The Task of Judgment:
Arendt's Unwritten Treatise

Anamarie R. Avecilla
Ateneo de Manila University
aravecilla@gmail.com

Abstract:
An aspect of Hannah Arendt's work has been getting considerable attention—her unwritten Theory of Judgment, which was to compose the third volume of her last written work, *The Life of the Mind.* Through this account, political scientists look at the possibility of having ongoing dialogues between communities that do not share principles and beliefs. The problem is that, short of two quotes, Arendt never got to write such volume because of her unexpected death on December 4, 1975. What has been considered her theory of judgment is primarily based on a lecture on what she asserts to be Kant's undeveloped political philosophy delivered in 1974, posthumously published as *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy.* Arendt scholars have been intrigued by this problem. What could she have written in this third volume? How can this missing piece be represented, given that her previous writings were mostly focused on her more systematic theory of action? Is there, perhaps, a line of thought that can be traced from her writings and be coherently represented as a theory? This study aims to answer these questions. It aims to present one way of construing what Arendt has left unwritten, her notion of Judgment, and create groundwork for any further inquiry into what the more philosophical aspect of her ideas can make possible for understanding contemporary politics.

Keywords:
Arendt, Kant, political philosophy, theory of judgment, community

Introduction

With a systematic theory of action, Hannah Arendt has become a distinguished thinker that contemporary political scientists turn to. They consult her ideas to find a new approach to understanding and doing politics, given that her redefinition of action, freedom, and other political themes seems most fitting to the unpredictable events that constantly appear as public issues. The participative quality of her notion of politics has also gained attention as it addresses the alienation of modern man, who, based on her theory, is called to insert himself in the public sphere, escape from his isolated anonymity and introduce his unique existence through speech and action in politics.

However, another aspect of her work has been getting considerable attention—her unwritten Theory of Judgment, which was to compose the third volume of her last written work, The Life of the Mind. Through this account, political scientists look at the possibility of having ongoing dialogues between communities that do not share principles and beliefs. The problem is that, short of two quotes, Arendt never got to write such volume because of her unexpected death on December 4, 1975. What has been considered her theory of judgment is primarily based on a lecture on what she asserts to be Kant's undeveloped political philosophy delivered in 1974, posthumously published as *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*.

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Arendt's Theory of Judgment

Essential to Arendt's conception of judgment is her notion of thinking. While thinking is involved with things that are not present, it is indispensable to judgment, which is always concerned with particular situations. She says that thinking is self-destructive; it unfreezes solid concepts, definitions and doctrines.[1] It overturns presumed standards and

[1] "It is in its nature to undo, unfreeze as it were, what language, the medium of thinking, has frozen into thought--words (concepts, sentences, definitions, doctrines)...The consequence of this peculiarity is that thinking inevitably has a destructive, undermining effect on all established criteria, values, measurements for good and evil, in short on those customs and rules of conduct we treat of in morals and ethics." Hannah Arendt, "Thinking and Moral Considerations" in *Responsibility and Judgment*, ed. by Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2003), 175-6.

pre-established criteria of what is good or evil and leaves one with nothing but perplexities. In her lectures, she quotes Lessing to express the destructive effect of thinking, "The trouble with men of critical thought is that they make pillars of the best-known truths shake wherever they let their eyes fall."[2] Because of this then, thinking creates the mental space that allows a person to form judgments based on the particularity of the situation, rather than by easily appropriating universal categories to what is at hand. It loosens the clutches of convention so that, although decision-making inevitably relies on previous knowledge, one becomes aware of the extent to which frameworks and standards can be applied to the situation. Judgment, then, is the outward manifestation of thinking in the sphere of human affairs. Based on her theory of action, Arendt contends that the realm of politics consists of an incessant flow of novel events so that occasions in history need to be considered in light of the conditions that define their particularity.[3] Thus, political matters always demand the use of judgment, with its essential prerequisite: thinking. This purging element of thinking is political by implication. Thinking liberates judgment, which is man's most political mental faculty.

