually shines forth. The meaning of an action, Arendt insists, only surfaces at the end of the story which the act inadvertently begins (1958: 192). She illustrates this point by referring to those involved in the French Revolution who “knew at most the principles that inspired their acts, but hardly the meaning of the story which eventually was to result from them” (1990: 82). In other words, without being put into a story, action remains an unlimited process from which we can gather no meaning except that we are subject to the boundlessness and unpredictability of human affairs.

It is therefore through a narrative look back that a seemingly arbitrary deed or event may be understood in terms of its worldly relevance and significance. In this way, an action “illuminates its past” as a beginning from which it emerges as its end (Arendt 1994: 319). This narrative re-telling of human appearances in the world does not, however, suggest that in making

⁶⁴ Arendt’s move here is not, however, out of a desire for reliability and stability (as it is for Plato), but rather out of a desire for meaning.

sense of the spontaneous and frail experience of action human beings resort to the identification of causal relations. Human beings neither make history through a command over the future, nor do human beings merely respond to natural or historical forces (Arendt 1958: 185).⁶⁵ Human actions and political events express freedom as beginning, where each beginning always occurs within the context of the durable, common world. However, appearance within this larger context entails an appearance over time. Its relation to the past and future equates with its relevance, as a meaningful phenomenon, to those sharing the world. But this also marks the limitation of the political actors whose sense and experience of meaning remains within the moment of action.

Recall that Arendt locates authentic being and understanding within action precisely as appearance of freedom in the world. Action as freedom has no aim other than the appearance itself; it is wholly self-contained. It discloses the human being as distinct beginning. But it also reveals, to those who see and hear an actor's public words and deeds, the human being as non-sovereign plurality. Hence the type of narrative that Arendt has in mind may be one that acknowledges our non-sovereignty and relation to the world into which we are born.

It is precisely in the story that takes account of the context in which action appears that this non-sovereignty of freedom and the plurality of human beings come forth. In the stories that comprise human being and reality, actors appear as the heroes but never the authors of their life stories (Arendt 1958: 184-186). An author determines the course and fate of the protagonist. In reality, however, our stories are not made but are lived within a plurality of narratives and relations. Action always involves multiple actors who act and react in unpredictable ways. In the public appearance of an actor, in the disclosure of *who* one is, what shines forth is the actor's worldly principles and relationship with the world.

Taking a stand in relation to the world and responding to it in the public realm constitutes political action. Arendt appeals to Machiavelli's notion of *virtù* as "the excellence with which

⁶⁵ See Arendt's article, "The Concept of History" in *Between Past and Future*, for elaboration on Arendt's understanding of history. According to Arendt, history does not encompass any kind of larger process, especially not a man-made one (1977: 58). Rather, history is constituted by the singular yet great deeds of human beings that "interrupt the circular movement of daily life" (42). It is a "record of extraordinary events" (Dossa 1989: 50). Whereas in nature human beings are "acted upon" by the force of life and necessity, in history, human beings themselves act and provide meaningful appearances of human freedom (Dossa 1989: 49).

Interestingly, Arendt also suggests that the concepts of history and nature are not simply directly opposed. They are in fact similar to the extent that both concern immortality (1977: 48). Moreover, it is precisely the desire for immortality and the repugnance to futility that underpins the activities of both work and action (1958: 21).

man answers the opportunities the world opens up before him in the guise of *fortuna*” (Arendt 1977: 151; Kateb 2000: 136).⁶⁶ In public political action and the appearance of *virtù*, “a kind of play with the world” unfolds (Villa 1996: 55). This interplay between *virtù* and *fortuna*, or actor and world, is not guided by any “instrumental dictates” or moral criteria, but simply by the “freedom of initiatory action” (1996: 55). We are free to respond to the world, and in doing so we disclose ourselves. Again, Arendt’s emphasis remains on the significance of performance itself. The revelation of virtuosity provides the criteria for politics as performance in its initiatory and intangible nature.⁶⁷ But it also speaks to the worldly situatedness of the political actors. The durable, common world challenges the political actor, but also makes his or her response relevant and significant to others. Arendt thus insists on the faculty of remembrance and storytelling as a way of understanding the singular actor’s efforts and concerns in terms of the worldly context. As Arendt states, “*who* somebody is or was we can know only by knowing the story of which he is himself the hero” (Arendt 1958: 186).⁶⁸

Even the frailty of action, the unpredictability and irreversibility of human events and affairs, become intelligible and acceptable only when placed within a story (Arendt 1977: 258). Human beings therefore reconcile themselves to events by making sense of them through remembrance in stories.⁶⁹ This reconciliation to the human condition in general and to the fragility of action in particular discloses care for the world.

Finally, the stories that make life intelligible recollect exemplary actors and actions. Narrative remembrance preserves the appearance of a life that is “deserving of attention” not

⁶⁶ This reverberates with Heidegger’s notion of thrown being-in-the-world. Roodt also understands this relation between human being and world as evidence that “being human is not an absolute state, but conditional upon an encounter with – and thus an openness towards – the world and its limits” (2005: 119). This encounter also occurs as “the interplay of conditions and capabilities” (119).

⁶⁷ For further elaboration on how excellence reflects freedom as virtuosity, see Arendt 1977: 153-4.

⁶⁸ Arendt defines a *bios* as that which can be made into a story, that which is worthy of remembrance (1958: 97). A *bios* is distinguished from a life of mere existence or survival. It consists of the unique events and appearances of a particular person whose life story, birth and death, gain significance and transcend the temporality of life as such. This also, however, requires a relatively permanent structure through which phenomena transcend the anonymity of life and can appear in their uniqueness.

⁶⁹ Although beyond the scope of this study, the relationship between remembrance and forgiveness requires further exploration. Remembrance and forgiveness entail a respect for the factual past, for what irretrievably happened. A path for new beginnings is opened through narrative reconciliation and forgiveness. For this reason, forgetting is specifically detrimental to the possibilities of forgiveness (See Duffy 2009: 45-57).

because it is “unique, but because it is exemplary” (Hammer 2000: 89).⁷⁰ An exemplary life provokes and inspires recollection in stories. As the manifestation of courage, as the disclosure of *amor mundi* (or principled love for the world), and as the appearance of the possibilities of human being through freedom as beginning, an exemplary life is worthy of public endurance; it is glorious. Through the faculty of remembrance, human beings are thus able to recognize the greatness and excellence that shine through the lives of particular actors.

And yet, these stories arise out of the backward glance of the spectator rather than the perspective of the “hero”. Just as *who* one is only appears to others (Arendt 1958: 192), one’s words and deeds may only be situated within a narrative story and made meaningful through the observations and recollections of others. Stories as memories are therefore made possible by the fact of human plurality, by the fact that we appear to one another in action. It depends on a respect for the appearance of actors in the world.

However, this remembrance is still submerged in action’s utter futility. It rests within those others with whom one engages. It is they who are audience to one’s actions and words, and who can in turn speak of them. But they are only momentary actors and spectators. Our audience remains mortal as our deeds remain fleeting.

3.3 Durability through remembrance as fabrication

Memories are constituted first by the presence of others who perceive and remember, and second, by the continued recollection of the person, deed or event in durable form. Stories not only make sense of reality, but also allow certain phenomena and meanings to endure. To be remembered is to be deemed worthwhile to remain in appearance, which is also to remain in the public, durable world. Imparting meaning upon an actor and his or her life deeds (through a story) is thus made possible by the sense of shared world where it is in the interest of this world that such meaning appears and endures.

Furthermore, our audience includes our fellow actors and immediate spectators, as well as those who look back upon our words and deeds through the mediation of the durable world. We achieve remembrance and endurance across time through those who look upon the fabricated

⁷⁰ The excellence and greatness that Arendt attributes to action (see Chapter 1, Section 4.2) thus encompasses the concept of *virtù* as the manner in which an individual responds to the challenges of the world. In doing so, a real love for the world shines through the more particular principles that motivate and permeate an actor’s life.

memoirs of our deeds. In other words, although the faculty of remembrance engages human plurality and appearance in action, it is also indelibly tied to fabrication. Arendt explains as follows:

The whole factual world of human affairs depends for its reality and continued existence, first, upon the presence of others who have seen and heard and will remember, and, second, *on the transformation of the intangible into the tangibility of things*. Without remembrance and without the *reification which remembrance needs*...the living activities of action, speech, and thought would lose their reality at the end of each process and disappear as though they never had been (1958: 95; my emphasis).

Reification, as described in this context, is not simply a supplement to remembrance. Human appearances and relations must be *made part of* the realm of fabricated objects (Arendt 1977: 206, 43; 1958: 95, 170). The intangible appearances of human beings *depend* and *need* reification into tangible forms and a worldly reality. Arendt further and unequivocally defines remembrance as “the beginning of the work process” (1958: 90).⁷¹

I must interject here and admit that Arendt does not only describe remembrance in terms of fabrication. She also describes the reification of the actor and political actions as a “kind of repetition, the imitation of mimesis, which according to Aristotle prevails in all arts but is actually appropriate to the drama” (Arendt 1958: 187). Remembrance through the art of drama is consequently much closer in nature to action than is remembrance as fabrication. Drama is the “political art par excellence” (1958: 188) insofar as it exists only in performance and for the performance. In drama, actors re-enact and imitate the words and deeds of the heroes in order to bring these original human actors into appearance once again.

However, even a play or drama, the closest imitation of *praxis*, remains the creation and work of a playwright as author (Arendt 1958: 187). The drama as work thus arises out of the knowledge and mastery of the author. Also, the meaning of the words and deeds of the heroes, the meaning of the play as story, does not appear in the imitations of the actors, but in the chorus. Only the chorus can see the story as a whole, but their “comments are pure poetry” (1958: 187). This suggests that meaning is decided by the playwright. It is then communicated through the

⁷¹ Biskowski recognizes this aspect of Arendt’s schema as well. The relatively enduring objects that comprise the world, he explains, “represent the reification of otherwise fleeting thoughts and actions. This reification is itself not the province of action but of work” (1993: 880).

chorus, who informs the audience of this meaning. The role and mentality of the author is therefore problematic.

Arendt's reference to Aristotle's understanding of drama in terms of mimesis or repetition does suggest that the drama "allows reality to appear in a new way" (Birmingham 2006: 22). In this manner, the drama reflects a reaction to the initial events and appearances, as well as a narrative interpretation thereof. Just as "we are entangled in different life-stories" (Duffy 2009: 103) and worldly circumstances, remembrance in whatever mode forms a node in this entangled web of relationships.⁷² An author or storyteller therefore contextualises the events and deeds of the political actor as hero, and in doing so commits an interpretative act involving the author's own context and narrative situatedness.⁷³ The *authentic* appearance of the actors or heroes, who they were and what they did, is thus in question. I return to this point shortly.

In terms of remembrance through performance in drama, I acknowledge that one cannot reduce the characterization of remembrance, a complex human faculty to say the least, to any particular mode or methodology. For my purposes, however, it is significant that Arendt makes the connection between remembrance and fabrication again and again in various essays and contexts. I therefore focus on the extensive evidence of this particular characteristic and relationship.

