

# Arendt on Aesthetic and Political Judgement

## Thought as the Pre-Political

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### The Politics of Critical Thought

In present times, around the globe, we are witnessing a public sphere in crisis, distorted through fake news, lies, threats of violence and call for constraints. This has occurred not only in states of authoritarian rule, but also in liberal societies. Thus, one of the great challenges for critical thought today is to be able to maintain sound methods of reflection when the public space, which since the enlightenment has been called upon to maintain a legacy of critical reflection and freedom, appears undermined. For Kant, Arendt, Habermas and others the public sphere was expected to sustain a measure of soundness of thought. But when the public sphere can no longer do so, and thought retreats into itself, what means do we have to engage in the world and develop a thought that is congruent with political possibilities? The concept of “critical thought” in this context refers not to the school of critical theory, but to the kind of thought that Arendt advocates—a thought that is socially, ethically and politically astute. It means to scrutinise opinions and beliefs and to practice a certain “Socratic midwifery”.<sup>1</sup> It is in this context that the inner voice is heard. The first site of truth in Western philosophical history appeared in the form of a dialogue, and Socrates may be read as an internal voice. In *Theaetetus*, Plato writes: “the soul when thinking appears to me to be just talking—asking questions of herself and answering them, affirming and denying”.<sup>2</sup> But how are we to conceive of the validity of the inner voice? Is thought not merely cementing “what is”, reflecting a state of things that it is unable to change?

For Slavoj Žižek, the problem with Arendt’s philosophy is that she lacks a notion of transformation proper. In representing a position of resistance against utopian ideologies, she becomes a right-wing intellectual “knave”; Arendt is as incapable of producing challenges as the utopian “fool”, according to Žižek.<sup>3</sup> She is merely confirming “what is”.

<sup>1</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy*, ed. Ronald Beiner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 36.

<sup>2</sup> Plato, *Theaetetus*, trans. Benjamin Jowett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 416.

<sup>3</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *In Defense of Lost Causes* (London: Verso, 2009), 29.

Such a charge may well refer to the weight given to thought, and to the function of judgement in the thought of the later Arendt. The domain of the political is not altogether relegated to the world of action. Although this was the primary presumption of *The Human Condition*, and by far the most well-known doctrine in her work, her later writings disproved it. In the lectures on Kant, the political becomes a concept more involved with judgement.<sup>4</sup> The lectures on Kant provided the groundwork for a volume that was never completed; it was meant to comprise the third of a trilogy on thinking, willing and judging. The first two are explored in *Life of the Mind*. Here Arendt's reflections on thinking in *Life of the Mind* lay out a groundwork for the work on judgement. As Arendt explains towards the end of "Thinking" in *Life of the Mind*, thought is the ground for judgement: judgement "realizes thinking" and makes it manifest in the world of appearances.<sup>5</sup>

Arendt does not equate thought with judgement, nor does she equate judgement with political activity. Rather, she defines judgement as integral to political action. As for thought, one could argue, then, that she gives to thought the dignity of being pre-political. It is a dignity that today, in so-called post truth societies, is not easy to uphold; one can retort to Žižek that it is not easy to affirm "what is".

For Arendt, political judgement depends on what she calls a sense of realness, a sense that is formed in and through the public sphere. "What is", a sense of realness, is precisely what was distorted in totalitarian society. And I believe that most of what Arendt ended up writing was conceived against the backdrop of her experience of and work on totalitarian society; hence the insistence on a sense of realness, the sustenance and weight of the public sphere.

### Critical Theory and the Two-in-One

Arendt's agent of thought in *Life of the Mind* is what she calls a two-in-one. It is an individual who thinks about him- or herself, as reflected not only in the history of philosophy but also in literature and art. The thinking individual who is in dialogue with him- or herself is an aspect of plurality and replaces the transcendental subject as the agent of experience.<sup>6</sup> Arendt's famous argument in *Life of the Mind* of thought-processes taking on a figure as a "two-in-one"

<sup>4</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1998), 7: action is the only true correspondent to plurality. As Rudolph Beiner has shown in his postscript to Arendt's lectures on Kant, Arendt's endeavour was to repoliticise judgement, see Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 106–107.