Arendt's last work entitled The Life of the Mind was to have three parts, namely, "Thinking", "Willing" and "Judging." While the first two parts now compose the said book, Arendt died before she was able to synthesize a theory of judgment. However, reflections on the subject can be gleaned from these sections as well from other pieces such as "Thinking and Moral Consideration", essays in Between Past and Future, and, as was earlier mentioned, her *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*. These works reveal two models of judgment based on different standpoints. One is based on the viewpoint of the political actor who judges in order to act in the public realm, while the other takes the position of the spectator, the poet and historian, or storyteller, who culls meaning from the past and reconciles man to past events. Yet these two modes are based on a more general theory, which Arendt borrows from Kant's discourse on aesthetics in his Critique of Judgment. This appropriation is original to Arendt in that, first of all, it provides the novel notion of non-deliberative judgment, and secondly, Kant himself provides for a systematic moral theory that serves as basis of his political theory. As such, the use of this theory of art to reflections on political judgment almost seems capricious as well as intentionally dissident to norms of political theory. However, Arendt argues for its validity consistent with her

[2] Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, ed. by Ronald Beiner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press,1982), 38.

[3] Arendt says that politics is the realm of human action, the consequences of which is both unpredictable and irreversible. Because the human affairs consist of constantly acting and interacting men, their deeds create politics to be an incessant flow of novel events which makes sense if comprehended in their own particularity rather than being explained away by some general ideology or historical trend. In her essay, "The Concept of History", she describes Greek and Roman historiography which she later on pits against her criticism of the modern notion of history. She states, "The lesson of each event, deed or occurrence is revealed in and by itself...Causality and context were seen in a light provided by the event itself, illuminating a specific segment of human affairs...Everything that was done or happened contained and disclosed its share of 'general' meaning within the confines of its individual shape and did not need a developing and engulfing process to become significant." Hannah Arendt, "The Concept of History", in *Between Past and Future* (New York: Penguin Books, 1977), 64.

earlier written theory of action. She claims that what is common to both arts and politics is that they are phenomena of the world. This means that both are concerned with things that make their appearance in the world, like objects of art or men's words and deeds. As such, their existence is both contingent and stubborn—although things could have been otherwise, these appearances simply are, and they provide no conclusive reason for being what they are.

In *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, judgment is defined as the capacity to form an opinion or conclusion by representative thinking, that is, by bringing to mind the standpoints of those whose interests and opinions are involved. This is not done by blindly adopting points of view, especially since they are likely to contradict each other and one's own. And while it is also not a matter of counting the majority vote, which falls back into a statistical-rational tool of governmentality, it does not fall to the extreme end of losing all sense of objectivity by emotionally empathizing with people. Rather, representative thinking requires that one must be able to imagine being and thinking in the position of others, while remaining to be impartial to any particular one. Through this, he adopts diverse perspectives that reveal a fuller view of the issue, without necessarily losing sight of his own. What this achieves is an enlarged mentality or a mindset that accommodates different standpoints.[4] Arendt says that the better one's ability to imagine this, the stronger will be his capacity for representative thinking, and thus the more valid his conclusion is. As such, while this judgment remains to be mere opinion, it gains validity by the fact that it has been viewed from different and possibly opposing viewpoints but retains its correctness.

Through Kant, Arendt found basis for a non-rational determination of judgment. Such aversion to rationality—in the form of congealed beliefs and set bureaucracies for decision-making, cognitive or logical processes simply applied to different situations—comes from Arendt's view of the tyrannical role of any metaphysical or foundational truth in politics, whether it is principled belief or procedure. For her, politics is all about action, which is really the act of speaking in public about public affairs. Authentic politics then is all about deliberation, persuasion, debate, and eventually, resultant decisions, which deal with politics itself—policies and institutions that will preserve a political body and government that allow for the continuance of further deliberations on matters that appear in the common world of men. The application of judgments made on the arts creates the space for judging based on what is at hand, or what is making its appearance, rather than on what was previously believed.