For example, in her article, "The Crisis in Culture," Arendt explains that human appearances and relations must be *made part of* the realm of fabricated objects (1977: 206). In "The Concept of History," she insists that it is the work of remembrance, "Mnemosyne," to endow all "works, deeds, and works with some permanence" (1977: 43).⁷⁴ And in *The Human Condition*, she claims that even the most intangible form of remembrance, poetry,

will eventually be "made," that is written down and transformed into a tangible thing among things, because remembrance and the gift of recollection, from

⁷² To an extent, the appearance of an actor is always an appearance within the web of relationships, constituted by the plurality of human beings as beginnings. Who one is may thus be understood relationally.

⁷³ The hermeneutical nature of this process points once again to the influence of Heidegger on the thought of Arendt, and also provides a point of overlap in the thought of Arendt and that of Hans-Georg Gadamer. A full discussion of this overlap, especially in terms of the notion of historicity or historicality, may perhaps illuminate some of the difficulties presented here, but it is unfortunately beyond the scope of this work.

⁷⁴ "The task of the poet and historiographer...consists in making something lasting out of remembrance. They do this by translating πράξις and λέξις, action and speech, into that kind of ποιησις or fabrication which eventually becomes the written word" (Arendt 1977: 44).

which all desire for imperishability springs, *need tangible things* to remind them, lest they perish themselves (1958: 170; my emphasis).

In relation to the activity of action itself, “acting and speaking men need the help of *homo faber* in his highest capacity, that is, the help of the artist, of poets and historiographers, of monument-builders or writers” (1958: 173). Thus, although the actors of the French Revolution could not know the meaning or plot of their story, this became manifest in the works of Melville and Dostoevsky (Arendt’s two examples), who “were in a better position to know what it all had been about” (1990: 82).⁷⁵ The location of meaning in the narrative recollection of spectators, and the significance of remembrance as an aspect of fabrication, further illuminate the problematic nature of the apparent dependence of *praxis* upon *poiēsis*. In the relation between action and remembrance, the significance of the appearances and relations of human beings in their distinctness and equality appears to be challenged by the advent of more durable and reliable constructs.

For instance, it seems as if the locus of meaning potentially shifts from the actions and appearances of the individuals involved to the ‘written story’ and accomplishment of the ‘author’. Consider that it is through making promises that actors produce covenants or bonds that endure beyond the immediate action. But such bonds are often followed by the creation of a tangible contract which serves as recollection and protection of the frail and intangible promise. The contract may then take precedence over the relationships produced by the experience of being together and sharing concerns.⁷⁶

In terms of remembrance through actual fabrication, this transfer of meaning is also problematic. The ‘author’ remembers and produces in the mode of *homo faber*. Recall from Chapter 2 that *homo faber* works according to the principles of utility and durability. Everything

⁷⁵ Arendt makes a similar statement with regards to the actors of the American Revolution who could not, even by virtue of their participation, know the story or innermost meaning of what they had begun (1990: 29).

⁷⁶ The discourse of Africanisation, as pursued by the University of South Africa (UNISA), shows a similar move away from the appearances of distinct yet plural human beings to a focus and demarcation of the identifiable ‘African’ characteristics. The aim of this project, as explained by Prinsloo (2010), is to establish and cultivate a pan-African identity. However, the resulting African “story” constructs and imposes a specific, unified view of what it means to be African. This occurs to the detriment of the multiplicity that abounds throughout the (similarly delimited) African and non-African contexts alike, and throughout the human condition in general. (One is here reminded of Arendt’s argument against using education and the school sphere to implement political agendas.) Prinsloo’s argument for understanding the African identity as a fluid “relational multiplicity” (147) also reiterates the centrality of interaction and appearance to one another in our plurality.

is thus approached in terms of a means-end calculus. The desired end, even as the recollection of an authentic actor, deed, or political event becomes a pre-conceived image in the mind of the fabricator. The end, in other words, is not the appearance or experience of action, but the recollection. The words and deeds of actors may then become means towards the production and presentation of an end conceived by the fabricator. Moreover, the end itself acquires a relative permanence or durability which may reiterate, in the experience of *homo faber*, the ‘value’ of the produced thing rather than the meaning of the ephemeral appearances of actors. The greatness of actors’ words and deeds is potentially undermined by the “creative genius” (Arendt 1958: 210) of the craftsman or artist.⁷⁷

And yet, meaning is actually destroyed for *homo faber* since the measure of utility imposes the hierarchy of means and ends upon human beings and relationships, thereby reducing all ends to further means. As a consequence, meaning is simply beyond *homo faber*. This suggests that a meaningful reconciliation to worldly circumstances through the performance of principles and care for the world as a public durable space may be undermined in the process of preserving such efforts. And to the extent that such efforts entail the realisation of human plurality, of the multiplicity of distinct, equal and non-sovereign individuals, such appearances may also be abandoned.

Finally, as a worldly, tangible reality, the ends produced must also conform to certain parameters that secure the qualities and meaning of the original appearance. Stated otherwise, although *homo faber* is also concerned with appearances, the objectification of human appearances into constructed form suggests that the open possibilities that appear in the unpredictable human being are dimmed down in fixed recollection.

In other words, remembrance of actions into durable form to an extent suggests the closure of the freedom and excessiveness that accompanies the authentically appearing human being. The appearance of plurality and beginning, remembered and transferred into durable form, is now determined. But identity determined and constructed, even as an end, is not free. How can a stable, defined thing convey or express human being as freedom? As the unpredictable and uncontainable? Arendt herself states the issue as follows: “Action can result in an end product

⁷⁷ Although fabrication does not provide a method for disclosing who one is, as in action, the produced work does identify authorship (Arendt 1958: 211). Thus, the artist or craftsman cannot express the uniqueness and distinctness of the human being in fabrication, not even in a work of genius.

only on condition that its own authentic, non-tangible, and always utterly fragile meaning is destroyed” (1958: 196).

What then appears in the durable objects that comprise the public world? Is it our transient appearances and human plurality, or the ability of the sovereign individual to control and direct nature and others in order to make something lasting? Is it the actor or the author who appears? These questions are significant insofar as the durable world and its contents inform how we appear, the reason we enter the public space, and the basis of our interactions.

The importance of remembrance in fact amplifies these difficulties insofar as it points not only to a dependence, but also to a preference for the reliability of work. The ability to produce a durable world of things again appears to be more vital in Arendt’s schema than the appearance of our unique identities. And the principle of permanence appears to be more essential than, and certainly in contradiction to, the principle of freedom as beginning. Finally, the dependence of actors on the fabricating capacities of *homo faber* also seems to suggest that actions may only be meaningful as the content for remembrance and fabrication. The potential dependence of action on work is especially problematic considering these significant differences that Arendt captures.

Even by virtue of the capacities inherent in *praxis*, we have not escaped the predicament presented thus far. This predicament is set forth in terms of the characterization of *poiēsis* as a method of world-building upon which *praxis* relies for appearance and remembrance. But we must ask how we may rethink the relation between action and work without negating what Arendt has illuminated for us.

To do so, one must acknowledge that Arendt’s exploration of the particular characteristics of action, work and labour not only sheds light on the differences between them. It also illuminates the inherent tensions and contradictions that permeate the modes of human being and the human condition in general.⁷⁸ I therefore examine the possible interdependence of *praxis* and *poiēsis* and their respective principles. Although many questions have so far been left

⁷⁸ Nelson, for example, notes that the “fundamental and flagrant contradictions” (Arendt 1977: 24) that Arendt attributes to great writers and thinkers (in this context, to Marx, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche specifically), appear in her own work as well (1978: 272). He even goes so far as to say that “not mere contradictions, but great tensions characterize Arendt’s philosophy” (273). He then identifies one such tension in the relation between politics and truth.

Roodt also takes up these internal tensions, but as aspects of the relation between conditions and capabilities. She asserts that the conditions and capabilities “do not add up” (2005: 121; her emphasis). In addition, she concludes that Arendt does not want to resolve the tension but to leave it incommensurable. To do otherwise would simply subsume the different capabilities under the dominance of one.

unanswered, the exposition of the faculty of judgment in Chapter 4 serves to bring these strands together.

4. Dependence as interdependence of free and worldly beings

I begin by acknowledging that the durable world may survive our individual lifetimes, but it is not permanent as such and still “wears out” (Arendt 1977: 189; Arendt 1958: 139). This fact should bring into question the supposed sovereignty of *homo faber* in relation to the world. Although capable of constructing an environment that outlasts the demands of life and human mortality, we simply cannot do so perfectly. Even the things we construct, because they achieve an independence from the process of production, are precisely beyond our command as producers (Hammer 2000: 86). In other words, that *homo faber* builds a world of durable objects on the principle of utility does not mean the objects so produced are limited to their intended use function. Both use and meaning are determined after the fabrication process.

This may not entirely account for how such objects primarily relate or separate human beings, but it does allow for the transformation of the world through an experience and active judgment of it. In Chapter 2, the manner in which the world of things becomes a meaningful context was attributed to the interaction of political actors who experience the world as something in common. The capacity of remembrance, as a manner of preservation of the durable and common world, similarly relies on human beings to care for the world as meaningful and through public action. Thus, although political actors depend upon *homo faber* to build a durable world of things, *homo faber* also depends upon political actors to provide meaningful content for production and to engage meaningfully with the world (Arendt 1958: 236).⁷⁹ Through the faculties of production of and engagement with the world, human beings are able to reconcile themselves to the unpredictable and irreversible nature of events. In doing so, the durable world becomes a home on earth. “The functional mentality of *homo faber* is limited by care for the world, the commitment to the public realm and performance, that characterizes the agonistic political actor. The world can now appear as something more than an artificial space” and

⁷⁹ Through active concern with the common world, actor’s deeds are deemed worthwhile to recollect and remember through objectification. Action therefore saves *homo faber* from the interminable circle of means and ends by adding meaning and significance to the public world. This kind of engagement with the world is precisely not that of consumption or use, and thus indirectly already preserves the world as a public space of appearance. This preservation in fact also retains the capacity for memory, based as it is on a sense of a past and a history.

phenomena can be “judged in terms of their greatness or beauty rather than their utility” (Villa 1996: 93).

In addition to the fragility of the world, the inherent transience of action implies that without remembrance and fabrication, our appearances in word and deed are anyway gone. The meaning and beauty of our being rests in the tragic awareness of the enormous power and capacity that we have in beginning, and yet the continual defeat by time of all that we do (Arendt 1958: 169). The “living spirit,” what Walter Benjamin calls the “aura” of a person or an event (1999: 223), can survive only as the “dead letter” (1958: 169). And even this requires new life to resurrect it and prevent its eventual decay (Benjamin 1999: 222). Our actions and appearances may be transformed in the process of remembrance, but the act of remembrance itself may breathe life, as new beginning, into the past.⁸⁰

Although this interdependence between action and work is important, it still does not adequately show how one moves between the principles of work and action. But tensions and differences notwithstanding, perhaps the relationship between *praxis* and *poiēsis* pertains rather to a tension inherent in our being free and worldly beings. Recall Arendt’s argument that the world is the primary concern and motivation of action since it is that which we share. Paradoxically, it is the assurance that the world endures that inspires the desire “to intervene, to alter, to create what is new” (Arendt 1977: 189; Arendt 1958: 55). And our efforts to do so are accompanied by the desire for such changes themselves to endure. A durable, public world thus instils a sense of future possibilities that inspires a concern with how this future world should look and sound.