<sup>5</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Life of the Mind I* (London: Harcourt, 1978), 193.

<sup>6</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Life of the Mind I*, 179–97

incorporates reflections on Shakespeare's *Richard III*. This is no coincidence. What is interesting with these plays, and this is perhaps why they have together with for instance *Hamlet* drawn so much interest in the last few years, is that they point to the fragility of that last resort of democracy: thought itself. When opinions cannot be advocated in the open, thought can still withdraw and lay the ground for political judgement.

This has also been staged at the theatre. Shakespeare's play with internal voices has been used for the immanent critique of authoritarian rule. Shostakovich's opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* (1934), for instance, uses a novel by Leskov in order to conjure up a Shakespearian motif, and to stage a critique of Stalin. Written in exile in Finland after a stay in Stockholm, Bertolt Brecht's *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* (1941) is itself an allegory on National Socialism based on *Richard III*. These critical theatrical adaptations, along with others, formed a background against which a significant amount of philosophical reflection dedicated itself to Shakespeare during and after the war. Such reflections focused on the capacity of the individual to reason, reflect and judge. These capacities are also in focus in two of the most talked about performances in Germany in recent years, Thomas Ostermaier's staging of *Hamlet* and *Richard III* at the Schaubühne in Berlin. Engaging with contemporary right-wing populism, Ostermaier refers to a long tradition of critique of authoritarian rule. Ostermaier's target is the neoliberal destruction of democracy, the commodification of power, and rule through fear.

The Shakespearean form of monologue from *Richard III*, directly delivered towards the audience, is a theatrical means of staging the inner voice of a Machiavellian player. As we overhear the inner voice of the king in *Richard III*, authoritarianism is underscored while his symbolic authority is undermined. To Arendt, the play stages the undoing of conscience, an aspect of the process of thought that precedes the capacity to make political judgements.

To many post-war European intellectuals, such as Arendt, Adorno and Brecht, one of the most problematic features of their own time was that conscience had become bankrupt. In 1966, Adorno discussed this in the radio program, "Education after Auschwitz". There is, says Adorno, no conscience in our time.<sup>7</sup> What should be internalised in the form of fundamental laws preserved by each individual has travelled out into a patchwork of contingent rules upheld by external authorities. While exiled in the US, trying his best to succeed the film industry, Brecht writes in his journal: "Shakespeare's grand motif, the

<sup>7</sup> Theodor Adorno, "Education After Auschwitz", *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords*, trans. Henry W. Pickford (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 194

fallibility of instinct (indistinctness of the inner voice) cannot be renewed”.<sup>8</sup> The little people, as Brecht put it, were defenceless against a moral codex that had gone berserk. The problem of the corruption of conscience could not be relegated to grand tragic figures. It was to be found, rather, on a universal scale, in the form of a deafening of an inner voice that should have symbolised the possibility of conscience; there was nothing to hold onto as persecutory and racist ideals took the place of conscience.

The reflections on Shakespeare’s staging of the inner voice became a point of reference for negotiations of self-reflexivity, and questions of compromised forms of contemporary subjectivity for Adorno, Brecht, Arendt and others. Plays such as *Macbeth* and *Hamlet* were seen to deal with issues of power, delusion and madness while problematising the possibilities of action.<sup>9</sup> But they were, above all, seen to stage fundamental problems inherent in contemporary subjectivity.

### Arendt’s Reading of *Richard III*

Richard III, as is well known, murders his adversaries in his ascent to power. He is plagued by an inner voice of doubt that pushes through in instances like the monologue quoted by Arendt:

What do I fear? Myself? There’s none else by:  
 Richard loves Richard: that is, I am I.  
 Is there a murder here? No. Yeas, I am:  
 Then fly: what! From myself? Great reason why  
 Lest I revenge. What! Myself upon myself?  
 Alack! I love myself. Wherefore? For any good  
 That I myself have done unto myself?  
 O! no: alas! I rather hate myself  
 For hateful deeds committed by myself.  
 I am a villain. Yet I lie, I am not.  
 Fool, of thyself speak well: fool, do not flatter.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Bertolt Brecht, Journal Entry, sept 20 1945, quoted in James K. Lyon, *Bertolt Brecht in America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 80.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Zdenek Stribny, *Shakespeare and Eastern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Agnes Heller, *The Time is Out of Joint: Shakespeare as Philosopher of History* (Boston: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), and Marta Fik, “Shakespeare in Poland, 1918-1989”, *Theatre Research International*, 21: 2 (1996).