As such, the very root and condition of politics is plurality or the utter uniqueness of each and every participatory individual in politics, which allows discourse and sharing of opinions to persist. Thus, any essential truth that claims to transcend and is imposed upon political debate and decision-making defeats the very existence of politics. What this eventually implies is that judgment gives dignity to opinion because it reveals that man has the capacity to take plurality into account in making a conclusion. Thus, a well-formed

[4] Arendt, "Truth and Politics" in *Between Past and Future*, 241.

opinion may not have the rational, universal basis of truth, but it has a fuller view of actual reality as seen from different standpoints. At the same time, judgment deals with factual truths, or facts about things that have come to pass, and about which men present themselves to each other in discourse. For man, whose inherent condition is co-existence with others, the inexhaustible richness of deliberation is of greater importance than any single truth.[5] Arendt sees the mutability of opinions not as a mark of imperfection but that of dynamism most apt to human affairs. Thus, taking into account this dynamic between plurality and the truth about real occurrences in the world, Arendt asserts that judgment is a specifically political ability. It enables man to orient himself in the world in so far as it is common to all.[6]

However, political deliberations and judgment refer not only to man's individual capacity for representative thinking. As mentioned, affairs in politics are appearances in a common world as it is shared by all judgment-makers, and more importantly, the sense by which a person fits in this world as part of the human community. When judgment is made it does not appeal to the capricious preferences of the judging subject usually understood to be his own personal taste, and which would make it a concern outside of the political realm. Rather, such judgment points to the possibility of communicating this taste to those who, belonging to the same world of appearances, witness the same thing. Any judgment is always turned toward others, looking to persuade them as to its validity.

With this analysis, Arendt applauds Kant for liberating the notion of 'taste' from its subjectivistic connotation. She quotes Kant, saying, "In matters of taste we must renounce ourselves in favor of others," and "In Taste egoism is overcome."[7] Yet she further clarifies that while it dispenses of subjective relativism, this overcoming of idiosyncrasies does not lead to a purely objective reality that will allow judgment to be determined cognitively. Rather, this non-subjective element in taste implies intersubjectivity, once again appealing to plurality or to man's necessary co-existence with other men. As Arendt says in her lecture, "Judgments, and especially judgments of taste, always reflects upon others and their taste, takes their possible judgments into account. This is necessary because I am human and cannot live outside the company of men."[8] In other words, any judgment of taste relies on this intersubjectivity for its validity, and only a judgment-making process open to discourse, to taking others' tastes into account, can achieve this.

Applied in politics, those that deal with events set off by men's words and deeds in his community, Arendt asserts that this same process of rendering judgment is made. While there is no talk of tastes in this realm, there are perspectives and convictions that are always matters of opinion. Yet again, a true political judgment, because it is conditioned upon representative thinking, anticipates communication with others in order to seek validity

[5] Ibid., 234.

[6] Arendt, "The Crisis in Culture" in *Between Past and Future*, 221.

[7] Arendt, *Lectures*, 67.

[8] Ibid.

from their agreement. This is achieved by engaging in deliberation to persuade and make them recognize its soundness. As Arendt says, "the power of judgment lies on the potential agreement with others."[9]

This makes clear why judgment is the most political of all of man's mental faculties. Central to this understanding is that every judgment, whether aesthetic or political, relies on intersubjectivity. This is realized by representative thinking, in order to form a judgment, and communicability; in order to validate such judgment. Yet what further allows for the possibility of these two is a more inherent human sense that is the very root of the possibility of judgment and of plurality of human existence. This is the sensus communis or common sense that refers not only to the level of comprehension expected of any normal human being but more significantly to the special sense that allows one to exist with other humans in a shared world. Because man has this basic sense of existing, always in company of other human beings, he is able to place himself in and to think from the standpoint of another, thus having the capacity for representative thinking. Also, because there can be no common world without speech, it is the only way human beings relate to each other, thus making communicability the standard of judgment. This simply means that one's judgment is communicable when it can fit into the common sense of others. Without this sense, human co-existence, which inevitably requires judgment making, can never be possible.

The Actor and the Spectator

There are two models of judgment that Arendt depicts. One comes from the standpoint of the political actor who takes part in politics. He uses judgment in order to identify and carry out the most appropriate decisions in the public realm. The other comes from the position of the spectator who stands outside and does not participate in political affairs. Although he does not practice judgment in order to act, his task is to recover meaning from past events, allowing man to come to terms with the past.