This relationship and tension between freedom and the world, between beginning and permanence, appears in the relationship of children to the world and in the role of education. It also, however, appears in political action as a new beginning. I consider each separately.

In Chapter 2, I examine the manner in which children must be protected from the publicity of the world as it disregards life as such. I also point out that the durability and stability of the world must be preserved in order to establish and retain a common context. The constant entrance of new life, of unpredictable beginnings into the world, in fact threatens the stability of thereof (Arendt 1977: 186). However, since the world is made by mortal hands and thus is not

⁸⁰ This potential beginning in the activity of remembrance will be further elucidated in Chapter 4.

eternal, its preservation also requires the new possibilities provided by the exercise of freedom (1977: 192-3). Hence, the world must be made (meaningful) over and over again, and only actions and efforts of new generations can do so. The world must therefore be protected against the onslaught of life in order to endure. But it is also through the simultaneous protection of life against the world that plurality and distinctness are nurtured and thus protect the future of the world. Entering a durable, stable world should cultivate a sense of togetherness in the young in order to ensure a future space for the acknowledgement, appearance, and exercise of the potential beginning that each new human being is.

We therefore have the dual responsibility of preserving a durable world and of cultivating the possibilities for beginning and changing the world. These two elements, beginning and preserving, are “not mutually exclusive opposites but two sides of the same event” (Arendt 1990: 223). In her work, *On Revolution*, Arendt explores this care for the world as it emerges in the most fundamental exercise of our capacity to act and begin: revolution. The foundation of a community reflects initiatory action and freedom as beginning, as well as the care for human association and living together. Asking anew who we are in terms of how we shall live together begins in revolution but culminates in the foundation of a new political landscape. It is here that the possibility and challenge of building a world conducive to the appearance of plurality and freedom confronts us as a reality. Arendt describes the situation as follows:

If foundation was the aim and the end of revolution, then the revolutionary spirit was not merely the spirit of beginning something new but of starting something permanent and enduring; a lasting institution, embodying this spirit and encouraging it to new achievements, would be self-defeating (1990: 232).

That this suggests that all attempts to preserve a space for who we are as beginnings are futile is a fact that Arendt does not shy away from. “The miracle that saves the world...is ultimately the fact of natality...the birth of new men and the new beginning, the action they are capable of by virtue of being born” (Arendt 1958: 247). Although this reiterates the arguments made by Villa and Knauer in defence of the capacity of beginning (see Chapter 2, Section 3), Arendt continues to juxtapose the miracle of birth and beginning to its attendant worldly character. Every child is “born into the continuity of history” (Arendt 1990: 211). He or she must learn of this history and the great works and deeds that constitute it. He or she must learn to care for the world in order to act in it and for it as an intrinsic task of human being.

5. Concluding thoughts

The capacity to begin (*praxis*) and the capacity to preserve (*poiēsis*) permeate one another in an interdependent fashion. This relationship must still, however, take into account the differences between action and work as accentuated by Arendt. It remains to be seen how the advent of meaning through remembrance, as an aspect of fabrication, preserves action as the appearances of human beings in their plurality and non-sovereignty. Thus, the frailty of action and human affairs must be acknowledged, especially since this reflects an understanding of freedom as non-sovereign beginning, and of *praxis* as self-contained performance. The significance of this frailty is accentuated in the expression of *amor mundi* through the presentation of principles, as well as in the capacities of promise-making and forgiveness. These reflect the extent of the ‘control’ or certainty which Arendt allows for political actors in acting in and for the world.

And yet, *amor mundi* also illuminates the inherent complexity and paradoxical nature of action. Political actors care for the world as a space of appearances, especially for the appearance of freedom as beginning. However, *amor mundi* also suggests that principled action reflects a care for the world as a durable public space. Although incapable of preserving authentic appearances and identities beyond the moment of action itself, political actors disclose a concern with the potential endurance of the world of appearances. Care for the durable world, an aspect of action and remembrance, hints at a possible point of mediation between the faculties of action and work.

However, this interdependent relationship must attend to the specific qualities of work which contribute to the building of the world as well. Instrumentality and durability together ensure the effective production of durable things that comprise the human artifice. What mediates the principles of permanence and beginning, of utility and meaning, of production and appearance? In the next chapter, I argue that this interdependence comes forth and is retained in the memories and judgments of spectators.

Chapter 4:

Judging in *praxis* and *poiēsis*

What mediates the conflict between the artist and the man of action is the *cultura animi*, that is, a mind so trained and cultivated that it can be trusted to tend and take care of a world of appearances whose criterion is beauty (Arendt 1977: 215).

1. Introduction

What makes the specifically public aspect of the world and of political action possible is the presence of others who can see, hear, and judge appearances. The notion of the spectator and spectatorship reiterates the significance of the world as a durable public space. In this final chapter, I argue that spectators judge all appearances, of actors, events, and fabricated objects, in favour of the durable world as a public space of appearance. I do so first with an examination of the relationship between the quality of durability, so far traced to the capacity of work, and the faculty of judging. It is through judgments that human beings are able to confer durability upon the world. The connection between durability, meaning, and beauty will be elucidated in this regard. It is to an extent through this connection, I argue, that judging mediates between action and work. It may also be on the basis of the relationship between durability and beauty that remembrance, incorporating judgment and fabrication, potentially alleviates the difficulties of the action-work relation.

Finally, I explore the extent to which the act of judging may itself be a political action. In the exercise and perseverance of judgments in the world, spectators are disclosed in their plurality and distinctness. This disclosure is possible first because judging requires the sharing of opinions with others as equals. It is, in other words, the underlying principle of communicability that links action and judgment. Communicability derives from the *sensus communis*, a faculty which Arendt states is shared by all human beings, and which reiterates once again the sharing of a common world. In conclusion, judging is based on the sharing of a worldly context and the caring for this world through the sharing of judgments or opinions as new beginnings, and through the preservation thereof.

Thus, judgment as remembrance enhances the durability of the meaningful world and continues the disclosure of plurality and freedom begun in *praxis*. It retains and illuminates the

tension and interdependence of *praxis* and *poiēsis*. I turn now to the role of the spectators who remember and decide what is worthy of enduring in the public light.

2. Mediating spectators: judges of and for the world

2.1 Overview of the judging activity

Spectators esteem and judge the ‘spectacle’ of human affairs and events. Before elaborating on this activity of judgment, it is important to trace the notion of the spectator and the spectacle to the classical Greek understandings. The Greek term *theōria* designates the activity of the spectator. Plato, however, understands *theōria* as contemplation or pure thinking (see Chapter 1). Hence, the tension between the *vita contemplativa* and the *vita activa* potentially reappears in the mode of the judging spectator. By introducing the faculty of judgment, has Arendt simply restored the supremacy of the life of the mind over the *vita activa*? Dossa argues that the potential for such a move is the reason Arendt struggled to write a theory of judgment in the first place (1989: 145-6).

Arendt’s utilization of much of Kant’s theory of aesthetic judgment may also suggest such a turn.⁸¹ Kant describes judgments of taste that arise out of “contemplative pleasure” and “inactive delight” (Arendt 1982: 15). Closer inspection of Arendt’s notion of judgment will however show that it is an activity entirely opposed to solitary and inactive wonder disconnected from the world. In her adoption of certain elements of Kant’s conceptualisation of aesthetic judgment, Arendt underscores public communicability and “passionate participation”. And in doing so, she turns to the “discriminating, discerning, judging elements of an *active* love of beauty” (Arendt 1977: 216; my emphasis). What Arendt therefore seems to offer, I believe, are notions of judgment and beauty which both entail *praxis* and inform *poiēsis*.

A full understanding of Arendt’s notion of judgment remains a complex question in Arendt scholarship, though. One finds in her exposition of judging not only elements from Kant, but also from Aristotle and Walter Benjamin.⁸² Unfortunately it is beyond the scope of this paper

⁸¹ Arendt takes her direction from Kant. It is his *Critique of Judgment*, and more specifically his theory of aesthetic judgment, that Arendt understands as Kant’s political philosophy. Her own examination of this aspect of Kant’s work suggests that Arendt derives many elements of her unwritten theory of judgment from Kant’s notion of aesthetic judgment.

⁸² Both d’Entreves and Lee-Nichols, for example, examine the Aristotelian and Kantian aspects to determine if these are contradictory. d’Entreves considers the extent to which the contradiction appears in the Aristotelian concern with

to conduct an in-depth examination of all these influences. I will therefore limit the discussion to a brief exploration of the pre-Platonic notion of the *theôros*, followed by an examination of the primary constituents of Arendt's theory of judgment. This account should indirectly address these varied influences on Arendt's thought, while directly attending to the tension between *praxis* and *poiēsis*.⁸³

2.2 *Theôros*, witness of the spectacle

Prior to Plato's philosophical interpretation of *theôria*, this term defines the activity of the spectator and means literally "witnessing a spectacle" (Lobkowitz 1967: 6; Nightingale 2001: 23). In their examinations of Greek thought and practice, both Lobkowitz and Nightingale locate the *theôros*, as a "spectator at games", in the practice and experience of bearing witness to a significant occasion (Lobkowitz 1967: 6; Nightingale 2001: 29). Such occasions include foreign festivals, sacral events, or even the consultation of an oracle. The spectators are therefore not the pleasure-seeking, "screaming and applauding mob" (1967: 6). They are also not the passive observers of a commodified, "spectacular society" as described in Guy Debord's *Society of the Spectacle*.⁸⁴ Rather, the spectator may be a pilgrim on a religious or personal journey to see the world, or he or she may be a civic ambassador sent by a particular city to observe and learn the

particulars and the universal position of the Kantian spectator (2000: 246). Lee-Nichols similarly notes the world-alienation of spectator-type judgment and the worldly situatedness of the actor-type (2006: 307-9). However, d'Entreves' also points out that Kant's notion of reflective judgment is actually concerned with particulars (2000: 250-3), while Lee-Nichols turns to the work of Walter Benjamin to rethink what is involved in retrospective judgment. (In a similar move, Hammer (2000) looks to the influences of St. Augustine on Arendt's thoughts on judgment and especially the role of remembrance therein.)

Finally, Ronald Beiner's interpretative essay on Arendt's *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* (1982) is also insightful. Beiner notes a tension between judgment as an aspect of the *vita activa* or as an aspect of retrospective contemplation (139). And according to Beiner, Arendt resolves this question "by abolishing this tension, opting wholly for the latter conception of judgment" (139). The argument set forth in this chapter deviates from this interpretation by arguing that the faculty of judgment may in fact negotiate both. As is stated in Footnote 3, however, this argument is based on the assumption of a durable world which may or may not alter the relation between acting and judging. This is a point for discussion that will not be attempted here, but should be taken up further.