<sup>10</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Life of the Mind I*, 189.

Here, the inner voice appears as the two-in-one, literally speaking. Richard the murderer speaks and thinks to himself. The monologues communicate through an inner voice. The two-in-one of the thought-process is, for Arendt, dramatically different from being in the world of appearances, where “the outside world intrudes upon the thinker and cuts short the thinking process”.<sup>11</sup> In private, Richard sees the ghosts of all those he has murdered. In public, he rejects them. The ghosts are dismissed to the cellar of non-consciousness. But the inner discord, nevertheless, interferes with the capacity of judgement.

The scene with Richard III is mentioned in conjunction with Arendt’s negotiations of the two-in-one, her reflections on thought as internalising some kind of alterity. According to Arendt, thought proper strives towards a certain congruence with itself, it strives to accommodate the other in such a way that discord is replaced with differentiation: I become the two-in-one, I accommodate the internal friend “at home”.<sup>12</sup> As Richard is alone, the ghosts are present in his mind. As he meets with his army later on, he forecloses this process of negotiation.

The question of conscience was important also in Arendt’s report on Eichmann in Jerusalem, which moreover is the work in which *Richard III* was mentioned for the first time. Eichmann, Arendt notes, surprisingly, did not deny the call of conscience—he was in fact obsessed with it. He did not need to “close his ears to the voice of conscience”, because his conscience did not, unlike Richard III’s, speak with the voices of his victims. It spoke, instead, with a “respectable voice”, with the voice of what Eichmann regarded as the respectable society around him.<sup>13</sup> Eichmann’s actions, then, were not the result of a denial but a perversion of the call of conscience. But it was never rooted in fundamental laws of morality. Eichmann’s conscience was not founded on the prohibition against killing the other.<sup>14</sup> Again we hear again of an absence of fundamental laws, which resounds in Adorno’s analysis of “cold thought” as well as in Brecht’s display of the perversion of moral laws on a universal scale.

In *Richard III*, thought comes across in the form of voices, bringing us beyond the idea of a self that is self-contained and self-reflective. The inner voice is a trace inscribed in consciousness that appears to give witness to another consciousness. Although that consciousness is never fully represented, it appears as the trace of something or somebody. The monologue resounds

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 185.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 190–91.

<sup>13</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (New York: Viking, 2. ed. 1964), 61.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. See in particular chapter 4.

with “the standpoint of somebody else”, and it evokes an internal voice that may guide our sense of the real, an internalised presence of alterity that “assures us of the reality of the world and of ourselves”.<sup>15</sup> An aspect of plurality manifests itself in the thought of Richard III to begin with, but then is cut off.

It is this sense of the real that has been cast off in the testimony of Eichmann, offering us instead a dead language of bureaucracy. If there is an inner voice in Eichmann, it is a commander who talks to a “knave”, submissive to any kind of demands, an invisible master rather than the trace of an alterity to whom I owe my conscience and my consciousness. It is clear that to Arendt, it is impossible to detach these issues from what she regarded as the political proper, the functioning of the public sphere.

### The Ear of Critical Thought

*The Human Condition* conceived of freedom in conjunction with a model of the public space that is no longer applicable.<sup>16</sup> Recently, Arendt’s analysis of the totalitarian tendency to suppress public spaces through lies, distortions and suppression, has garnered considerable attention. There are several ways in which public spaces have been perforated also in democratic societies, for instance through political lies,<sup>17</sup> the commodification of politics, the threat of violence etc. In times of short-sighted economism and individualism, finding new models for judgement is one of the greatest challenges for critical thought.

