10

Judgment and the Moral Foundations of Politics in Hannah Arendt's Thought

Seyla Benhabib

In a democratic polity agreement among citizens generated through processes of public dialogue is central to the legitimacy of basic institutions. Such dialogues submit the rationale behind the major power arrangements of societies to the test. Insight into the justice or injustice, fairness or unfairness of these arrangements gained as a result of such dialogic exchanges results in public knowledge won through public deliberation. Even when such processes of dialogue convince us that these power structures need alteration, when we reach this judgment as a result of participatory politics we not only have the assurance that we can support our position by principled argument but also, and more importantly, we form a judgment having submitted our opinion to the test of the judgment of others. Perhaps the most valuable outcome of such authentic processes of public dialogue when compared to the mere exchange of information or the mere circulation of images is that, when and if they occur, such public conversations result in the cultivation of the faculty of judgment and the formation of an "enlarged mentality." This chapter explores judgment as a moral and political faculty by taking its cue from Hannah Arendt's rereading of Kant's *Critique of Judgment.*

JUDGMENT AND MORAL CONSIDERATIONS

Hannah Arendt's incomplete reflections on judgment, intended to be the third volume of her work, *The Life of the Mind,* are puzzling. The perplexing

quality of these reflections derives less from the burden on contemporary students of her thought to seek to understand and imaginatively complete what an author might have intended to but was unable to say in her lifetime. This hermeneutic puzzle arises from three sets of claims which Arendt makes about judgment and which stand in tension to each other.

First, in the introduction to the first volume of *The Life of the Mind* Arendt clarifies that her preoccupation with the mental activities of thinking, willing and judging had two different origins.[1] The immediate impulse came from her attending the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem; the additional, but equally important, prompting was provided by her desire to explore the counterpart of the *Vita Activa* (which in English translation misleadingly appeared as *The Human Condition*) in the *Vita Contemplativa*. In coining the phrase "the banality of evil" and in explaining the moral quality of Eichmann's deeds in terms other than the monstrous or demonic nature of the doer, Arendt became aware of going counter to the tradition of western thought that saw evil in metaphysical terms as ultimate depravity, corruption or sinfulness. The most striking quality of Eichmann, she claimed, was not stupidity or wickedness or depravity but one she described as "thoughtlessness." This in turn led her to the question:

> Might the problem of good and evil, our faculty for telling right from wrong, be connected with our faculty of thought? . . . Could the activity of thinking as such, the habit of examining whatever happens to come to pass or attract attention, regardless of results and specific contents, could this activity be among the conditions that make men abstain from evil-doing or even actually "condition" them against it?[2]

Arendt pursued this question in a lecture on "Thinking and Moral Considerations" published in *Social Research* in 1971, around the same time that she was composing the volume on *Thinking*. Again she asked: "Is our ability to judge, to tell right from wrong, beautiful from ugly, dependent upon our faculty of thought? Does the inability to think and a disastrous failure of what we commonly call conscience coincide?"[3]

As these passages indicate, in approaching the problem of judgment Arendt was primarily interested in the interrelationships between thinking and judging as moral faculties. She was concerned with judgment as the faculty of "telling right from wrong."

In the second place, and in contrast to her interest in judgment as a moral faculty, Arendt also focussed on judgment as the retrospective faculty of culling meaning from the past, as a faculty essential to the art of storytelling. In the Postscriptum to the volume on *Thinking*, she briefly outlines how she proposes to handle the problem of judgment in volume 3. She still intends to discuss judgment as it is related to "the problem of theory and practice and to all attempts to arrive at a halfway plausible theory of ethics."[4] But her last paragraph to the Postscriptum turns from ethics to the problem of history. She intends to deny history's right of being the ultimate judge—"Die Weltgeschichte ist das Weltgericht" (Hegel)—without denying history's importance. As Richard Bernstein and Ronald Beiner have observed, in these subsequent reflections Arendt's interest appears to have shifted from the standpoint of the actor, judging in order to act, to that of the spectator, judging in order to cull meaning from the past.[5]

Third, Arendt's reflections on judgment do not only vacillate between judgment as a moral faculty, guiding action, versus judgment as a retrospective faculty, guiding the spectator or the storyteller. There is an even deeper philosophical perplexity about the status of judgment in her work. This concerns her attempt to bring together the Aristotelian conception of judgment as an aspect of phronesis with the Kantian understanding of judgment as the faculty of "enlarged thought" or "representative thinking." As Christopher Lasch has observed:

> On the one hand, Arendt's defense of judgment as the quintessential political virtue seems to lead to an Aristotelian conception of politics as a branch of practical reason. On the other hand, her appeal to Kant as the source of her ideas about judgment appeals to a very different conception of politics, in which political action has to be grounded not in the practical arts but in universal moral principles. . . . Arendt's discussion of judgment, instead of clarifying the difference between ancient and modern conceptions of morality and politics, seems to confuse the two.[6]

In this chapter I propose to examine some of these hermeneutical puzzles by focussing on one aspect of Arendt's reflections on judgment in particular. Although Arendt herself never made good on the "attempt to arrive at a halfway plausible theory of ethics" and instead called judgment "the most political" of all our cognitive faculties, I intend to argue that Arendt's characterization of action through the categories of natality, plurality and narrativity provides us with an illuminating framework for analyzing judgment not only as a political but as a moral faculty; furthermore, although Arendt provided us with an intriguing beginning point for thinking about the interrelationship of morality and politics, she herself was misled in these matters by a quasi-intuitionist concept of moral conscience on the one hand and an unusually narrow concept of morality on the other.