⁸³ The significance of judgment in this thesis is limited to its relation to the capacities of *praxis* and *poiēsis*. The role of remembrance is thus considered in this regard. Asking into the manner in which the faculty of judgment may mediate the relationship further assumes the condition of worldliness as the context of this mediation, and thus the relation between judging and the modern context of world alienation is not examined. Finally, since it is the relationships inherent in Arendt's schema that are under question, Arendt's interpretation of Kant's aesthetic judgment will be taken at face value.

⁸⁴ In such a "spectacular society", spectators remain passive receivers of information, entertainment, and "meaning". It is a depoliticising relation between spectator and spectacle. This coheres with Arendt's delineation of the modern condition as that dominated by a labouring society and the life of the Social.

customs of others (Nightingale 2001: 30-32). The spectator is therefore a witness to things foreign, often acquiring a new understanding of his or her own ‘familiar’ customs.

On this basis, the spectacle itself may be understood as other than mere sports and entertainment. In the classical Greek understanding, the spectacle involves sports and games, but also religious and cultural rites and rituals. What characterizes the spectacle is not entertainment *per se*, but illumination. As oracle, it reveals hidden meanings and unknown futures. As festival, game, or ritual, it discloses elements of the culture, history, and values of a particular community. The *theôros*, as foreign observer, may see these cultural elements as exemplars of the unique particularity of that community. Simultaneously, the particularity of his or her own culture also appears. The spectacle thus consists of various performances and events that embody aspects of a community’s relation to the world.

More specifically, the spectacle may also refer to theatrical performances common in ancient Athens (Taminiaux 1997: 206). In such an event, the role of the audience is to see and hear the words and deeds performed on stage and to make a judgment on the quality thereof. In doing so, the spectators consider both visible appearances and “invisible meanings”, or questions on beauty, justice, and virtue, etc. (1997: 206). In their judgments, the spectators illuminate the particular views of the community, as well as the plurality of such views. In other words, the *theôros*, judging alongside others, sees different ways of looking upon the same thing. The appearances of different interpretations and possibilities through the interaction with others reverberate with Arendt’s understanding of political action, but it informs her notion of judgment as well.

Arendt’s judging spectator engages the views of others in matters regarding the common world. As an event necessarily observed by spectators, the spectacle amounts to a public appearance concerning and constituting the shared world. It is the realm of actors, events, and fabricated things. It is a space of appearance and illumination. Arendt therefore retains the spectators’ relationship to the world of appearances. In other words, they do not withdraw from the spectacle into some *nunc stans* in the contemplation of the eternal (Taminiaux 1997: 206). Such a position is beyond the world of human affairs (1997: 206). The spectators as conceived by Arendt, on the other hand, always remain situated in the world (1997: 209).

Arendt's notion of the spectator is therefore not grounded in the notion of *theôria* as contemplation. Spectators see, hear, and judge in favour of the world of appearances. They are thus able, to an extent, to mediate the tension between *praxis* and *poiēsis* insofar as their judgments concern the public space where both actors and products appear. It also mediates insofar as both *praxis* and *poiēsis*, beginning and preserving, in part entail the activity of judging.

Accordingly, Arendt contends that it is precisely this judging spectator who “sits in every actor and fabricator” (1982: 63). As a universally shared human faculty, the capacity for judgment bridges the gap between the mentality of the actor and that of the fabricator. What mediates our shared existence, our common world, is a faculty that is a potential for each and every human being. It is also Arendt's distinct conceptualisation of this faculty that makes such mediation possible. In the rest of this chapter, I explore the integral facets of Arendt's theory of judgment as it is set forth throughout her work. I begin with the centrality of appearance and the notion of beauty. I then elaborate on the role of the spectator in the appearance of meaning, the advent of durability, and the disclosure of plurality.

3. Arendt's notion of judgment

3.1 Appearance of beauty as illumination of world

Spectators approach phenomena with a “disinterested joy” that makes them the caretakers of the world (Arendt 1982: 125; Arendt 1977: 207). This disinterestedness, or impartiality, forms the general standpoint of the spectator, acquired through a reflection on multiple, particular standpoints and conditions (Arendt 1978b: 258). It is from this general standpoint that the spectator is able to reflect upon human affairs, to discriminate and choose between the beautiful and the ugly, the right and the wrong.

This disinterestedness is achieved through the manner in which spectators engage with the world. Their involvement is, much like that of actors, not determined by the needs of life, utility, or exchange (Arendt 1977: 206). They favour appearance and thus let all things simply be as they appear. As Arendt explains:

To be sure, an ordinary use object is not and should not be intended to be beautiful; yet whatever has a shape at all and is seen cannot help being either beautiful, ugly, or something in-between. Everything that is, must appear, and nothing can appear without a shape of its own; hence there is in fact no thing that does not in some way transcend its functional use, and its transcendence, its

beauty or ugliness, is identical with appearing publicly and being seen (1958: 172).

This transcendence of function allows the phenomenon, as fabricated object, acting person, or enacted event, to illuminate the space of appearance and the common world (Curtis 1999: 94). Just as the spectacles of the classical period reveals aspects of culture and attitudes about the world, Arendt's spectator experiences what Kimberley Curtis calls the "phenomenal richness" of the world (1999: 16). In both its own appearance and its illuminating capacity, a phenomenon may be regarded by spectators in terms of beauty. Just as political actors depend for the exercise of action upon a mutual respect for appearance, so too do genuine spectators respect all appearances as such. The distance of the spectator is therefore not an unconcerned distance, but precisely one that desires yet respects the appearances of beautiful and excellent works and deeds.

In her book, *Our Sense of the Real* (1999), Curtis provides an exhaustive account of Arendt's view of beauty as the standard for judgment. A judgment of beauty, she explains, "derives from the meaning the appearance emanates" (1999: 94). Spectators perceive and confer this meaning on the basis of what is disclosed about the shared world. This meaningfulness then perseveres in the spectators' memories, in stories, and in other tangible forms. To an extent then, the role of the spectator is that of the author who remembers and records the deeds and events of political actors. Curtis calls this attentiveness the "aesthetic sensibility" and further argues that it is driven by the desire to cherish what is beautiful (1999: 10-12). But spectators do not merely experience the beautiful or meaningful; they have an active role in the possibility and constitution thereof.

In fact, without spectators, there would simply be no spectacle, no actors appearing in a public space, and hence no meaning (Arendt 1982: 61-2).⁸⁵ Thus it is primarily the activity of judging itself that discloses meaning. Stated otherwise, what is significant in the act of judging is the illuminating phenomenon, but also the presence and judgments of the spectators. The significant role of the judging spectators therefore mediates the importance of the enduring object, as object of remembrance, work of art, etc. In "The Crisis in Culture", Arendt describes

⁸⁵ Arendt refers to Kant's thoughts on the French Revolution as an example. She concludes that "without [his] sympathetic participation, the "meaning" of the occurrence would be altogether different, or simply non-existent" (1978b: 259).

this relation between the spectator and beautiful appearances as the humanizing of the beautiful, whereby judgments bestow “a humanistic meaning” to worldly things (Arendt 1977: 221).⁸⁶ In doing so, spectators show a discriminatory rather than an inconsiderate or unconditional love of the beautiful.

Judging the beauty of a thing or deed depends on what it adds to or reveals about the shared world and the shared human condition.⁸⁷ According to Curtis, the beautiful discloses human vulnerability and finitude (Curtis 1999: 93-4; Arendt 1977: 112). For Arendt, this finitude and the reconciliation to it is embedded in human plurality. This deviates from Heidegger’s view, at least in Arendt’s interpretation, that *Dasein* is called by conscience to itself, reconciling itself to its own individual contingency in the “inner action” of thought (Villa 1994: 235). For Arendt, we reconcile ourselves to a world and condition that is shared, and to a contingency that is experienced through the fact of human plurality and freedom. The conditions of plurality, freedom, and worldliness mark our dependency upon one another, as well as the frail and fleeting nature of our works and deeds.

Looking upon and looking back at events, spectators often see defeated “moments of freedom” (Arendt 1982: 146). Thus beautiful phenomena, like meaningful stories, illuminate our non-sovereignty within acts of beginning. This includes the exemplary life that perhaps answers in some way how human beings should live together, and how the world should look and sound. And the stories of exemplary actors and deeds recall those who respond to the challenges of the world even if these result in failure. In other words, ‘failed’ actions still exemplify the human ability to insert and distinguish our individual selves in the public world, and to make our finite existence between a past and future meaningful.⁸⁸ Arendt makes reference to “homeric impartiality” as the quality and capacity of paying retrospective tribute not only to heroes and kinfolk, but also to “the foe and the defeated man” (1977: 258). Glorification and immortalisation should not be the privilege of the victor; it belongs to the world.

⁸⁶ It may also be in this manner that human beings reconcile themselves to the world, make sense of it, and potentially make it a home.

⁸⁷ Judgment thus relates to the world as a durable space that holds human beings in common.

⁸⁸ This does not, however, mean that one’s particularity is undermined. It is not the addition of causal relations, or positing the occurrence of deeds or events within a larger framework of historical progress. Recall from Chapter 3 that ‘history’ comprises the great and excellent deeds and events that appear in their particularity. This recognition is thus the acknowledgement of the non-sovereignty, unpredictability, and freedom that describes the human condition.

On this basis, the impartiality or disinterestedness of judgment does not derive from an Archimedean stance outside of the world. It is not the application of absolute and universal standards to the world of appearances and particulars. Rather, spectators and judgments of beauty always remain situated within the world. As a shared context and shared concern, it is the world that endows judgments of beauty with a certain objectivity (Arendt 1958: 173). The nature of this objectivity will become clearer in the discussion of judging as *praxis*. What is important here is that genuine spectators are personally disinterested and judge appearances *for* the world.

This objectivity of the world also does not negate the fact that it is a world of appearances constituted by a plurality of perspectives and relations (Taminiaux 1997: 205). It provides a context of particularities and a space for the plurality of opinions rather than the disclosure of truth. On this basis, it is possible to understand beauty as a measure that exceeds any absolute standard. In Arendt's own words, judging concerns "the manifold, never-ending affairs of human existence in the world, never arriving at a final solution to their riddles but ready with ever-new answers to the question of what it may be all about" (Arendt 1978a: 209-10). The capacity to preserve appearances is to an extent motivated by the desire to cherish human particularity and plurality (Curtis 1999: 12) as these shine through the human efforts to make sense of and take a stand in relation to the world.

Although spectators respect the particularity and plurality of appearances and take heed of "moments of freedom", they also preserve such moments in memory and through fabrication. But this should not necessarily undermine the authentic appearances of human beings who act and begin in the world. If the exercise of judging is understood as an aspect of the process of remembrance and fabrication, then the problematic sovereignty of the fabricator and the primacy of produced works may be addressed.

3.2 *Poiēsis* as judgment

In Chapter 3, I discuss the advent of meaning in remembrance as fabrication. I also argue that this relationship implies a dependence of *praxis*, as the appearance of meaning, on the faculty of *poiēsis*. In consideration of the role and exercise of judgment in the activity of fabrication, the relationship between *praxis* and *poiēsis* appears less problematic.