Something that may contribute to this problematic is widening the scope of the conception of the public sphere. We need to understand not only the role of free speech and action, but also thinking and judging. For this purpose, Hannah Arendt has much to offer; although, alas, her work on these issues was never completed. In *Life of the Mind*, she develops a distinct theory of thought, which can be linked to a notion of plurality inherent to the very definition of the public sphere. And her notion of judgement, as has been argued, plays a distinct political role.

For Arendt, the public sphere represents plurality, for instance through the interaction of institutions, but also through individuals gathered in various forms of collectivity. Although they appeal to different modes of discourse and action, both Habermas’ and Arendt’s notion of the public sphere, elaborated

<sup>15</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 50.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. 12. This is made clear by Arendt who notes the exclusion of slaves etc. if one sticks with an ancient model of free political life.

<sup>17</sup> As noted by Arendt in “Lying in Politics”, in *Crisis of the Republic* (Orlando: Harcourt, 1972), 1–49.

after Kant, can be regarded as normative models of how an open society was supposed to function, in the wake of the totalitarian state.

Many have questioned the current relevance of Arendt's post-war notion of the public sphere.<sup>18</sup> According to Bruno Latour, political issues are no longer motored by public debates but by concerns invested in by multiple individuals. These concerns may find an outlet in sites that constitute a network binding together a hidden geography, for instance through works of art, sites on the Internet, and clusters of groups. Latour's notion of hidden geographies identifies political concerns that are negotiated on sites often not public in and of themselves, but merely semi-public. Real political issues are no longer fuelled by ideas and ideologies. They have to do with particular issues that give rise to feelings: it could be the melting of the polar icecaps, writers in prison, the depletion of cultural institutions. We no longer gather around ideas that found "realpolitik" at the cost of the concern of living beings. We gather around objects that are immediately linked to the big questions of our time. Here, we find the existence of an alternative public space that no longer is a space of free speech but of engagement. We find a politics based not on freedom but on bonding. It is here that a hidden geography comes to the fore, on virtual spaces and cultural spaces.<sup>19</sup> The concept of what is public must then be widened: it must refer to all possible places for engagement that can even be considered—the question is no longer what the physical conditions are for publicness. It applies rather to the networks behind the engagement. In an exhibition called "Making Things Public", performed in Karlsruhe 2005, Latour created a simulation of the invisible flows and movements that create public spaces today.<sup>20</sup>

In many ways, however, Latour's idea of new forms of publicness only emphasises the kind of complexities that existed already before; as Kant noted, not only opinions and action but also affectivity of engagement belongs to public cultures.<sup>21</sup> And for Arendt, not only actions and opinions, but also thought, must be considered crucial for democratic practices. As Arendt has shown, thought is not abstract, it is embedded in a variety of practices, and it has several

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Chantal Mouffe, "Art and Democracy: Art as an Agnostic Intervention in Public Space", *Open 14: Art as a Public Issue: How Art and Institutions Reinvent the Public Dimension*, eds. Jorinde Seijdel and Liesbeth Melis (Amsterdam: NAI, 2008)

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Bruno Latour, "Emancipation or attachments? The different futures of politics", In *Modernity, Postmodernity, Contemporaneity*, eds. Terry Smith, Okwui Enwezor, and Nancy Condee (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 309–24.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Bruno Latour, "From Realpolitik to Dingpolitik, Making Things Public", *Atmospheres of Democracy*, eds. Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel (Cambridge: MIT, 2005), 14–31.

<sup>21</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. James Creed Meredith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), § 29.

functions; art for instance. Just as speech, art is embedded in a context. Thought is not autonomous.

What marks the crisis of the public sphere is the experience of the senses—for instance, the affect of “enthusiasm” is replaced with the overruling imaginary structures of ideology. Thought and experience become disconnected. Rather than negotiating reality as a ground for the feasibility of action, the agent of the public sphere becomes someone who has many opinions. When opinions rule over experience, reality becomes distorted. Experience is no longer a measure that may point to the coming together of a sense of the real, a *sensus communis*. The undoing of experience produces not only fake news but also fantasies. The responsibility that accompanies thought is replaced with the attachment to fantasies that may be more or less persecutory. Instead of acting in a make up of society where differences are accepted, persecutory fantasies about the other come to reign.