My purpose is to think with Arendt against Arendt. I will follow her inconclusive reflections on judgment to develop a phenomenological analysis of judgment as a moral faculty, but at the same time I will criticize her own problematic separation of morality from politics. However, I will also place Arendt's ruminations on this matter in the context of some contemporary debates in practical philosophy between neo-Aristotelians and neo-Kantians. This line of analysis will allow me to address the difficulty raised by Christopher Lasch. It

may be that Arendt's attempt to bring together the Aristotelian concern with particulars in practical matters with a principled, universalist moral standpoint is not simply confusing but contains an insight very much worth developing. Arendt's incomplete doctrine of judgment, by weakening the opposition between contextual judgment and a universalist morality, could help us see through some false fronts in contemporary moral and political theory.

JUDGMENT AND ACTION

Let me begin with a general observation. We speak of judgment in many domains. Legal, aesthetic, medical, therapeutic, musical, military, interpretive-hermeneutic judgments are as much a part of our common vocabulary as are moral and political judgment. Moral and political judgments differ from these other exercises of judgment in one respect. Prima facie in the domains of law, aesthetics, medicine, therapy, music, the military, and the hermeneutic interpretation of texts we seem ready to admit that those exercising judgment are in possession of a special body of knowledge, and of a particular expertise or experience related to the frequent exercise of this body of knowledge. The exercise of judgment in these domains evokes immediately a distinction between the experts or the practitioners and a lay public that is neither in possession of this specialized body of knowledge nor experienced in its exercise.

In the case of moral and political judgment matters are different. Since I take moral judgment to be fundamentally distinct from all other forms of judgment in one crucial respect, which I will explain below, let me deal with political judgment first. At first sight, there appears to be no reason as to why we should not ascribe the expertise of political judgment to certain special individuals like statespersons, diplomats, elected representatives, administrative officers and the like. In fact, we might assume that ideally, even when not in practice, one reason for these individuals to hold the offices they do is their ability to exercise the kinds of judgments demanded from them by their tasks.

This model of political judgment, which views it as a form of expert opinion, is inadequate from the standpoint of a theory of democracy. Even if we abstract for a moment from the question of representative versus participatory democracy, the exercise of political judgment in a democratic polity cannot be relegated only to experts. Even in narrow models of representative democracy, the public, the citizens, are still expected to exercise their political judgment at least on election day. Citizens in a democratic polity are capable of exercising judgment in several areas. First, they have to be able to judge the relation between the possible in a social and political system and the desirable from some normative standpoint of justice, fairness, equality and freedom. Second, they have to be able to judge the capacity of this specific individual and organization to carry out their mandate. Finally, they have to be able to judge the foreseeable consequences of their choices from the standpoint of the past, present and future of their polity.

Participatory models of democracy see participation as a good in itself, to be extended as widely as possible. In these theories, both the domains in which the public is entitled to exercise political judgment and their institutional possibilities for doing so become political issues. A critique of the culture of experts, and the transfer of the power and prerogative of judgment from experts to the public at large thus viewed as essential to the constitution of a democratic ethos. In other words, the very definition of political judgment—what it is, who is entitled to exercise it, and how people can be further enabled to exercise it—is itself a political and normative question, invoking principles of the politically desirable as well as crucial assessments of the politically feasible. There can be no value-neutral theory of political judgment; a theory of political judgment is itself a normative theory of the most desirable political order.

This contestable and contested quality of political judgment sheds new light upon all other domains of judgment—legal, aesthetic, therapeutic, military and medical. In each of these domains, judgment, as a social process of appropriating and exercising knowledge, can become a political question that involves debate and contestation about the limits, duties and capacities of expert authority in relation to the lay public.

Moral judgment differs from these other domains in one crucial respect: the exercise of moral judgment is pervasive and unavoidable; in fact, this exercise is coextensive with relations of social interaction in the lifeworld in general. *Moral judgment is what we "always already" exercise in virtue of being immersed in a network of human relationships that constitute our life together.* Whereas there can be reasonable debate about whether or not to exercise juridical, military, therapeutic, aesthetic, or even political judgment, in the case of moral judgment this option is not there. The domain of the moral is so deeply enmeshed with those interactions that constitute our lifeworld that to withdraw from moral judgment is tantamount to ceasing to interact, to talk and act in the human community.

To justify my claim that moral judgment is what we "always already" exercise in virtue of being immersed in a network of human relations, I want to begin by recalling the most salient features of action as Arendt introduces them in *The Human Condition.*[7] These are natality, plurality and the immersion of action in a web of interpretations which I shall call "narrativity." Natality is like a "second birth," according to Arendt. It is that quality through which we insert ourselves into the world, this time not through the mere fact of being born but through the initiation of words and deeds. This initiation of words and deeds, which Arendt names "the principle of beginning" (HC, p. 177), can no more be avoided than the fact of birth itself. The child

becomes a member of a human community in that it learns to initiate speech and action. Although an unavoidable aspect of human acculturation, the condition of natality implies no determinism. Just as every speaker of a language has a capacity to generate an infinite number of grammatically well-formed sentences, the doer of deeds has a capacity to initiate always the unexpected and the improbable which nonetheless belongs to the possible repertoire of human action and conduct.