The political actor is in a position to influence the course of events in the public sphere. His decisions inevitably affect his fellow citizens, including those who do not directly and actively participate in politics. The actions he executes effects changes in the public and forms reality. This task propels him to make judgments. Immersed in the particularities of the public, his decisions must be based on the situation or the set of facts at hand. In politics, however, what verifies the correctness of any fact is the extent to which it is viewed from as many perspectives as possible. Undoubtedly, the role of an enlarged mentality is therefore essential to the political actor's judgment. For as long as this affects the shared world of man, actions and the resultant events that it causes become a concern for all. Yet, while representative thinking is a condition in rendering judgment, any careful

[9] Arendt, "The Crisis in Culture", 220.

analysis will reveal that this does not always lead to the most popular decision. As necessary consequence of plurality, any judgment, while it waits to gain validity from the assent of other people, faces at the same time possible disagreement and non-validity.

Such opposition, however, reveals that other perspectives and opinions are at stake. This shows that the concerns of the public are always in the face of urgency, a call as immediate as the concern that makes its appearance in the common world. This demand leaves the politician no set blueprint by which to act. This is why Arendt features a particular ability that the political participant must possess in order to carry out the correct decisions despite the lack of any clear standards. Borrowing from Aristotle, she likens the spectator's judgment to practical insight or phronesis. Taking from Nicomachean Ethics, she defines this ability as the virtue or excellence of the statesman and distinguishes it from the wisdom of the philosopher. She says, "The difference between this judging insight and speculative thought lies in that the former has its roots in what we usually call common sense, which the latter constantly transcends."[10] The employment of phronesis manifests that this expertise is a privilege of a few individuals who have already proved their skills in responding to practical concerns. The validity of their judgment, although depending on the possible consent of people from different perspectives, also relies on their past record of making prudent and judicious judgments, or upon their being phronimos. Thus, Arendt's man of wisdom is tasked to determine representative judgment in order to act in the public sphere, intrinsic to which is the fact that duty and power can only be granted by the populace.

On the other hand, another model of judgment particularly befits the role of the spectator, one who stands outside of politics in order to gather meaning from past events. Also known as the historian or storyteller, he is the teller of facts viewed from a position external to actual political affairs. His standpoint is essential to rendering judgments for it is here that he maintains an impartial stance and is then able to look upon politics from this perspective. If he steps into the public sphere and engages in the dynamic of persuasion and debate, he would forfeit his status since participation is conditioned upon having a particular position to uphold. However, this aim for impartiality does not preclude that facts are never independent of interpretation. Any story is always told from a particular perspective, even if the teller is outside of politics. Yet Arendt maintains that while every spectator comes from a standpoint defined by the different outlooks in his time, and while each generation has the right to write their own version of history, it only arranges the facts according to their perspective. This means that the basic events and circumstances that occur serve as 'raw materials' that obstinately assert their contingent reality and thus cannot be transformed into opinion or interpretation grossly far from what they are.

The main task of the spectator is to weave this story and present it to the public, which allows them to come to terms with what has happened in the past. In recognition of the perspectival nature of history, Arendt declares, "Who says what is always tells a

[10] Ibid., 221.

story."[11] This once again brings to mind Herodotus' endeavor (to say what is), a matter upon which lies not simply having the knowledge of truth, but most importantly the very identity of the world inhabited by man, making it apt to be called 'reality' for its irrefutable actuality. Yet this story is something that men need to recognize and accept in order to legislate as their own identity and reality.

The spectator's judgment therefore takes the form of retrospective assessment. The need for such an assessment reveals that, in the world, the occurrences of phenomena that break our accepted categories and inherited frames of thought never fail to pass us by. Yet man, whose natality[12] corresponds to the fact of his being a principle of beginning in the world, has the capacity to act and set off irreversible and unpredictable processes that continually form this world. While unexpected and novel things arise in the public, human beings as principles of action and beginning, have the capacity to conjure new categories by which these novelties can be thought about. Arendt says, "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."[13] While the capacity to cause as well as to understand novel phenomena are both natural to man, any judgment rendered by the political spectator requires skills that should be practiced while following a particular kind of thinking.

Whereas the political actor makes use of phronesis, the spectator cannot render judgment without the capacity for imagination. Kant defines this as the faculty of representing to the mind an absent object that has been perceived before.[14] Such representation establishes the distance that allows for the historian to judge without bias, yet at the same time bridges the remoteness of an event so that it gains the same level of significance as those of his own affairs. Arendt argues that it is in maintaining this position that one is

[11] Arendt, "Truth and Politics", 261.