This has resulted in the loss of the inner voice, the tonality of alterity. It is replaced with the voice demanding submission of the “knave”, the subject that thinks but who merely affirms “what is” in the language of Slavoj Žižek. The voicing of readymade opinions, often construed in and through virtual collectives, replaces thought. In contrast, can the internal voice of thought, or what Kant calls “the voice in the belly”, serve as a site for pre-political forms of negotiation in times when public space in the post-war sense has been compromised?

### What Is the Inner Voice?

Philosophy has often been conceived through a concept of *theoria*, an idea of overview or spectatorship. There is an awareness of this in the critique of western logo- and visual-centrism, as we can find for instance in Jacques Derrida, Jean-Luc Nancy, Mladen Dolar, and others.<sup>22</sup> The first site of truth in Western political history appeared in the form of an internal voice. Socratic consciousness appeared through a fictional character without body, character, or face. This has continued in the tradition of philosophy, where the voice comes forth as a tonality that appears in metaphysics, ethics, politics and physics. The Socratic voice may be an invisible voice of consciousness, but it also serves the injunction of laws and moral concepts in a more formalised manner.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Jacques Derrida, *The Ear of the Other: Otobiography, Transference, Translation*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1988) and Jean-Luc Nancy, *A L'écoute*. (Paris: Broché, 2002).



To quote Jean-Luc Nancy, the subject of vision is always given as an angle, a point of view. Listening, on the other hand, penetrates, but at the same time, the locus of its call is unclear.<sup>23</sup> Sounds are not something we act upon. They are something that break down our defences, they run deep into us. Whereas vision is framed, listening exposes us to a lack of limit. From such a perspective, the inner voice of thought can be described as a kind of sensorial encroachment. The voice through which we think, the moods that accompany thoughts, impinge upon us from both the outside and the inside, transcending the division between private and public, the intimate and the collective.

In times of authoritarianism, might the inner voice escape ruination? Hannah Arendt reflects on the tonalities of the inner voice from two points of view. The primary question is how actions “in concert”, collective actions that carry their own specific mood, are made possible. The second, of principal interest for us here, is how thought carries its own tonalities.

From the first point of view, collective action is best formulated through a notion of attunement. It is something that happens, something around which we simply wrap ourselves without noticing how or why. The verb *hören* (to listen) also carries the connotation of: *gehören*, *hörig*, *gehören*, words that, in English, are translated as to *obey*, *be in bondage*, *to belong*. In *gehören* (to belong), the “listening” implies not just a sense but also a relationship of power. The one who listens is exposed; sound is more penetrating than visual sights. Through sight, we can orient ourselves in space and locate our position. Sound, however, is not always easy to follow towards its source. It may surround us and pierce through our shields more easily. Sound may be experienced as lacking the kind of shape that makes it objectifiable and possible to locate.

Arendt’s notion of mood, which accompanies her conception of actions in concert, can be compared to the Heideggerian term *Stimmungen*, a form of unveiling that is non-discursive and non-conceptual. It is also not perceptible or sensible; it is a mood that sticks to phenomena of experience without being properties of them. To Heidegger, moods such as fear and the sense of the uncanny disclose predicaments of human beings. At the same time, moods are conveyed in music, literature and art in general. In this sense, *Stimmungen* belong to those aspects that cut across the limit between art and philosophy.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, an aspect of mood overruns the distinction between the collective and the individual, between public action and the tonality of individual thought.

<sup>23</sup> Jean-Luc Nancy, *A L’écoute*, 44.

<sup>24</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans John McQuarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 1978), 230–35.

Relating *Stimmungen* to politics, however, is not unproblematic. In Slavoj Žižek's film *The Pervert's Guide to Ideology*, one scene depicts Beethoven's ninth symphony as a suggestive device; not only is it used as a signature for the European Union, it was a symbol in Nazi Germany, the China of the cultural revolution, Stalinist USSR, etc., an empty shell into which all ideologies can be poured. In the negotiation of a theory of listening that can be related to political action, therefore, we need to separate the notion of the collective, and the kind of ideology produced in a collective, from the kind of attunement Arendt relates to political action, properly speaking.