Whereas action corresponds to the fact of birth, "speech corresponds to the fact of distinctness and is the actualization of the human condition of plurality, that is, of living as a distinct and unique being among equals" (HC, p. 178). Plurality, which is revealed in speech, is rooted in the fact of human equality, which in this context does not mean moral and political equality but rather a generic equality of the human constitution that allows humans to understand each other (HC, p. 175). Whereas in the case of other species, this generic equality defines the individuality of each member of a species, in the case of humans the distinctness of individuals from one another is revealed through speech. We can say that the human capacity to use speech leads to a differentiation of the repertoire of activities beyond those which are species specific as well as allowing the emergence of a differentiated subjectivity in the inner life of the self. Speech differentiates action from mere behavior; the one who speaks is also the one who thinks, feels and experiences in a certain way. The individuation of the human self is simultaneously the process whereby this self becomes capable of action and of expressing the subjectivity of the doer.

Speech and action are fundamentally related, and "many, and even most acts," observes Arendt, "are performed in the manner of speech" (HC, p. 178). Speech and action have a revelatory quality: they reveal the "whoness" of the doer. This revelation of the whoness of the actor is always a revealing to somebody who is like oneself. Only if somebody else is able to understand the meaning of our words as well as the whatness of our deeds can the identity of the self be said to be revealed. Action and speech, therefore, are essentially interaction. They take place between humans.

Narrativity, or the immersion of action in a web of human relationships, is the mode through which the self is individuated and acts are identified. Both the whatness of the act and the whoness of the self are disclosed to agents capable of communicative understanding. Actions are identified narratively. Somebody has always done such-and-such at some point in time. To identify an action is to tell the story of its initiation, of its unfolding, and of its immersion in a web of relations constituted through the actions and narratives of others. Likewise, the whoness of the self is constituted by the story of a life—a coherent narrative of which we are always the protagonist, but not always the author or the producer. Narrativity is the mode through which actions are individuated and the identity of the self constituted.

Of course, these claims concerning the role of narrative in the individuation of actions and the constitution of self-identity are not uncontested. The tendency in the philosophical tradition has been to view these phenomena along the models of substance and accidents or a thing and its properties. The self becomes the "I know not what" underlying or suspending its actions. These, in turn, are not considered as meaningful deeds that reveal something to someone but rather as properties of bodies. The self whom Hume stumbles upon while ruminating in his consciousness, or the Kantian "I" that accompanies all my representations is not the self in the human community, the acting or interacting self, but the self qua thinker, qua subject of consciousness withdrawn from the world.

There is a fundamental connection between the tradition's ignoring of the question of judgment in moral life and the neglect of the specificity of action as speech and action or communicative interaction. Once we see moral action as interaction, performed toward others and in the company of others, the role of judgment emerges in at least three relevant areas of moral interaction.[8] These are the assessment of one's duties, the assessment of one's actions as fulfilling these duties, and the assessment of one's maxims as embodied, expressed or revealed in actions.

TOWARD A PHENOMENOLOGY OF MORAL JUDGMENT

Although the clash of moral duties is a frequently acknowledged topic in moral philosophy, the exercise of judgment concerned with the assessment of one's duties in particular situations arises even when there is no such clash. Consider a moral duty like generosity. How does an agent recognize *this particular situation* as being one that calls for the duty of generosity? Suppose through some circumstances, the details of which are not exactly clear, a friend in the publishing business manages to squander the family fortune, and is heavily in debt. We must first determine whether these particular circumstances are ones in which such a duty of generosity has a claim on what we are to do. But how do we determine the claims of the circumstances upon us? Note that this question does not concern the moral duty an agent acknowledges to be generous. It concerns the interpretation of the duty of generosity in this particular case. Is an individual who squanders the family fortune through her own deeds one that deserves my generosity? If I know from the previous history of the person her tendency to be reckless with money, would or should this influence my deliberations in the matter? The general rule of generosity—to help those in need—does not aid here, for the issue is whether this particular situation is one in which this rule leads to a moral claim upon me. My first thesis is: ***The exercise of moral judgment that is concerned with the epistemic identification of human situations and cir-***

cumstances as morally relevant does not proceed according to the model of the subsumption of a particular under a universal. By "morally relevant" I mean a situation or a circumstance so defined that it would lead to the formulation of a prima facie moral duty among those involved.

What about the assessment of one's action then? Suppose I resolve the above situation by deciding in favor of helping my friend. How should this act of generosity be exercised? Whereas in the first instance we were asking, is this situation morally relevant for me because it imposes upon me the duty of generosity, now we are asking, what is it that I must do to fulfill this duty? Suppose, after deciding to help this friend, I go up to her in the midst of a crowded cocktail party and say that I know she is broke and here is a certain amount of money which I hope she will use better next time. Have I acted generously? Have I humiliated this individual? Have I simply exhibited my egotistic desire for praise from others? In other words, what I do, which course of action I decide upon, involves some interpretive ability to see my act not only as it relates to me but as it will be perceived and understood by others. I must have enough moral imagination to know the possible act descriptions or narratives that my action can be subsumed under. My second thesis is: *The identity of a moral action is not one that can be construed in light of a general rule governing particular instances but entails the exercise of moral imagination which activates our capacity for thinking of possible narratives and act descriptions in light of which our actions can be understood by others.*

Finally, let me turn to the assessment of one's maxim. It might appear that this area of moral considerations at least should be immune to the interpretive indeterminacy of moral judgment and imagination. I know what I want to do, it might be said, what my intentions are, even though my capacity to understand and to foresee what others think or might think, how they might construe my actions, may be limited or simply of no great interest to me. Indeed, there is often a clash between the whatness of a deed in the eyes of others and the whoness of the agent performing it. Actors are also sufferers: they not only act but become the object of the tale of others. Despite this oft-noted and unavoidable cleavage between intention and action, once they become a part of the world, actions reveal our intentions, and sometimes we do not know what our intentions are or may have been until our actions have become a part of the world. In formulating intentions, we project ourselves, our narrative history into the world and we want to be recognized as the doer of such and such. We identify our intentions in terms of a narrative of which we ourselves are the author. This narrative entails both knowledge of our past, and self-projection, desires for our future. It also anticipates the meaning that this past and future may have and will have in the eyes of others. The self is not only an I but a me, one that is perceived by others, interpreted and judged by others. The perspectives of the I and the me must somehow be integrated to succeed in making our intentions communicable. My third thesis is this. *The assessment of the maxim of one's intentions, as these embody moral principles, requires understanding the narrative history of the self who is the actor; this understanding discloses both self-knowledge and knowledge of oneself as viewed by others.*