It is in light of the relationship between beauty and durability that the significance of judgment as remembrance may be understood. Arendt maintains that “Beauty is the very manifestation of imperishability” (1977: 218); “...something of this quality [of durability] is inherent in every thing as a thing, and it is precisely this quality or the lack of it that shines forth in its shape and makes it beautiful or ugly” (1958: 172). Thus durability, characterising the world as fabricated and shared, holds a special relationship to beauty as the standard for all which appears. When perceived in the mode of the spectators, beautiful works and deeds exceed all function and are meaningful as appearances. They are meaningful in their illumination of the world as a space for appearances and as a shared context. But it is also by virtue of their own enduring appearances that beautiful phenomena not only illuminate but also constitute the world as a durable public space. Appearance and endurance relate human beings to the world and one another. Durability, in other words, is not merely a characteristic indicating use in contrast to consumption. It also reflects relative permanence achieved in appearance as such and on the basis of its illuminating capacity.

Curtis explains this relationship as follows: “Beautiful things provide us with meanings that can be shared not because they are the same to all of us – timeless and true in that universalist way – but because they are durable and lasting...They endure and can be shared because of their capacity to illuminate the always historically specific *and* universal shape of our human dilemmas” (1999: 92-3).

The relationship between beauty and durability emerges in the activity of spectators’ judging. Again, this active involvement remains disinterested. It is not the exercise of private interests, but a distinguishing love for the world. In their involvement, spectators’ judgments manifest in the persistence or disappearance of a phenomenon. If deemed meaningful, an action or event is objectified in more durable form (Arendt 1977: 204). Endurance in the light of the public is therefore the compliment paid to a phenomenon regarded as meaningful and beautiful. This endurance may appear in the immediate reflections of the spectators, such as an audience’s applause for an outstanding performance. It may also appear in subsequent and more tangible forms such as stories, monuments, works of art, etc.

The relationship between beauty and durability therefore holds certain implications for the activity and mentality of *homo faber*. First, the universality of the judging faculty implies that

it is possible for *homo faber* to attain the distance and disinterestedness of the spectator. The distance of the fabricator-cum-spectator makes possible what Villa aptly calls the “death of the author” (1996: 107). The spectator must forget him or herself, in terms of private interests and needs, in order to regard appearances on the basis of the world. Moreover, the human being, in whatever mode or activity, always remains confronted with a world shaped and fabricated prior to his or her individual entrance. Thus, while engaging in work, *homo faber* also relates to those previous others who have added to the human artifice. Through durable constructs, the builders and preservers of the world are in touch with the judgments, standards, and principles of the past. These constitute *homo faber*’s relationship to the world and the web of human relationships, and further inform the activity of work. In other words, even though Arendt ascribes an instrumental and sovereign attitude to work, *homo faber* also tends to the world through the capacity to cherish and preserve what is beautiful (Curtis 1999: 13).⁸⁹ The concern with utility is mediated by a concern with durability as a concern with public appearance and beauty.

Finally, because *homo faber* preserves *beautiful appearances* in the world, the desire to cherish incorporates a judgment of beauty based in taste. The fabricator can judge worldly appearances and receive feedback through the judgments of others. As I will discuss shortly, judgments appear both in the exercise of judging (in the appearances of spectators), and in the enduring works that appear in the world. In this manner, *homo faber*’s preservation and fabrication of objects for public appearance are informed by judgments of the past, and also rely on the judgments of present and future spectators. Arendt appeals to Kant’s notion of taste: although it is genius that makes possible the production of great and genuine works of art, the decision on their beauty derives from the taste of the spectators (Arendt 1982: 62).

The problematic outlined in Chapters 2 and 3, however, suggest that the appearances of durable objects of remembrance and beauty may undermine the plurality and distinctness of the appearing actors. And moreover, the public appearance of such objects may also not indicate a

⁸⁹ The mediation by the judging faculty should not, however, undermine the characteristics Arendt attributes to work. In other words, the efficacy of the activity, based on the sovereignty and instrumentality of the maker, should not be undermined by the input of other’s judgments. A qualification is thus in order. First, the activity of work should not itself become an activity of judging. The incorporation of judgment may rather indicate that *homo faber* is open to other perspectives only with regards to the final product. Products and judgments appear publicly, and it is through this public space that *homo faber* confronts the reactions and inputs of others. Second, the mediation by the judging faculty does not do away with the tension between action and work, freedom and permanence. Rather, it represents the faculty that provides at the very least a bridge between the modes of the human being.

public, *political* space where actors may appear and disclose themselves. That the process of fabrication also entails an exercise of judgment, however, may account for these difficulties. I therefore look briefly at the effect of judgment on the nature of works of art and remembrance.

3.3 Judgment, remembrance, and works of art

Having rethought fabrication in relation to judgment, the significance of judgment in the exercise of remembrance and in objects of remembrance becomes clearer. A persisting phenomenon judged beautiful and meaningful retains this judgment within its own appearance. It is not forgotten nor is it immediately used up. Rather, its presence invites return in the mode of new spectators' judgments. And continual concern with and return to the phenomenon results in further new judgments, and further endurance. In other words, spectators' efforts to salvage meaningful moments in memory and through fabrication make future remembrance and judgment possible.

Returning to enduring phenomena in the capacity of the judging spectator allows the human being to engage with more than just the enduring object.⁹⁰ The spectator also engages those whose judgments have been imparted upon it, with those with whom we share a durable world over time, in the past as well as the future. A beautiful object thus illuminates not only the world as meaningful, nor the recollected events or deeds, but also the spectators and their judgments. (The appearance and disclosure of the spectators, and the extent to which judgment also takes the form of *praxis*, which I will show momentarily, addresses the tension between the appearances of actors and remembrance in durable form.) Meaning does not simply derive from the sovereign interpretation and input of the fabricator, but also appears in the continual engagement between spectators in the return to the question of potential worldly meaning.

The possibility for new judgments seems partly rooted in the fact that the meaning of the phenomenon under question remains open. It has not been wholly determined by the recollection of the initial spectators or fabricators. Just as *who* one is can never be fully determined and defined, so the meaning of one's words and deeds and the memories thereof remain elusive. Although a judgment or memory may be objectified and stabilized into a given, tangible form, it

⁹⁰ Arendt admits that we could choose not to do so, but this still does not change the fact that "the very quality of an opinion, as of a judgment, depends upon the degree of its impartiality" (Arendt 1977: 237).

continues to bear manifold possibilities. The object of remembrance is ‘incomplete’ insofar as it requires the continual participation of spectators to decide its beauty and meaningfulness. In other words, the transformation of words and deeds into durable form, as discussed in Chapter 3, does not necessarily result in a complete reduction and fixed reification of the initial appearances. Such appearances are in any case ephemeral and testify to the fact of human finitude and fragility. The act of remembrance is an act of judging which respects appearances and perceives human particularity, vulnerability, and plurality. It instils meaning by situating the actor or phenomenon in the durable public world. Not only are the actor’s deeds contextualised within the world as a condition of human existence, but they are also retained as part of the durable public space.

Consider a work of art. A work of art is an exemplar of culture and the most worldly, i.e. durable, of all things (Arendt 1977: 204-6). It is the one fabricated object that exists for the sake of appearance and illumination only. Through its enduring publicness, the work of art moves us over the centuries as a beacon by which we relate to others (1977: 200). In other words, a physical object must “establish a sense of place” (Hansen 1993: 73-4); it must appear as a concern for those who look upon it, thus relating the present to the past.⁹¹ It is due to the endurance of the object and its enduring meaningfulness that it can “grasp and move the reader or the spectator” (1977: 199). To do so, artists must make themselves understood by those who are not artists (Arendt 1982: 63).⁹² The failure to do so, however, is to fail the worldly situation that should appear and be shared through the mediation of the artwork.⁹³

The events, stories, and judgments of the past therefore speak to us through the memoirs and artworks of a particular time. Through such enduring constructs, we are confronted with both

⁹¹ “Every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably” (Benjamin 1999: 247).

⁹² It is interesting to note, however, that Arendt places the same demand upon the political actors. Actors must also make themselves understood by those who are not actors, i.e., by the artists (Arendt 1982: 63). It is only because the judging faculty is shared by actors and fabricators alike that this communication is possible at all.

⁹³ This illuminating capacity and quality of phenomena may seem to cohere with Heidegger’s notion of the world-disclosing or truth-revealing nature of genuine works of art. But what is disclosed for Heidegger is the particular historical world and historical truth or destiny of a people. And it is in developing this notion that Heidegger thinks *praxis* and politics in terms of *poiēsis* (Villa 1994: 219-223, 249). Arendt of course remains convinced that the “historical world” that comes forth is in fact a world disclosing human plurality through the sharing of words and deeds (Villa 1994: 249).

the facts and narratives of the past.⁹⁴ By situating works of art and remembrance within our own narratives, we make sense of this past and place ourselves in the common world. Accordingly, in the engagement with art, human beings situate or contextualise both the remembered phenomena and the artist's interpretation, just as the artist situates the actors or events in recollection. And in doing so we also reconcile ourselves to the events of the past (and the facts of reality) which we cannot change but we can come to understand. Through remembrance and endurance, works of art therefore aid the possibilities of forgiveness and new beginnings. Stated otherwise, engaging with and adding to the realm and repertoire of enduring arts serves to maintain the specifically public, durable world over time.⁹⁵ This becomes clear once we understand the work of art and worldly things in general as open and ambiguous.

An open and ambiguous artwork fosters judgment and dialogue between spectators. In fact, such works are incomplete without spectators' engagement. The meaning of the art remains elastic, malleable, and unpredictable (Spaid 2003: 99). For example, Walter Benjamin discusses a statue of Venus which "stood in a different traditional context with the Greeks, who made it an object of veneration, than with the clerics of the Middle Ages, who viewed it as an ominous idol" (1999: 217). The fact that the statue was not destroyed during the Middle Ages may reflect the desire to preserve the past while simultaneously breathing new life and new meanings into it. It may also reveal a respect for beautiful and meaningful phenomena that illuminate the past. Again, it is not in the use of an object that its meaning is determined, but in its appearance and our relation to it (Villa 1996: 102).⁹⁶

This openness may also apply to fabricated use objects. In Chapter 2, the automobile was presented as an example of the manner in which the fabricated world may undermine the sense of togetherness and respect for the appearances of human beings. But in Chapter 3 it was

⁹⁴ By narrative is meant the manner in which past generations have made sense of the facts of reality. Thus, new narratives may arise in relation to the facts, so long as the facts themselves are respected. In her article, "Truth and Politics" (1977: 223-259), Arendt argues that the problem with lies and deception is not simply about deceiving others, but about the injury done to reality itself (1977: 250). The factual past cannot be altered. The respect for this past also translates into the desire for preservation and its conflict with the capacity of beginning. The negotiation of this conflict seems only possible through a genuine care for the world.

⁹⁵ To a certain extent then, the public appearance of such fabricated objects may in fact constitute a political space. Once judging is understood in its relation to *praxis* (see Section 3.4), this becomes even more plausible.