Here, the notion of plurality is crucial; attunement is a figure that begins with plurality. From this point of view, we need to consider plurality as something more than the collective. Here, I think that Arendt's notion of thinking, and the kind of inherent plurality that it may represent, is helpful. It is a plurality illuminated by way of the notion of the inner voice, presenting the two-in-one, the plurality present in thought itself.

The inner voice, in this way, may orient us towards a horizon that supports a common grasp of the world. Thought may offer a site of truth that resists assaults on our senses of the real in other compromised forms of discourse.

### How Do I Listen?

From the notion of the inner voice as a kind of integration of the other, and from the notion that thought has a kind of tonality, a subset of questions follows: is the inner voice private, or does it engage and direct us to a community? Is the inner voice related to corporeal desires and intimate relations, or can it, in contrast, offer a means to better understand community?

In his *Anthropology*, Kant writes that thought is not devoid of communicable language, it is not simply silent or abstract. It is communicable language directed to oneself. Thinking, he comments famously, is *speaking* with oneself. Figuratively it would correspond to "speech in the belly".<sup>25</sup>

This means for Kant that thought is accompanied by an I of apperception that is tangible through an inner tonality. To think, therefore, is to listen to oneself. This is a conception of thought that, for Kant, is not contrary to a metaphysical notion of reason. On the contrary, for Kant, the tonality of the belly can be encountered in the movement towards humanity's venture to think for itself, i.e. to use reason. Here, another element is added, a form of extension: thought, among other criteria, should be reflective and consistent. But it must

<sup>25</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, trans. Robert Louden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 86.

also apply a certain universal command. For Kant, this is not simply abstract. His formula for the command—and this intrigues Arendt—is the following: to use reason is “to think for oneself (in communication with human beings) into the place of every other person”.<sup>26</sup>

Critical thought, Arendt argues, becomes in principle “anti-authoritarian”<sup>27</sup> from such a point of view. The subject must be capable of thinking by itself and not in accordance with inherited and imposed views or ideas. It must negotiate the capacity of putting oneself in the place of the other.<sup>28</sup> Ever since Socrates, thought has been a silent dialogue with oneself, directed towards the public. What Kant negotiates distinctly is precisely that direction, the transient leap towards the public, which should from the very beginning be inherent in the process of thinking itself.

Thought itself, as Arendt notes in her diaries, may be guilty of the mistaken leap towards a humanist metaphysics that occurs when thought is conceived as an inner, silent dialogue with a representative of reason that has no tone and no self. When thought fails to appear in the form of a tone, or when it appears in a way that is not distinct enough, the thinking self appears to be ageless, without qualities: “It is”, Arendt writes, “as if I am not a human being, but *the* human being”.<sup>29</sup>

The very attachment to the idea of thinking as a kind of toneless inner dialogue may mean that I can *only* be myself when I am thinking, Arendt writes. But this is a grave mistake. Heidegger, Arendt notes, could not deal with the fact that thought might not only be complicit with, but in fact also dependent on, the manifestation of plurality. But it is not only Heidegger who is unable to hear not only the call of conscience but the actual space from where it derives. The sterility of the thought of Hegel and Marx, Arendt argues, lies in their understanding of thought as pure consciousness.<sup>30</sup>

As a reader of Kant, Arendt picks up the idea that to think is to speak to oneself, and to hear oneself “*innerlich*”.<sup>31</sup> This “inner” motion of thought is not only inner in the sense of being incorporated. It is *innerlich*, a tonality that is intense, when the voice from the belly suggests a doubleness of agency. The doubleness of the thinking individual is added to Arendt’s notion of plurality.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 124.

<sup>27</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy*, 38.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 42.

<sup>29</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Denktagebuch*, 2 vols, eds. Ursula Ludz and Ingeborg Nordmann (Munich: Piper, 2002), 723.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 695.

<sup>31</sup> Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, 86.

Thought does not have an object. It is not congruent with judgement, which has an object, but traces, rather, a relation to the world. Judging, Arendt argues, deals with thinking, deals with absences: absent friends, the negative, a world that is not present.

Thought is not the universal reflection of reason, although it can be that. Most of the time, however, it is embedded in a mood that carries as much meaning as do connotations of words flowing in a conscious train of thought. The mood of the thinking ego, she writes, is serenity, melancholy even, and intensely involved with recollection.