What I have described so far may be considered a phenomenology of moral judgment. I have argued that if one proceeds from the model of moral action as communicative interaction, as speech and deed, moral judgment is relevant in three domains: in the assessment of morally relevant situations, in the identification of morally correct actions, and in the interpretation of the intentions and maxims of the moral agent. The assessment of morally relevant situations cannot be explained in light of the subsumptive model of judgment; the identification of morally correct actions requires moral imagination of possible act descriptions and narratives under which they fall; and the interpretation of one's intentions and maxims entails comprehension of narrative histories—both one's own and those of others.

JUDGMENT IN KANT'S MORAL PHILOSOPHY

Arendt's characterization of human action in terms of natality, plurality and narrativity provides us with an excellent beginning point for developing a phenomenology of moral judgment. I now would like to turn briefly to the status of judgment in Kant's moral philosophy. For as Richard Bernstein has also noted, one of the most perplexing aspects of Arendt's discussion of judgment consists of the following: "Arendt well knew that, even though she invokes the name of Kant, she was radically departing from Kant. There is no question in Kant that the 'ability to tell right from wrong' is a matter of practical reason and not the faculty of reflective judgment which ascends from particulars to generals or universals."[9] The question is whether the rather perfunctory role that moral judgment plays in Kant's practical philosophy is not related to his two-world metaphysics and to the denigration of action that follows from it. In explaining Arendt's relation to Kant on these matters, one must first consider Kant's theory of action.

Kant, in fact, did not completely ignore the role of judgment in practical philosophy. Judgment, "as the faculty of thinking the particular under the universal," is determinant when the universal is given and the particular is merely to be subsumed under it.[10] It is reflective, if only the particular is given and the universal has to be found for it. Since according to Kant, the moral law, as the universal guiding moral action, is in all circumstances given, moral judgment is determinant rather than reflective. Let me ask whether, even according to Kant's own reasoning, moral judgments can be merely determinant, that is whether they merely entail the subsumption of the particular under the universal law.

In the section "Of the Topic of Pure Practical Reason" in the *Critique of*

Practical Reason, Kant writes: "To decide whether an action which is possible for us in the sensuous world is or is not a case under the rule requires practical judgment, which applies what is asserted universally in the rule (in abstracto) to an action in concreto."[11] This problem presents special difficulties. Since an action determined by the law of practical reason must contain no other ground for its occurrence than the conception of the moral law, and since "all instances of possible action," according to Kant, "are only empirical and can belong only to experience and nature," it is absurd to wish to find an instance in the world of sense which allows the application of the law of freedom to it.[12] Kant sums up the difficulty:

> The morally good, on the contrary, is something which, by its object, is supersensuous; nothing corresponding to it can be found in sensuous intuition; consequently, judgment under laws of pure practical reason seems to be subject to special difficulties, which result from the fact that a law of freedom is to be applied to actions which are events occurring in the world of sense and thus, to this extent, belonging to nature.[13]

In this discussion Kant assumes that every action is an event in the world falling under natural laws. Yet for freedom to be possible, he also has to admit that although all actions, once performed, become events in the world, some actions must be caused by the idea of the moral law alone. What distinguishes a moral from a nonmoral action is the ground of its determination, that is, the nature of the principles governing one's maxims alone. Furthermore, only such actions can be morally good.

As is often the case, in his considerations on this matter Kant conflates two issues. First is a question we may name the epistemology of human actions. How can they be identified and individuated? Kant's metaphysics of two worlds, the noumenal and the phenomenal, leads him to the view that all actions once they become deeds in the world are events. But the problem is not whether actions are not also events, but whether the language of natural events is epistemologically adequate to describe human actions. Even as events in the world, human actions can only be understood with reference to reasons, that is with reference to the meaningful grounds or principles which act as their causes. Reasons are of such a kind that they require to be understood; they can only be described from the participants' or actors' own perspectives. I am not suggesting that an objectivating science of human action is not possible, but only that understanding—*Verstehen*—is an essential component of any such science of human action as well. Under the spell of the exaggerated promises of Newtonian science, Kant dissolves all distinction between natural, human and the social sciences, and simply takes it for granted that a natural, Newtonian science of human action is possible.