⁹⁶ But it is also only when not consumed that an object retains this openness for new possibilities. An object of consumption creates no distance between the consumer and the object, or the consumer and him/herself. The implication is, once again, that the capacities of work and the advent of durability have a central place in Arendt's schema.

concluded that the products of work acquire an independence from the work process. All such objects are therefore open to the possibilities of use, consumption, and meaning. And in fact, there is evidence of the appropriation of the car in much more meaningful ways. The Anangu, for example, live in the western desert of South Australia and traditionally went everywhere on foot (Young 2001: 36). Since the 1960s, however, the automobile has become an integral part of their lives. According to anthropologist, Diana Young, the Anangu have adapted the meaning or purpose of the automobile to their own social and communal experiences. For example, they may use the car as a *wiltja*, a space either for social interaction or separation from others (2001: 42-3). Further uses of it also express social etiquette and relations: to park under the shade; to approach someone else slowly as if on foot; and to refrain from making new tracks on someone else's land. These are all expressions of concern and respect for one another. The Anangu identification with the car thus shows how fabricated objects, even those that are not primarily art, may in fact be made into something meaningful in a particular community.⁹⁷

Finally, Wilson introduces the role of Salsa as a cultural artefact that continually shifts and fragments as it literally moves throughout the world (Wilson 2010: 244-5). The meanings and associations of the dance (or of any fabricated object for that matter), what it can say to us and mean for us, exceeds what is delimited in its original or constructed form. It, and our engagement with it, remains a “possible solution before an unending task” of understanding (Jauss 1982: 603-4).⁹⁸ In other words, the artwork continually engages viewers to ask into its meaning. And meaning remains open insofar as viewers comprise the plurality of human beings who are able to judge, to interact and to begin again. In this manner, the activity of the judging spectator necessarily involves *praxis*.

3.4 Judgment as *praxis*

Arendt retains her emphasis on genuine politics and authentic appearance in action and beginning, even in the advent of *homo faber*'s capacity to build a durable world and create

⁹⁷ Consider also the Knights of the Roundtable. It is not the maker of the table who decides whether the table is in fact beautiful or meaningful, or the experiences made possible with it. It is in the Knights' experience of the table, but through their interactions with one another, that the table succeeds in opening up a genuine public space and becomes meaningful.

⁹⁸ Understanding encompasses an unending process of trying to “reconcile ourselves to reality, that is, [trying] to be at home in the world” by asking how human beings should live together (Hansen 1993: 205-6).

illuminating works. This effort seems to be supported by a notion of judging in terms of *praxis*. Such a view of judgment may thus mediate judging as the desire to cherish and preserve what is meaningful through the capacity of fabrication. In exploring this possibility, I examine the elements of judging as these adhere with the exercise of authentic political action. I do so through a reading of Arendt's discussion of judgment in her article "The Crisis in Culture", and on a lecture series on Kant's notion of aesthetic judgment, entitled "Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy".

Appropriating from Kant's theorisation of aesthetic judgment, Arendt brings together the faculties of taste, imagination, and common sense. The significance of the faculty of taste is that it necessarily discriminates (Arendt 1982: 66). While one can see, hear, or touch something without laying a judgment upon it, in taste sensations the "it-pleases-or-displeases-me" is immediate and overwhelming (1982: 66). Arendt chooses this capacity for its automatic discriminating quality. The taste of a particular food, for example, immediately results in a sensation of pleasure or displeasure, and thus forms the basis for distinguishing between good and bad tasting foods. This same capacity may be applied to appearances and the discrimination between the beautiful and ugly (Arendt 1977: 211). In fact, Arendt notes that *krinein*, the Greek term for judgment, also expresses this discerning activity (Arendt 1982: 37). But the limitation of the faculty of taste is that it is "entirely private" and incommunicable (1982: 66). It is for this reason that Kant introduces the roles of imagination and common sense.

The faculty of the imagination internalizes the appearance of an object so that it may be re-presented in the mind for reflection (Arendt 1982: 67). The immediacy of the experience is bracketed through the distance established between the person and the object of judgment. One is thereby able to distance oneself from one's subjective experiences and private and immediate interests (Arendt 1977: 237). As stated previously, the spectator acquires a disinterestedness that allows for a respect for appearances. In this way, the spectator is impartial to the initial effects of the experience and is able to reflect upon the object as well as the experience and judgment of the object. What either pleases or displeases me is no longer just the object itself, but my judgment of it (Arendt 1982: 67-9). I am now either pleased or displeased by the pleasure or displeasure that the object arouses in me. And while my initial experience may have been gratifying, it is through my reflection upon it that I can judge it beautiful or not. In other words,

through this acquired distance, one can be critical of one's own perspective or initial judgment, and only through such a critical reflection does the beauty and meaning of a phenomenon become intelligible, and a judgment of it possible.⁹⁹

This reflection on an object and on our own judgments requires that we put ourselves in the places of others. "To train your imagination to go visiting" (Arendt 1982: 43) means that one situates oneself in the particular positions of others in order to see and understand from their perspectives. This does not mean that one simply trades one's own limited perspective for that of another. It is not a passive exchange of prejudices. Rather, it is to acknowledge the plurality of perspectives through which the world appears and is experienced. It means to liberate oneself from limiting self-interests and singular views and to be "open to all sides" (Hansen 1993: 210). And even though one thinks from the positions of others, one does so in one's "own identity" (Arendt 1977: 237). Thus one takes into account other positions by imagining how one would think and feel in those positions.

Through imagination, one engages in a critical thinking process of testing one's own opinion through the exposure to and engagement with the opinions of others (Arendt 1982: 42). This kind of thinking travels in the space of the public, from one particular standpoint and conflicting opinion to the next (1982: 43; Arendt 1977: 238, 217). In doing so, one achieves a broader, general standpoint or an "enlarged mentality". This broader understanding underlies the exercise of judgment as action. Every judgment, in other words, relies upon an acknowledgement of and "conversation" with other perspectives. Communicability thus underlies the capacity for

⁹⁹ Hammer further explores the role of the imagination in terms of the thinking activity. What can be made present in thought, he argues, are not merely objects that are currently not present, but even that which is 'no longer' and 'not yet' (2000: 96). The 'no longer' and 'not yet' refer, however, not simply to aspects or things of the world, but to the two limiting conditions and ontological being of the human: imminent death (the 'not yet') and birth as the beginning and the origin of the human being (the 'no longer'). Thinking opens up a gap between this force of the past and the force of the future, a gap within the continuum of time.

Two points are relevant in relation to Hammer's discussion. First, Hammer argues that it is the role of remembrance, an "Augustinian journey of memory", that makes possible this thinking within the gap between past and future. It is in and through this capacity of memory that the capacity to begin, freedom as such, penetrates common practices and prejudices.

The second point relates to the activity of thinking. This activity is essential in Arendt's understanding of the life and capacities of the mind. Her exploration of the life of the mind forms a crucial point in her critique of the philosophical bias against politics. It is also a capacity that works together with that of judging, in fact informing and activating the latter. Arendt even argues that judgments are the worldly manifestations of thoughts (1982: 37-8). Since this study only aims to provide a preliminary view on the faculty of judgment, a full examination of the faculty of thought unfortunately exceeds the scope of this analysis.

taste and discernment, as well as the exercise of imaginative conversation with others.¹⁰⁰ This requisite characteristic of judging highlights the fact that the exercise of judgment as interaction with others occurs in the mode of *praxis*.

For instance, that judgment entails the sharing of multiple perspectives reveals that the spectators always exist in and as a plurality (Arendt 1982: 63). Just as political actors cannot perform genuine political acts without the presence of others, spectators cannot achieve the disinterestedness of an enlarged mentality, nor make a valid or relevant judgment on meaning, without engagement with others as equals. The emphasis on communicability further reiterates the interactional, performative, and specifically public character of judging.

In judging, spectators acknowledge the positions and perspectives of others. This acknowledgement translates into a respect for the appearances of others as distinct equals. A judgment is, therefore, always an opinion offered more or less persuasively to the critical engagement and judgments of others.¹⁰¹ It is not a matter of asserting truth, but of communicating and persuading others to share an opinion (Hansen 1993: 210). Every judgment thus comprises a publicly derived, contingent and contextual opinion. The validity of judgments as opinion is also altogether different from the “coercion inherent in truth” (Lee-Nichols 2006: 308).¹⁰² Judging is not (contra Heidegger) the activity of genuine statesmen, thinkers, or artists who perceive meaning as the truth of a particular historical community (Villa 1996: 219). But it is also not a joint pursuit of truth either. Rather, validity remains invested in the exercise of action and the engagement with others.

Arendt appeals to Kant’s notion of a *sensus communis* to describe the ability “to think with an enlarged mentality” and determine a judgment’s communicability (Arendt 1982: 43; Arendt 1977: 217). According to Arendt, Kant does not hereby indicate common sense, which would simply be another private sense. It rather indicates a “community sense”, “an extra mental

¹⁰⁰ It is precisely because judgments must be communicated, a feature that Arendt draws from Kant’s understanding of aesthetic judgment, that she does not refer us back to the wonder and contemplation of the solitary philosopher. The experience of beauty and illumination necessitates communicability and thus is not *thaumazein*, the inactive wonder as conceived by Plato.

¹⁰¹ Sharing judgments through persuasion reiterates the significance of action as speech, as the communication of more than just needs and desires, which can be communicated without speech. It also coheres with the description of action as the presentation of principles through performance and lived example.

¹⁰² “Reflection is guided not, as it is for Plato, by the recollection of ideas that are removed from the world, but by the remembrance of a world which constitutes us” (Hammer 2000: 95).

capability (German: *Menschenverstand*) – that fits us into a community” (1982: 70). It is a capacity of all human beings and, for Kant, identifies our humanity. This “community sense” depends on the human capacity to communicate with others in speech, and to do so on the basis of what is held in common, namely the world. The *sensus communis* therefore relates human beings to one another on the basis of a shared existence.¹⁰³ In the dialogues of persuasion, it also reveals the plurality, distinctness, and freedom that encompasses an interaction between equals. In other words, judging opens up a public space of appearance for the disclosure and initiatives of spectators qua actors.

The test of communicability and the capacity for imagination together provide a public space for the exercise of judgment. Just as the actor inadvertently discloses him or herself in political action, so too the judging person is disclosed (Arendt 1977: 220). Stated otherwise, speech discloses the speaker in a public space and invites judgment; but this attribute of speech also functions in judging as the public sharing of opinions (Lee-Nichols 2006: 308). In judging with others, the unique, worldly identity of each particular, judging person shines forth. As a concern with the shared world and what appears in it, judging is itself a question of *who* the spectators are.

It is in this public sharing, understanding, and confirming of opinions, that we (as worldly and free beings) fit ourselves into a community. The ultimate pleasure is therefore not in

¹⁰³ Curtis rightly notes the challenge to be attentive to those who are part of our political world. But what of those who are not a part of it? The question of who may enter the public political spaces of appearance, to speak and act and thereby disclose him or herself is important. It appears as if Arendt’s theory of political action necessarily excludes some human beings (of course those engaging the modes of labour and work) from recognition in and by the political community. But insofar as *amor mundi* and the *sensus communis* produce relationships and communities, what prevents entire groups of people from being excluded? The reality of the political histories throughout the world confirms this apprehension, and Arendt’s understanding of politics seems to allow for it. The difficulty of this question does not merely reflect upon Arendt’s theory, though, but on the relationship between politics and ethics.