[12] Arendt draws a direct connection between natality, the fact of being born, and man's capacity for action. In *The Human Condition*, action is the highest form of human activity in the vita activa as it is conditioned by plurality (the fact that to live is to live among men, and that their sameness lies in their unique distinctness), and rooted in natality or of man as the principle of beginning in the world as signified by his birth. For Arendt, to act means "to take an initiative, to begin, or to set something into motion" and man, because of his uniqueness and natality has the capacity for what is startlingly unexpected. She says, "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...It is in the nature of beginning that something new is started which cannot be expected from whatever may have happened before." Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2d ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 177-178. She brings these notions together when she says, "Human action, like all strictly political phenomena, is bound up with human plurality, which is one of the fundamental conditions of human life insofar as it rests on the fact of natality, through which the human world is constantly invaded by strangers, newcomers whose action and reaction cannot be foreseen by those who are already there and are going to leave in a short while." -- "The Concept of History," 61.

[13] Arendt, "Understanding and Politics," in *Partisan Review*, 20:4 (July-August 1953), 391.

[14] Arendt, *Lectures*, 79.

able to reflect upon past events from various perspectives. At the same time, it must be recalled that any judgment requires the use of common sense. While imagination establishes the necessary position that enables the spectator to make impartial judgments, common sense ensures that the spectator can transcend his individual particularities so that his judgment can be shared by other people. In the project of trying to make the past understandable, his aim is to find a history that is communicable to all. The meaning of history must have cognizable validity.

In story-telling, the events recounted lose their utter contingency because sheer happenings gain some comprehensible meaning to man that enables him to accept things as they are and thus reconcile with reality. This acceptance is truthfulness, and to teach this is the spectator's political role.

The Main Structure of Judgment: The Exemplar Validity of Particulars

In The Critique of Judgement, Kant distinguishes between two kinds of judgment, namely, determinant and reflective. While judgment in general is the faculty of thinking the particular as contained under the universal, it is the given that sets what reasoning process will ensue. If the universal principle is given, the judgment that appropriates it to the particular is determinant. Apparently, this judgment can be made cognitively since one can easily deduce from general concepts. However, if the particular is given and no pre-established universal can subsume it, then a general principle must still be found for it. This kind of judgment is reflective. It is non-cognitive since it describes an ascending movement from the particular to the universal without the mediation of pre-given concepts. Therefore, the kind of judgment depends on the basis of reasoning—whether it is the given universal or the particular—which will determine the judgment process.

The main structure of Arendt's theory of judgment, from the perspective of either actor or spectator, is reflective judgment. What is initially set is an experience that later on gains universal meaning only as seen in and through that particular encounter, and thus having exemplar validity. This means that it allows one to understand the universal principle only as exemplified by such particular experience. Therefore, in aesthetic judgments, one understands the universal predicate 'beauty' only by experiencing a particular object that embodies it. Upon encountering a flower, one can say that it is an example of beauty, or that it has exemplar validity.[15] The judgment primarily remains to be about that flower, and I am able to use the concept 'beauty' by encountering that particular flower.

In the same light, any political issue or event should not be explained away by making political decisions on such current concern using traditional structures, or understanding it simply as a necessary part of history, which has an overarching, universal

[15] Ibid., 77.

significance. It should not be viewed as naturally following precedent occurrences, making it a required condition of a predetermined end or of an infinite progress, reminiscent of Hegelian dialectics and the Marxist reversal of it. For Arendt, this kind of approach is totalizing. Such manner of comprehending occurrences rids the event of its own particular significance. Thus, the political actor must confront concerns with a flexible perspective open to diverse opinions and form his judgment based on this, not on any previously selected belief of conceptual framework. It is in this way that his actions remain positively effective in the public sphere, as it takes into consideration particular and current clamors of all sectors. The political spectator, or the historian and storyteller, must judge an event as having exemplar validity in that it illuminates universal import precisely by retaining its particularity. It is in this way that he is able to save historical incidents from disappearing into the oblivion of history.