The second question which guides Kant is the distinction between the morally right and the morally good. Actions that are morally right are in conformity with the moral law; but only those that have the duty to conform to the moral law as their sole ground or motivational purpose are morally good. The distinction between the morally right and the morally good is not counter-intuitive; for it is possible to do the right thing for the wrong reasons. The intentions of the doer are obviously an essential, though by no means the sole, component of the moral quality or virtue of an action. Where Kant seems to go wrong though is in his insistence that we can never know if an action was moral, virtuous in this sense at all, since the morally good defies embodiment in the phenomenal world. We might say with Hegel that "the purity of heart" becomes a chimera in Kant's moral philosophy. As soon as it is embodied in action and becomes a part of the world, it becomes impure; yet to embody the good will in action is the only mark of freedom and moral dignity. Thus we seem to be free only when we act, yet become unfree as soon as we act. The way out of this quandary, I want to suggest, is not to deny the distinction between the morally good and the morally right but to reject the two-world metaphysics of Kantian theory in favor of a social epistemology which can do justice to the description and explanation of human action and interaction.[14] Thus, although Kant does not ignore the role of judgment in practical philosophy, his reflections on this matter get mired in the problem of his two-world metaphysics and preclude a closer examination of what may be involved in the exercise of moral judgment. I have already argued that the assessment of one's duties in a concrete case depends upon the recognition of certain situations as being morally relevant, and that this judgment cannot be explained in light of the subsumptive model. Furthermore, the identification of morally correct actions requires—*pace* Kant—the exercise of imagination in the articulation of possible narratives and act-descriptions under which our deeds might fall; finally the interpretation of one's actions and maxims entail the understanding of the narrative history of the self and of others. These hermeneutic-interpretive operations constitute an aspect of the contextualization of all moral principles in specific instances. Judgment is not the faculty of subsuming a particular under a universal but the faculty of contextualizing the universal such that it comes to bear upon the particular.

Are we now in a position to answer the question why Arendt, who repeatedly emphasized that judgment was a faculty of "telling right from wrong" and not just the beautiful from the ugly, continued to appeal to Kant's doctrine of reflective judgment as a model for judgment in general?[15] Clearly, Arendt had no use for Kant's two-world metaphysics and for the denigration of human action which resulted from it. In this respect, Kant only shared the contempt for the vita activa characteristic of the philosophical tradition as a whole. What Arendt saw in Kant's doctrine of aesthetic judgment was something else. In Kant's conception of reflective judgment, restricted by Kant himself—erroneously in Arendt's eyes—to the aesthetic realm alone, Arendt discovered a

procedure for ascertaining intersubjective validity in the public realm. This kind of intersubjective validity clearly transcended the expression of simple preference while falling short of the a priori and certain validity demanded by Kantian reason. Let us recall Kant's description of "reflective judgment":[16]

> by the name sensus communis is to be understood the idea of a public sense, i.e., a critical faculty which in its reflective act takes account (a priori) of the mode of representation of everyone else, in order, as it were, to weigh its judgment with the collective reason of mankind, and thereby avoid the illusion arising from subjective and personal conditions which could readily be taken for objective. . . . This is accomplished by weighing the judgment, not so much with actual, but rather with the merely possible, judgments of others, and by putting ourselves in the position of every one else.

In her early essay on "The Crisis in Culture," Arendt provides an illuminating gloss on this passage. She writes:

> The power of judgment rests on a potential agreement with others, and the thinking process which is active in judging something is not, like the thought process of pure reasoning, a dialogue between me and myself, but finds itself always and primarily, even if I am quite alone in making up my mind, in an anticipated communication with others with whom I must finally come to some agreement. From this potential agreement judgment derives its specific validity. This means, on the one hand, that such judgment must liberate itself from the "subjective private conditions," that is, from the idiosyncracies which naturally determine the outlook of each individual in his privacy and are legitimate as long as they are only privately held opinions but which are not fit to enter the market place, and lack all validity in the public realm. And this enlarged way of thinking, which as judgment knows how to transcend its individual limitations, cannot function in strict isolation or solitude; it needs the presence of others "in whose place" it must think, whose perspective it must take into consideration, and without whom it never has the opportunity to operate at all.[17]

The answer then to the question as to why Arendt did not explore her departure from Kant in these matters is primarily that in Kant's discovery of the "enlarged mentality" Arendt saw the model for the kind of intersubjective validity we could hope to attain in the public realm. Why she saw such an "enlarged mentality" as specifically political rather than moral, however, has to do with her own rather narrow conception of the moral domain.

NEO-KANTIAN AND NEO-ARISTOTELIAN PERSPECTIVES ON JUDGMENT

Prior to exploring the relationship between the moral and the political in Arendt's thought, we must consider the following objection to what has been said so far: Is it in fact possible to combine a phenomenology of moral judgment, based upon an Arendtian conception of action, with a Kantian model of intersubjective validity? While the first line of thinking is more characteristic of the Aristotelian tradition with its emphasis on context and narrative-bound particulars, the Kantian model of reflective judgment makes no such reference to contextuality and enjoins us abstractly "to think from the standpoint of everyone else." Whereas in the Aristotelian model it is the exemplary quality of the judgment of the *phronimos* which grants it validity, in the Kantian model the ground of the validity of our (aesthetic) judgments is their universal communicability with the hope of winning the assent of all.

Clearly to suggest that Arendt or anybody could simply combine or integrate these modes of thought into a frictionless unity would be equivalent to wanting to square the circle. There are fundamental metaphysical assumptions dividing Aristotle and Kant, and these underlie their theories of ethics and politics. Yet in contemporary debates among Kantians and Aristotelians, these metaphysical assumptions play hardly a role. Neo-Aristotelians like Gadamer, Taylor and MacIntyre base their practical philosophies neither upon an Aristotelian metaphysical teleology nor on an Aristotelian theory of form and matter. Equally, neo-Kantians like Rawls, Gewirth, Apel and Habermas reject Kant's two-world metaphysics as well as his Newtonian theory of action. A central issue in the current debate is whether a universalist moral standpoint must be formalistic, a prioristic and context insensitive or whether moral universalism can be reconciled with contextual sensitivity.[18]