I offer here only a tentative thought on the issue, and evoke once again Arendt’s emphasis on the condition of plurality. The realisation of plurality entails the respect for others as equals, and a regard for the contingency and non-sovereignty of human being. This condition should permeate not only the relations between distinct individuals, but between distinct groups as well. On the other hand, human existence is a fragile and, according to some scholars, tragic existence. As Hammer notes, human beings must continually struggle to “uncorruptly take others into account” (2000: 97). And the best manner to do so, he continues, is through lived examples and the stories that recall them.

the truth of one's ideas, but in the company one keeps.¹⁰⁴ It is a non-sovereign exchange of opinions on what is beautiful and, in effect, on *who* we are. Thus, judgment cultivates a sense of togetherness by asking how we should live together. This question concerns the durable world and the organisation of human life, but also the public space and the plurality and frailty of human affairs. It is about the permanent human artifice, as well as human relationships, the disclosure of human beings, identities, and understandings. Although the answers to these questions are never final, they appear in the actions, events, and principles that are remembered and preserved. In this manner, we are able to make our presence explicit and “establish our space in time” (Curtis 1999: 97).¹⁰⁵ In other words, human beings situate themselves within the world alongside others. Hence, the activity of judging overlaps to a degree the modes of *praxis* and *poiēsis*.

Finally, the unique identities of the spectators reveal *who* they are as beginnings, as a particularity within a plurality, and as situated in the world. A judgment elucidates the judging person's relation to the common world, the principles that inform his or her standpoint, and his or her unique and unpredictable identity. A judgment thus reveals the non-sovereignty and frailty that accompanies the human being in the world, as well as the capacity to begin. Accordingly, a judgment is always a beginning and an insertion of human freedom in the world (Mensch 2007: 26).¹⁰⁶ This disclosive capacity also informs the interaction with and judgment of durable things such as art.

¹⁰⁴ Arendt's move here is in response to the modern condition understood in terms of the loss of all standards, guideposts, or in Arendt's terms, “banisters” for thinking and judging. The capacity to think anew without such standards entails the capacity to judge as an exercise of free action and beginning. As Arendt states in “Essays in Understanding”, “a being whose essence is beginning may have enough of origin within himself to understand without preconceived categories and to judge without the set of customary rules which is morality” (1994: 321). See also d'Entreves (2000: 247) on this point.

¹⁰⁵ Although the faculty of judgment mediates between *praxis* and *poiēsis*, it still does not conflate the two activities. Arendt is adamant that politics is not the creation of a state, but the articulation of plurality. The sharing of judgments produces relationships in appearance. When this engagement results in the establishment of a community in the world, judging illuminates this practice of political foundation as action in its fullest sense. The subsequent establishment of institutional structures through the capacity of work, such as a constitution, is mediated by the *sensus communis* and the universality of the judging faculty.

¹⁰⁶ Curtis elaborates on this illumination with regards to Arendt's reading of Kafka's parable, “He”: what is salvaged and what endures are exemplary efforts to stand within the past and the future so as to insert a present, *our* present, as a moment unique in its own birth yet also exposing (from our unique perspective) the general dilemma of our human condition (1999: 99-100).

That judgments also appear in the enduring objects previously deemed beautiful does not negate the fact that there must be spectators present for the object to be disclosive as such. The work of art or remembrance does not take precedence over authentic human appearances in the public space. Without the involvement of spectators, there simply is no such space. It has also already been noted how the artist or fabricator cares for the world through a reliance on the perspectives and reactions of others. But it is also because judgment entails *praxis* that an object remains open and unpredictable in terms of new meanings and judgments.

Recall that we judge our tastes on the basis of others' judgments. The experience of pleasure that informs a judgment therefore derives not simply from the object itself, but from the experience of the variety of meanings and perspectives shared (Spaid 2003: 98). In other words, the durable world and the things therein appear and are understood through the dialogue in which plural meanings arise (2003: 98). It is through the excessiveness of *others* (and as a reflection of the excessiveness of oneself) that we continue to use and understand objects differently (Mensch 2007: 36). Thus, what judging spectators see in the worldly artifice is not human mastery but human plurality.

Accompanying the experience and disclosure of plurality, it is also the non-sovereign, unpredictable, and boundless nature of *praxis* that permeates the exercise of judgment. Spectators-cum-actors can only care for the enduring world and future newcomers provisionally.¹⁰⁷ To share a judgment on the efforts, decisions and perspectives of the past is to risk one's own perspective and identity. Spectators thus disclose themselves to the public world, but without full knowledge of this disclosure or the consequences of their judgments. Even fabricated objects that may endure in the world remain subject to the judgments and events of an unpredictable future.

Nevertheless, as stated before, it is by virtue of the endurance of judgments in the shared world that new perspectives and judgments are invited. As long as judging retains its political character, the sovereignty and instrumentality that accompany the activity of work cannot

¹⁰⁷ Consider the example of a constitution that binds a community together through a shared concern and promise, a desire and care for freedom and its appearance in a public, durable world. The constitution thus protects the right and capacity of human beings to ask about how to live together and to appear and engage in public spaces. However, to take a care for freedom seriously, it must make possible the exercise of freedom in the future. The constitution itself must thus be open to new and further interpretations and meanings.

entirely circumvent the possibilities for the future. It is care for the world through the capacities of both preservation and beginning that underpins the *sensus communis* and the exercise of judgment. Through such care for the world, human beings are related and revealed to one another over time.

The importance of the common world thus mediates and balances the significant role of political actors against that of *homo faber*. The concern with communicability, entailed in the notion of *sensus communis* and the enlarged mentality, is only possible by virtue of a shared concern. In fact, the *sensus communis* also means “that a *context* is what we have in common with other people, that it is a world we share with a plurality of fellows” (Taminiaux 1997: 203).

Consequently, it is again the durable, shared world that makes communicability and understanding among distinct and free beings possible in the first place. The distinctness of each person appears as “the excess of the other” (Mensch 2007: 36) and indicates their freedom and unpredictability. “What we share, however, is what allows us to manage this, to accommodate our differing interpretations” (2007: 36).¹⁰⁸ The *sensus communis* therefore appears to link a concern with the perspectives of others and the communicability of one’s own judgments with a concern for the shared world.¹⁰⁹ The appearances and memories of human beings who care for the world through judging illuminate human plurality and the capacity for freedom and action. These also, however, illuminate the capacity to preserve plurality and particularity by virtue of what is shared. Stated otherwise, judging is itself meaningful, relevant, and disclosive only insofar as it is rooted in the *sensus communis*, which takes account both of the plurality of other perspectives and of the public, durable world.¹¹⁰ Our tangible reality is potentially a durable,

¹⁰⁸ It is on this basis that Mensch concludes that politics is “the art of this accommodation”, “the way we deal with the excessive quality of our others” (2007: 36). In a debate on some course of collective action to take, for example, different opinions on a particular proposal are voiced. The goal or purpose of the action “achieves its presence in continual return as each speaker takes it up in turn” (36). In this public process of deliberation, the plurality of perspectives, actions, and outcomes, as well as the goal itself, “exhibit the openness to the future that they have as being part of the public space” (36).

¹⁰⁹ Recall from Chapter 2 that ‘world’ refers to the context of relations and activities that form a horizon of possibilities for human being. As durable, the world persists outside of subjective experiences and is shared as an objective reality. As shared, the world has the potential for disclosing plurality. But it is also because of the fact of human plurality that the durable world itself appears as something shared.

¹¹⁰ It seems then as if the *sensus communis* coheres with Arendt’s notion of *amor mundi*. Arendt’s introduction and discussion of *amor mundi* shows that *who* one is may only be understood in relation to the shared world. *Who* one is appears in the decisions between right and wrong and between beautiful and ugly specifically as expressions of worldly principles (Hansen 1993: 209). Such principles care for that which is outside of the private self and rather appears and constitutes human being as plurality. In caring for the world, human beings thus recognize the

meaningful home and public space when it is acknowledged as a shared concern in the exercise of judgment in both *praxis* and *poiēsis*.

4. Concluding thoughts

In conclusion, the interdependence between *praxis* and *poiēsis* does not necessarily undermine the appearances of human beings in action. This interdependent tension is rather mediated through the capacity for judgment. The characterisation of judgment in terms of disinterested dialogue, remembrance, and communicability attends to the productivity and responsibilities of *homo faber*, as well as to the appearances and principles of political actors.

Judging mediates the tension since it informs the process of fabrication through the recollection of exemplary words, deeds, and events. That which is deemed exemplary in terms of our shared human condition is that which addresses the dilemmas that concern us as free and worldly beings. Such appearances are therefore meaningful because they illuminate our fragile condition as constituted by the human capacities to begin and to preserve. Through the capacity of work, human beings are able to instil a degree of permanence to the efforts of political actors. And in doing so, the judgments and perspectives of others inform and situate the world-building activity. Remembrance and fabrication care for the world as a public space of enduring appearances.

Insofar as the faculty of judgment is motivated by a respect for appearances and a sense of togetherness, it also articulates plurality and beginning. In other words, judging further mediates insofar as it engages a plurality of beings who are distinct beginnings. Through the activity of judgment as *praxis*, we insert into the enduring world new perspectives, judgments, and meanings. Thus judging simultaneously retains and renews worldly appearances of action and freedom through interaction and the judgment of worldly objects. The meaning of any such object appears in the excessiveness of those who receive and engage with it, of those who act in and help build a common world.

Finally, it is the communicability of judgments that permeates the care for the world as a durable public space. Durable public space encompasses the fabricated world that endures

challenges with which the world confronts human beings, and find meaning in the responses offered by a plurality of distinct and free beings. *Amor mundi*, like the *sensus communis*, illuminates a respect for appearances and a sense of togetherness on the basis of a shared, durable world.

against the demands of life and the interests of private individuals. It is a shared context and shared concern, relating human beings on the basis of its public and enduring character, and a place where meaningful phenomena may endure through the capacities of action, fabrication, and judgment.

Conclusion

The complex and paradoxical relationship between *praxis*, *poiēsis*, and durable public space illuminates human being as free and worldly being. It was the purpose of this dissertation to examine the potential dependence of *praxis* upon *poiēsis*. In doing so, the difficulties and implications were considered. However, it may be concluded that *praxis* and *poiēsis* form an interdependent tension that is potentially mediated by the faculty of judging.

The difficulties that define the tension between action and work appear first in the relation between action, or the possibilities for action, and the durable, fabricated world. Arendt describes politics as the interaction between equal but intrinsically distinct beings who disclose themselves to one another in word and deed. It also entails freedom as non-sovereign beginning. But the exercise of action requires first the realisation of the condition of plurality. This realisation entails a sense of togetherness which acknowledges the contingency and non-sovereignty of our being in the world, and which respects the authentic public appearances of human beings. When such plurality is actualised, human beings open up a public space of appearance through the sharing of words and deeds.