Apparently, this kind of judgment cannot be found in Kant's moral philosophy, which is thoroughly rational. While judgment finds meaning based on the particular, thus being able to identify a certain "this" as representative of a universal idea that may be predicated to it, practical reason commands the performance or non-performance of an act. This command comes from a rational law made universal and identical to the will. Arendt stresses that practical reason 'reasons'; it is the generality in this that allows them to take the form of imperatives.[16] Thus, decisions on which act to undertake gain significance in so far as they are anchored to a universal law. Aesthetic and political judgments, on the other hand, are made based on the particularity of the situation in so far as they provide universal import. It is exactly for this purpose, for redeeming the individual significance of particulars, that Arendt debunks rationally determined judgments in affairs quintessential to which are plurality and discourse.

Common Sense: Man as Exemplar Validity

Yet this specifically political appropriation of such notion of judgment does not end on the level of events in history. There is also the agent who causes and sets off the chain of events that he both initiates and suffers. The human being, in his unique individuality, is an exemplar of his specie. Arendt says, "It is by virtue of this idea of mankind, present in every single man, that men are human, and they can be called civilized or humane to the extent that this idea becomes the principle not only of their judgments but of their actions. It is at this point that actor and spectator become united; the maxim of the actor and the maxim, the 'standard,' according to which the spectator judges the spectacle of the world, become one."[17] This means that in making judgments, the ability to consider the standpoints of others and find a common standard that will make it communicable proves that man, aware of the inherent plurality of existence, can represent his fellow men

[16] Ibid., 77.

[17] Ibid., 75.

yet at the same time retain his individuality. She further develops this argument, saying that being human or civilized, that which sets us apart from other animals, is defined by this very ability to render judgments and pursue actions in main consideration of our fellow human beings. In other words, the possibility of the spectator and actor having the same standards of judgment shows that man has exemplar validity, or is an example of his specie, yet this can only be seen in his particular, unique existence in the world. As with political actors in past events, this recognition of individuality is every human being's dignity. In this commonality of standard lies the true power of judgment and opinion.

Conclusion

"Victrix causa diis placuit sed victa Catoni."

(The victorious cause pleases the gods but the defeated one pleases Cato.) - Cato

"If I could remove the magic from my path,

And utterly forget all enchanted spells,

Nature, I would stand before you as but a man,

Then it would be worth the effort of being a man." - Goethe, Faust, Part II, Act V

Only these two quotes compose Arendt's volume on the subject of judgment, the first one from Cato and the second from Goethe.[18] As dear friend and editor, Mary McCarthy, reports, "After her death, a sheet of paper was found in her typewriter, blank except for the heading 'Judging' and two epigraphs. Some time between the Saturday of finishing 'Willing' and the Thursday of her death, she must have sat down to confront the final section."[19] Arendt, one of the most influential and controversial thinkers of the twentieth century, never finished what was believed to be her second major work. Yet, based on what has been discussed above, we can risk an interpretation of these two epigraphs, and doing so would give us a glimpse of whether our interpretation is close to what she may have written.

The first epigraph refers to how the ancient war victors were favored by the gods, and

[18] Ronald Beiner, "Interpretative Essay" in *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 126.

[19] Mary McCarthy, "Editor's Postface" in *The Life of the Mind* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978), 242.

thus pleased the latter. On the contrary, Cato, being the orator and thus taking the place of the spectator storyteller, gains disinterested pleasure in making sense of the actions performed by men during his time. Thus, he is pleased even by those who were defeated. This is consistent to her discussion of Kant, parallel to Cato, as spectator of the French Revolution. In her reading of Kant, she asserts that his principles of morality clashed with his principles of judgment when he "condemns the very action whose results he then affirms with a satisfaction bordering on enthusiasm"[20] since revolt against the government could not be a universalize-able maxim and yet he showed great admiration for the interruption that was happening in the political realm through it.