It is at this juncture that Arendt's prima facie implausible synthesis of Aristotelian and Kantian elements proves fruitful. Here I can only suggest what an Arendtian contribution to this debate might be. Arendt intimated that intrinsic to Kant's model of "reflective judgment" may be a conception of rationality and intersubjective validity which would allow us to retain a principled universalist moral standpoint while acknowledging the role of contextual moral judgment in human affairs. Let me expand. Consider first a Kantian objection to the phenomenology of moral judgment presented above. What you have described, a Kantian might object, is an art of cleverness in human matters, "eine Geschicklichkeit auf Menschen and ihren Willen Einfluss zu haben"—a certain skill in influencing others and their will.[19] Certainly, the objection continues, the hermeneutic and interpretive abilities you describe are relevant in human company and for human sociability, but what lends them their moral quality is that they are guided by moral principles. In the absence of such moral principles, these hermeneutic-interpretive skills can be utilized to manipulate people, or to produce the semblance of virtue without its existence. As Kant pointedly writes: "Ebenso gibt es Sitten (Conduite) ohne Tugend, Hoeflichkeit ohne Wohlwollen, Anstaendigkeit ohne Ehrbarkeit, usw." ("Likewise, there can be ethical conduct (conduite in French) without virtue, politeness without good will, and decency without honorableness.")[20]

This Kantian objection applies to all variants of neo-Aristotelian theories in which the relationship of moral judgment to moral principles, and the grounds of the validity of the latter are left unclear. As the debate over the narrow or wider meaning of Aristotle's concept of prudence, phronesis, shows, there are some crucial ambiguities in this concept.[21] At times phronesis is interpreted in the narrow sense as entailing the choice of means to a given end whose validity itself is not further investigated. Others, like Gadamer, interpret phronesis more widely as entailing not only knowledge of means but also of ends that constitute our life as a whole.[22] Yet compare the following statement from *Truth and Method* in which Gadamer himself reverts to the Aristotelian language of "seeing" and "the archer hitting the mark"[23] in describing the activities of the phronimos.

> From this it follows that ultimately all moral actions require taste—not as if this most individual balancing of decisions is the only thing that governs them, but it is an indispensable element. It is truly an act of undemonstrable tact to hit the target and give the application of the universal, the moral law (Kant), a discipline, which reason itself cannot. Thus taste is not the ground, but the supreme perfection of the moral judgment.[24]

Gadamer does not altogether collapse the distinction between taste and morality since he admits that taste is not the ground of the validity of moral judgment. But he does not tell us what the ground of the validity of moral judgment is either. Moral principles are viewed as embodied in the horizon of our traditions that constitute our ethical community. Of course, Gadamer does not have in mind a mechanical application of these principles or blind obedience to habits. All application involves interpretation, and all interpretation involves understanding. In continuing a tradition we do not merely apply it, we cointerpret it, codefine it, and reinterpret it. However, there must be some principles, the Kantian would insist, for distinguishing between traditions worth preserving and those that are not, ethical practices worth sharing in and those we must reject even when they are our very own. We can concede to Gadamer that such criteria themselves are going to be embodied in some or another tradition or in some or another practice, may be handed down from the past, may be inspired by utopian hopes for the future.

From a Kantian standpoint, the crucial issue is whether the exercise of judgment is guided by moral principles, which themselves reflect a universalistic morality, or whether such exercise takes no bearings from moral principles and is instead governed by a situational casuistic. In other words, a contemporary Kantian may admit that Kant's claims about moral judgment being merely subsumptive as well as Kant's theory of action are inadequate and must be rejected. Yet such a Kantian could also insist that a distinction needs to be made between moral judgment and moral principle, and the latter must

be guided by a universalist morality considering all humans as ends in themselves. Along these lines, Barbara Herman has argued that Kantian morality lacks "rules of moral salience," enabling agents to identify morally relevant situations, maxims and act-descriptions.[25] She contends nonetheless that such rules of moral salience could well be formulated from within a Kantian framework, insisting that moral judgment all the same needs to be guided by universalistic moral principles.

This distinction between moral judgment and moral principles, between general rules which guide and govern our moral action and conduct and the specific form these rules assume in specific actions, events and situations, helps us see how room may be made in Kantian theory for the exercise of moral judgment. This distinction alone does not suffice though to establish that a universalistic morality and contextual judgment are indeed compatible. If, as is usually assumed to be the case, the moral law enjoins us to abstract from situational detail and to think of what could be valid for all rational beings *simpliciter*, then indeed there is no such compatibility. For the Kantian principle would enjoin exactly the opposite of what moral judgment would require.

It is in this context that Kant's formula for reflective judgment the only ground of whose validity is its universal communicability with the hope of winning the assent of all, and Arendt's reading of this as a procedure of "enlarged thought" become relevant. "Act in such a way that the maxim of your actions can always be a universal law of nature" can be reformulated as "Act in such a way that the maxim of your actions takes into account the perspective of everyone else in such a way that you would be in a position to 'woo their consent.'" Such a procedure of enlarged thought and contextual moral judgment are not at all incompatible. The moral principle of enlarged thought enjoins us to view each person as one to whom I owe the moral respect, to consider their standpoint. This is the universalist-egalitarian kernel of Kantian morality. Yet "to think from the standpoint of everyone else" requires precisely the exercise of contextual moral judgment.

I isolated above three respects in which the exercise of moral judgment was crucial: first, the recognition of morally relevant situations; second, the exercise of the moral imagination in the articulation of possible act-descriptions through which our deeds would be construed; third, the interpretation of one's action and maxims in light of the narrative history of the self and others. Each of these aspects of moral judgment requires for its successful exercise the ability to take the standpoint of the other. The more human perspectives we can bring to bear upon our understanding of a situation, all the more likely are we to recognize its moral relevance or salience. The more perspectives we are able to make present to ourselves, all the more are we likely to appreciate the possible act-descriptions through which others will identify our deeds. Finally, the more we are able to think from the perspective of oth-

ers, all the more can we make vivid to ourselves the narrative histories of oth-ers involved. Moral judgment, whatever other cognitive abilities it may entail, certainly must involve the ability for "enlarged thought," or the ability to make up my mind "in an anticipated communication with others with whom I know I must finally come to some agreement" (Arendt).