However, the public space of appearance is also part and parcel of the worldly existence of human beings. The durable world relates human beings to one another, providing a common context and thus shared concerns. To an extent, it conditions the realisation of human plurality. And although actors do care for the world through the disclosure of principles, Arendt emphasises action as appearance and performance with no purpose beyond the activity itself. Coupled with the frailty, unpredictability, and non-sovereignty of actors, the possibilities of political action appear to be subject to the more reliable and productive capacity of work. Finally, actors depend upon remembrance and fabrication for the illumination and preservation of the meaning of their words and deeds. This seems to further elevate durability over the self-contained performances of human beings as an exercise of freedom. This also suggests that political actors depend upon *homo faber* to build a durable world and durable things, and to provide and preserve meaning and permanence. In short, the capacities and principles of work appear to take precedence over that of action.

The more specific challenge of this implication derives from the nature of work. In work, the craftsman or fabricator remains concerned with the production of a predetermined end. During this process the human being, in the mode of *homo faber*, works as a sovereign and is specifically isolated from the plurality of human beings. The world as a public space is therefore understood as a space for the appearances of fabricated things rather than for the plurality and distinctness of acting human beings. But the durability of the world and the effective production of durable ends are in fact important. It is because *homo faber* is primarily concerned with ‘ends’ that it is possible for human beings to build a durable world of tangible things as a potential home. And yet, *homo faber* builds the world and the things in it through an instrumental approach and understanding. This seems to undermine the advent of meaning by degrading all ends to further means. This consequently brings into question the ability of *homo faber* to preserve authentic human appearances through remembrance and fabrication.

However, rather than accept the formulated dependence of action upon work, a possible interdependence that retains the complex and paradoxical relation between the two faculties is posited. *Amor mundi*, for example, suggests that actors care for the world as a space of appearances, but also as a durable, shared context. It is also care for the world that informs the faculty of remembrance. It is this shared concern that elucidates the interdependence between action and work, and that comes forth and is retained in the memories and judgments of spectators. This is the conclusion of Chapter 3 and the basis of the argument in Chapter 4. It is finally concluded that the faculty of judgment may mediate the tension between *praxis* and *poiēsis*. Such a mediation, however, must achieve certain criteria, as set forth in this study.

First, this interdependence must not subsume one faculty (either action or work) to the dominance of the other. A conflation of these modes merely undermines the essential characteristics of each. Hence, plurality, distinctness, freedom, and frailty must be preserved in the relation between action and judgment. And the principles of utility and durability must also be retained in the relation between work and judgment. In other words, the tensions between *praxis* and *poiēsis* must be sustained. Any kind of harmonious arrangement of faculties will simply deny the tension that accompanies the conflicting principles and qualities of each. As a faculty that articulates care for the world, judging appears able to retain and mediate this tension.

Based in the *sensus communis*, which concerns both the common world and communicability, the faculty of judgment attends to the qualities and principles of both action and work.

That judgments reflect concern with the common world and what should appear in it indicates a link with the faculty of work. In Chapter 2 it is argued that the commonality of the world is possible only through the advent of durability. Only through the quality of durability do the things of the world achieve an objectivity independent from the work process and the subjective interests and needs of individuals. And only then does the worldly artifice appear as something held in common. It is through the faculty of *poiēsis*, its instrumental approach and concern with durability, that such a common world is achieved. As the desire and capacity to build and cherish the durable world, *poiēsis* fulfils this aspect of judging.

Political action similarly reveals a concern with the common world. The commonality of the world and the condition of plurality (the presence of others) articulate one another. The world as common context and concern, as a public space of appearance, is the basis of action as appearance and performance. It therefore informs the disclosure of distinct identities, human plurality, and freedom as non-sovereign beginning. In addition, actors' concern with the common world entails a concern with durability. But the difficulties of this point, as noted above, are potentially mediated by the exercise of judging. Human appearances and events are judged meaningful by spectators, whose judgments both illuminate these appearances and endure in the common world. The faculty of judgment thus informs the process of remembrance and fabrication, whereby such meaningful appearances are objectified into durable constructs.

The faculty of judging and the *sensus communis* furthermore negotiate the seemingly contradictory significance granted to the appearances of political actors and to narrative remembrance in more tangible forms. By virtue of the nature of work, an end product achieves an independence from the work process, and in doing so becomes subject to the test of public appearance. *Homo faber's* concern with durability thus translates into a concern with public appearance as such. This concern is informed by the disinterestedness and discriminating love for the world that defines the judging faculty. The utilitarian mentality that informs the work process is thus balanced by *homo faber's* ability to approach the world as a public space of appearance. In doing so, the fabricator must confront others' perspectives and judgments that constitute and endure in the public world. The sovereignty of the artist's perspective, which

appears in the end product, is thus challenged by the fact of plurality. In other words, as a concern with the world as shared context and concern, the faculty of judgment takes heed of both durability and plurality.

This openness to the perspectives of others does not, however, undermine the principles of the work activity. Rather, it suggests that it is in the mode of judging spectators, and not of *homo faber* qua fabricator alone, that human beings understand and preserve the beauty and meaningfulness of appearing phenomena. The participation of the judging spectators thus introduces the need for and standard of communicability.

The communicability of judgments may be determined in the sharing of perspectives and opinions through the faculty of *praxis*. The act of judging therefore involves a kind of action that takes account of human plurality, distinctness, and freedom. It shows a sense of togetherness that fosters respect for others as distinct equals. Coupled with the disinterested attitude of judging spectators, the role of *praxis* suggests that the act of judging is itself an act of freedom as non-sovereign beginning.

This further illuminates the fact that no spectators are the final arbiters of meaning. By virtue of natality, human beings retain the capacity to begin and impart new judgments. Consequently, the meaningful appearances that are remembered and objectified through fabrication retain the plurality and openness of judgments. This is possible insofar as the judgments of the spectators endure in the objects of remembrance, and invite continual return by new spectators to the question of meaning. Thus, although the capacity for fabrication and preservation offset the transience of action, the non-sovereignty, unpredictability, and boundlessness intrinsic to acting human beings is retained.

The notion of communicability further necessitates relevance to others. This need for relevance applies to the public appearances of objects and actors alike. Both relevance and communicability point to the sharing of a world that relates people to one another. Meaning and understanding are therefore only possible (and public appearances only relevant) if there is a context held in common. The beauty and meaning of an object is determined by its relevance to others as well as by the existence of a durable public world. And it is by virtue of the common concern for public appearances, and through the preservation of the world, that enduring judgments continue to invite new judgments in the form of beginning. Objects of remembrance

are therefore themselves only relevant by disclosing the shared world (or an aspect thereof), and by being open to new meanings and perspectives.

But the faculty of *praxis*, with its inherent frailty and freedom, is also not cut off from the durable world but is rather informed by it. The communication and distinction of oneself similarly necessitates understanding by and relevance to others through the mediation of a common world. *Who* one is, even as freedom, can only be understood in relation to the world and one's being in the world. And this common context can itself only endure insofar as human beings continually re-situate themselves as beginnings in relation to it. That action entails worldly principles motivated by *amor mundi* implies that actors engage with one another in a joint concern for how the common world should look, and thus how human beings should live together.

Amor mundi expresses a care for the world as a care for a public space of political action, for authentic human appearances, and for a durable world that holds us in common and orients our activities. Just as the *sensus communis* and the faculty of judgment are common to all human beings qua human beings, so love for the world is a possibility intrinsic to human, worldly existence. Insofar as human beings are free and worldly beings, the activity of judging illuminates the worldliness of action and freedom, as well as the potential meaningfulness of the world. Freedom and worldliness articulate one another, just as durability and plurality appear together in the human efforts to share and take care of the world. Similarly, meaningful phenomena illuminate the human condition as it comprises the frailty and non-sovereignty of human being, but also the world as a durable public space. The capacity to preserve and the capacity to begin inform the exercise of judging and constitute the world as durable public space.

Finally, the relationship between *praxis* and *poiēsis* appears all the more powerfully and touches us all the more critically in our present condition. In a world of muted and faceless spaces, of proliferating processes and novelties, efforts to change or preserve seem all but swept away. But questions of who we are clearly still abound. The moments where such questions bring us together are not simply constituted by a sharing of our productions. These are disclosures of our plurality, particularity, and capacity to begin. And these are disclosures not only to us, but also through us and the spaces that we wrest open. Even the briefest of such moments provide the stuff for memory, and return.

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Summary

Title: *Praxis, poiēsis*, and durable public space in the philosophy of Hannah Arendt
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This dissertation examines the potential dependence of *praxis* upon *poiēsis*. The relation between *praxis* and *poiēsis*, or action and work, is complicated by the conflicting qualities and principles of each. This tension, however, illuminates the human being as free and worldly. It is therefore concluded that *praxis* and *poiēsis* form an interdependent tension that is potentially mediated by the faculty of judging and care for the world.

Chapter 1 serves as an introduction to the framework and significant elements of Arendt's overall project. It begins with an elucidation of the philosophical bias against politics that Arendt critiques. The rest of the chapter explores the unique characteristics and principles that Arendt attributes to each respective activity of the *vita activa*. This chapter enables the reader to grasp the significance of the differences that Arendt accentuates between activities, as well as the specific characteristics and principles of action and work.

Chapter 2 introduces the potential dependence of action upon the capabilities of the work activity. It centres on the relationship between action, the condition of plurality, the public space of appearance, and the durable, fabricated world. The durable world provides both a shared context and shared concern for potential action and the realisation of plurality. But this is problematic considering the extent to which the durable world arises through fabrication. This suggests that action is subordinate to the faculty of work. The problematic implications of such a relationship are further analysed, with a focus on the principles that inform *homo faber's* view of the world in general, and the relation between this sensibility and public spaces of appearance in particular. The contradictory principles of work and action, and yet the significance of work in building a durable world, will come to light.

Chapter 3 explores further the extent of the relationship between action and world. The aim is to provide an exegesis of Arendt's notion of *amor mundi*, or love for the world, coupled

with her emphasis on the frailty of action. *Amor mundi* illuminates actors' concern with the world as a space for appearance and as a durable world. However, the extent to which political actors may effectively care for the world is brought into question. The faculties of promise-making, forgiveness, and remembrance are examined as 'solutions' to the frailty of action. But remembrance once again suggests a dependence of action on work. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the relationship between *praxis* and *poiēsis* in light of the role of remembrance and the tension between freedom and permanence.

Chapter 4 builds on the claim that *praxis* and *poiēsis* must be rethought in terms of an interdependence that reflects the nature of human being as free and worldly. It is argued that it is specifically in the faculty of judgment that this interdependence is mediated. The role of the disinterested spectator is therefore introduced and its relevance in both *praxis* and *poiēsis* investigated. This faculty emphasises the importance of spectators who judge all appearances on the basis of beauty and meaning, and out of a concern for the world as a durable public space. The relation between judgment, action, and work also illuminates the condition of the human being as free and worldly, and the capacity to care for the world through the activities of both beginning and preserving.

Key words: Arendt, action, work, durability, plurality, public space, freedom, remembrance, judging, beginning, preserving