The second paragraph also deals with the historian as judge. This time, she refers to some magic or enchanted spells on the path, the removal of which would give worth to the effort of being man. To find a clue on what she refers to, one must go back to the "Postscriptum to Thinking" in the first volume of The Life of the Mind. She writes, "If judgment is our faculty for dealing with the past, the historian is the the inquiring man who by relating it sits in judgment over it. If that is so, we may reclaim our human dignity, win it back, as it were, from the pseudo-divinity named History of the modern age, without denying History's importance but denying its right to be the ultimate judge."[21]

'Magic' here then refers to the pseudo-divinity or the metaphysical notion of History or Progress, which implies that there is an ultimate meaning to history and that everything that happens in the human affairs is a part of its self-unfolding. In this case, the affairs of man gain significance only in light of this bigger, asymptotic future, which in its infinity promises nothing but oblivion to human action. The last lines of Arendt's lectures on Kant deals with the inconsistency of his belief in Progress and his interest in man's individual dignity, being an exemplar or reflection of mankind in general. She ends by saying, "It is against human dignity to believe in progress. Progress...means that the story has an end. The end of the story itself is infinity. There is no point at which we might stand still ad look back with the backward glance of the historian."[22]

Thus, without subsuming particular events under these rational historical developments, man is left to be not only the actor--the doer of actions in history--but also the story-teller, one who as spectator makes sense out of historical events, creating his own meaning out of what would otherwise be random happenings. This makes it worth being a man in the face of Nature, whose immortality is guaranteed by specie procreation, and, though unsaid here, of gods, who by virtue of being god, are deathless. Thus while, mortality is the "hallmark of human existence, embedded in a cosmos where everything is immortal"[23] the greatness of human being--his works, deeds and words--are rescued from oblivion by the historian. Human dignity is preserved because in the end, "Not History,

[20] Arendt, Lectures, 48.

[21] Arendt, "Thinking," in *The Life of the Mind*, 216.

[22] Arendt, Lectures, 77.

[23] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 18-19.

but the historian, is the ultimate judge."[24]

The other aspect of this discussion leads back to the notion of plurality. If the spectator judge is the one who writes history, and if he were to be true to being such, then much like Cato who is pleased even by those who were defeated, or like Herodotus echoing Homeric impartiality in his attempt to prevent "the greatest and wonderful actions of the Greeks and the barbarians from losing their due meed of glory"[25], history would tell a story of multitudinous views imagined and taken on by the storyteller. The problem with Hegel's History, World-Spirit or Mankind (and of Marx's reversal of it in the notion of Progress), is that it was a single story by a single subject. Once again, human dignity is preserved because particular words and deeds done by unique human beings gain significance on their own.

Finally, this dignity is something that can be owned for the price of responsibility, which is what our capacity for judgment ultimately expresses. In as much as action and participative citizenship were ways to promote shared responsibility for the world through the power of agency, the faculty of judgment shapes a person to become a world citizen[26] critical of political events and capable of an enlarged mentality that accommodates varying perspectives through which such world is seen. What she observed then holds true for today (perhaps even more so), that "There exists in our society a widespread fear of judging...behind this unwillingness to judge lurks the suspicion that no one is a free agent, and hence the doubt that anyone could be responsible or could be expected to answer for what he has done."[27] Beiner expresses Arendt's forewarning to generations of the contemporary age and paints a picture that resembles the prevailing set up in our societies. He says, "The real danger in contemporary societies is that the bureaucratic, technocratic, and depoliticized structures of modern life encourage indifference and increasingly render men less discriminating, less capable of critical thinking, and less inclined to assume responsibility."[28]

Given the current state where an ever-expanding population is constantly getting technologically connected, and where political issues and their repercussions can hardly be considered local, judgment is crucial to comprehending contemporary political issues and securing our place as global citizens. Relinquishing all metaphysical beliefs about an ultimate meaning in history allows us to fulfill our responsibility to establish the world formed by our actions, and renew it in doing so. Such really is the task incumbent upon each generation for "we all arrived at one time or another as newcomers in a world which was there before us and will still be there when we are gone, when we shall have left its burden to our successors."[29]

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[24] Beiner, "Interpretative Essay" 127.

[25] Arendt, "The Concept of History" 51. (emphasis supplied)

[26] Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, *Why Arendt Matters* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006), 164.

[27] Arendt, "Personal Responsibility Under Dictatorship" in *Responsibility and Judgment*, 19.

[28] Beiner, "Interpretative Essay" 113.

[29] Ibid., 28.

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