Such capacity for judgment is not empathy, as Arendt also observes,[26] for it does not mean emotionally assuming or accepting the point of view of the other. It means merely making present to oneself what the perspectives of others involved are or could be, and whether I could "woo their consent" in acting the way I do. If such thinking from the standpoint of everyone else is to be distinguished from empathy, then how else are we to understand it? For Kant this was not an issue since he assumed that, thinking for one, a pure rational being could think for all. If we reject Kantian a priorism, and his assumption that as moral selves we are all somehow identical; if, in other words, we distinguish a universalist morality of principles from Kant's doctrine of a priori rationality, then I want to suggest we must think of such enlarged thought as a condition of actual or simulated dialogue. To "think from the perspective of everyone else" is to know "how to listen" to what the other is saying, or when the voices of others are absent, to imagine to oneself a conversation with the other as my dialogue partner. "Enlarged thought" is best realized through a dialogic or discursive ethic.

THE MORAL FOUNDATIONS OF POLITICS IN ARENDT'S WORK

Is there any reason to assume that this procedural model of enlarged thought, which enjoins us actually to engage in or simulate in thought a moral dialogue with all concerned, helps us recover that thread among thinking, judgment and moral considerations which Hannah Arendt sought for? It is again one of the perplexities of Arendtian thinking on these matters that while she readily acknowledged the relevance of "enlarged thought" as a principle in the public-political realm, in her considerations on morality she reverted to the Platonic model of the unity of the soul with itself. In her 1971 essay on "Thinking and Moral Considerations," following Socrates in the *Gorgias*, she described conscience as the harmony or oneness of the soul with itself.[27] While I would not want to deny the relevance of this experience for moral considerations, I think Arendt was too quick in assuming that out of the self's desire for unity and consistency a principled moral standpoint could emerge. Let me simply remind you of Walt Whitman's famous lines: "Do I contradict myself? Very well then I contradict myself, I am large, I contain multitudes."[28] While Arendt emphasized ***harmony*** as the morally relevant experience, she regarded ***plurality*** as the politicial principle par excellence. But through

this emphasis on unity or harmony she presented a quasi-intuitionist conception of moral judgment. For if the basis of the validity of our moral judgments is that they allow us "to be at home with ourselves," are we not in fact making validity a matter of the idiosyncracies of the individual psyche? Was not one of the most perplexing characteristics of Eichmann in Arendt's eyes precisely the fact that he was "at home" with himself? Arendt fails to convince that an attitude of moral reflection and probing, such as enjoined by the procedure of enlarged thought, and the Platonic emphasis on unity or harmony of the soul with itself can be reconciled. In fact, the capacity for enlarged thought may well lead to moral conflict and alienation, but in a world in disarray an attitude of moral alienation may be more at home in the world than an attitude of simple harmony with oneself.

There is an irony in these reflections. The kinds of historical situations which led Arendt to her ruminations on thinking and moral considerations, most notably National Socialism and Stalinism in our century, are precisely instances when the intersubjectivity constitutive of the social world has been so dirempted and damaged that the motivation as well as the capacity to engage in enlarged thought disappears. In other words, one possible Arendtian objection to the model of actual or simulated dialogue I have presented may be that it reveals the utopianism of moral thought in the extreme. For these kinds of moral attitudes seem to disappear precisely when we most need them, that is in those situations of moral and political upheaval when the fabric of moral interactions which constitute everyday life are so destroyed that the moral obligation to think of the other as one whose perspective I must weigh equally alongside my own disappears from the conscience of individuals.

There is indeed a cleavage between moral principle and historical reality. The question when a principled moral standpoint of enlarged thought can become or fails to become the *moral culture* of a society cannot be answered by philosophical arguments concerning its validity and desirability. However, this admission is not equivalent to the acceptance of impotence in the face of history which the old Hegel, at least, always viewed as the price a Kantian ethics had to pay for formalism. We can name this issue the problem of the mediation of moral principles and moral culture. It is at this point when we are precisely concerned with mediating a principled moral standpoint with actual historical and social practices that the issue of a political ethic arises. A *political ethic* concerns the creation of institutions, the formation of practices, and the sustaining of civic values that cultivate the ability of enlarged thought and the universalist-egalitarian commitment which inspires them. Here I must depart from Arendt.

Arendt herself radically separated moral considerations from political action. Although her own political theory of the public space, community, power and participation seems to me to be inconceivable without an implicit

political ethic of enlarged thought, in her book *On Revolution* she proceeded from a remarkably narrow conception of morality. As is well known, one of her major criticisms of the French revolutionaries was that in attempting to establish a republic of virtue they only succeeded in establishing one of terror.[29] "Purity of heart" in her view has no room in politics. Arendt here did not distinguish between the morally good and the morally right. The moral good, virtue, concerns indeed those dispositions, traits of character, emotions and intentions that lead to virtuous conduct. The morally right concerns our public actions and interactions which affect, influence and reflect upon the moral dignity and worth of the other as a public being. Thus one possible answer to Arendt's separation of morality and politics is to argue with Kant and with modern liberal political theory that there is a moral foundation to politics insofar as any political system embodies principles of justice. In Kantian theory this domain covers the *Rechtslehre*, namely those human rights and public principles of legislation that embody respect for the moral worth and dignity of another. This is what John Rawls reformulates in his theory of justice as the fundamental principles of justice that are to govern the basic institutions of societies. Between a "republic of terror" and a "republic of virtue," we might say, lies the conception of a "well-ordered and just society," embodying basic moral principles in its macropolitical and economic institutions.[30]