The subject that thinks does so from a position in which its reflections are intertwined with the tonality of its inner voice. What is “inner” to Arendt comes to the fore as a mood. Through this mood, language is not only pointing to phenomena, but also to itself. Language, therefore, does not communicate emotions to the exterior world as much as it transposes thought through moods.<sup>32</sup> Thought becomes embedded in moods and tonalities of language. Action is also encompassed by “moods”, the happiness of the revolution for instance. The concept of mood transcends the differentiation between individual and collectivity; it encompasses the thinking individual in larger movements of action.<sup>33</sup>

The capacity to think involves an “enlarged mentality”.<sup>34</sup> This means that inner thought is not a detached ego-less and universalistic abstraction, it is attached to a form of representation, though it may be a vague one. As one can argue by reading Arendt, the inner voice can be imbued with tasks that point in a direction where the inner voice of critical thought acquires a tonality that pushes the limits of the I of apperception. Thought points to the primacy of alterity through the use of imagination. Through our imagination, we “go visiting”.<sup>35</sup> That means, when we abstract from the particular we are not merely set in a colourless and airy room of the mind. We imagine places and people with which we are unfamiliar. The inner voice, in this way, pushes us in directions with which we are unfamiliar.

Sometimes we may hear ourselves thinking. We may hear our own voice, as in an echo. Sometimes, thoughts appear, as voices in a cave. They strike us, as

<sup>32</sup> Arendt, *Denktagebuch*, 690.

<sup>33</sup> It is, in this sense, as Artemy Magun has put it, a form of rhythmic and reasoned coordination, with other things, beings and with the internal splits within oneself. See Magun, *Unity and Solitude* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 41.

<sup>34</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, § 41. See also Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 73.

<sup>35</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 43.

from the outside. We hear them, from an invisible point that we cannot see, and yet they are structuring our perception and our apprehension of space.<sup>36</sup> When we hear our own thoughts, we experience ourselves not as estranged from ourselves, but somehow as naturally double, as reflecting beings capable of reflecting in the world internally and silently, in our own minds. When the voices appear as foreign, as the voices of angels or devils, or simply as belonging to other people, this would be a sign of psychosis.<sup>37</sup> When we hear our own thoughts internally, however, as aspects of ourselves, we experience ourselves as integrated in the world, as capable of reflecting, and although we may be alone, as capable of engaging in vivid internal reasoning with ourselves, and with the world.

To Arendt, then, we can only really think when others are encroaching upon us. Only in a world of plurality can we truly reflect on ourselves and our actions. For Arendt, the truly interesting forms of thought manifest themselves in the engagement with internal voices. It is certain that thinking and action are two separate activities that can never be viewed as interchangeable. But thinking, although it is conducted in solitude, manifests itself precisely through the encroachment of others not only on our horizon of perception but also in our minds.

Thought, Arendt suggests, may appear to put us close to the neutral manifestation of a non-self: "It is because the thinking ego is ageless and nowhere that past and future can become manifest to it as such, emptied, as it were, of their concrete content and liberated from all spatial categories". But this neutrality is only an illusion. Thinking, in fact, takes place in a "time-space", in which the thinker is reflected and deflected. Time can come into being "only with [the thinker's] self-inserting appearance".<sup>38</sup> Neither philosophy, nor literature, may exist outside of the "time-space" in which the activity of thinking, writing or listening takes place; producing the deflection of those that think, tell or listen. This is precisely what philosophy may learn, when it listens to literature. There is no place outside of time that can be emptied of this deflection.

It is this challenge that the inner voice of critical thought needs to meet; gathering voices, in order to listen, rather than return to the same, and thus straying errantly, ever further away from the web of voices. It is this challenge, also, that we need to face as we look for new models for critical thought, and I believe that this is what Arendt allows us to do.

<sup>36</sup> Michel Chion, *The Voice in Cinema* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 21.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Jacques Lacan, *Le Sinthome* (1975–76) (Paris: Broché, 2005)

<sup>38</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future* (New York: Viking, 1961), 10–11.