It is possible to go one step farther in exploring the topic of a political ethic without altogether collapsing the distinction between the right and the good. This additional step would involve the encouragement and cultivation of a public ethos of democratic participation. Between the basic institutions of a polity, embodying principles of the morally right, and the domain of moral interactions in the lifeworld, in which virtue often comes to the fore, lie the civic practices and associations of a society in which individuals face each other neither as pure legal subjects nor as moral agents standing under ties of ethical obligations to each other but as public agents in a political space. The gap between the demands of justice, as it articulates the morally right, and the demands of virtue, as it defines the quality of our relations to others in the everyday lifeworld, can be bridged by cultivating qualities of civic friendship and solidarity. These moral attitudes of civic friendship and solidarity involve the extension of the sympathy and affection we naturally feel toward those closest to us unto larger human groups and thus personalize justice. Whereas it is customary particularly from a Kantian perspective to see a rupture here between the public virtue of impersonal justice and the private virtue of goodness, it is possible to envisage not their identity but their mediation.

The discourse model of ethics which enjoins enlarged thought, by making the perspective of all involved in a dialogue situation the sine qua non of the moral standpoint, allows us to think of this continuity and mediation. For the articulation of the perspectives of all involved requires, in fact, a civic and public life in which the right to opinion and action is guaranteed.[31] The articulation of differences through civic and political associations is essential for us to comprehend and to come to appreciate the perspective of others. The feelings of friendship and solidarity result precisely through the extension of our moral and political imagination not in vacuo, or via a Rawlsian thought experiment, but through the actual confrontation in public life with the point of view of those who are otherwise strangers to us but who become known to us through their public presence as voices and perspectives we have to take into account.

There is thus a fundamental link between a civic culture of public participation and the moral quality of enlarged thought. Enlarged thought, which morally obligates us to think from the standpoint of everyone else, politically requires the creation of institutions and practices whereby the voice and the perspective of others, often unknown to us, can become expressed in their own right. A major mistake of Kantian moral theory is to assume that the principles of enlarged thought can be realized via the isolated thought experiments of a thinker. These solitary thought experiments often substitute the standpoint of one privileged part for that of the whole. Indeed, it can hardly be otherwise. For "to think from the standpoint of everyone else" in Kantian moral philosophy is equivalent to thinking from the standpoint of one who is like all others in virtue of being a pure rational and autonomous agent. Once we reject the two-world metaphysics of Kantian theory, as well as the definition of our moral identities in purely rational terms, and we proceed to the perspectives of natality, plurality and the narrativity of action, we have to see that "to think from the standpoint of everyone else" entails sharing a public culture such that everyone else can articulate indeed what they think and what their perspectives are. The cultivation of one's moral imagination flourishes in such a culture in which the self-centered perspective of the individual is constantly challenged by the multiplicity and diversity of perspectives that constitute public life.

In this sense, Hannah Arendt was right in maintaining that judgment is the most political of all human faculties, for it leads to the recovery of the perspectival quality of the public world in which action unfolds. Where I depart from Arendt though is in her attempt to restrict this quality of mind to the political realm alone, thereby ignoring judgment as a moral faculty. The consequences of her position are on the one hand a reduction of principled moral reasoning to the standpoint of conscience, which is identified with the perspective of the unitary self, and on the other hand, a radical disjunction between morality and politics which ignores precisely the normative principles that seem to be embodied in the fundamental concepts of her own political theory like public space, power and political community. I have attempted to show that her own theory of action can be made fruitful for the exploration of moral judgment and that furthermore this theory of action leads to a reformulation of the essence of Kantian moral theory in terms of a

dialogic procedure of enlarged thought. My final reflections have attempted to mediate between this perspective of enlarged thought and its political embodiment in a public culture of democratic ethos.

NOTES

This chapter is a revised version of an article originally published in *Political Theory* 16.1 (1988), 29–51. Copyright © 1988 by Sage Publications, Inc. Reprinted with permission.

This article was originally delivered at the Hannah Arendt Memorial Symposium on Political Judgment, held at the New School for Social Research in the fall of 1985. I would like to thank Albrecht Wellmer and Charles Taylor for their comments on this lecture and the anonymous reader of the journal *Political Theory* for helpful criticism. I have revised and expanded the published version.

1. Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, vol. 1: *Thinking* (Harcourt, Brace and Jovanovich, New York and London, 1977), p. 3; volume 2 of *The Life of the Mind* is *Willing* (1978).

2. Ibid., p. 5.

3. Hannah Arendt, "Thinking and Moral Considerations: A Lecture," reprinted in *Social Research*, fiftieth anniversary issue (Spring/Summer 1984), p. 8.

4. Arendt, *Thinking*, p. 216.

5. Ronald Beiner, "Hannah Arendt on Judging," in Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1982), pp. 117ff; R. J. Bernstein, "Judging—the Actor and the Spectator," in *Philosophical Profiles* (University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1986), pp. 221–38. Cf. also Arendt's discussion of Kant's distinction between the standpoint of the actor and that of the spectator in these lectures, pp. 44ff., 54ff.

6. Christopher Lasch, "Introduction," *Salmagundi*, special Hannah Arendt issue, ed. Christopher Lasch, no. 60 (1983), p. xi.

7. H. Arendt, *The Human Condition* (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1958), 1973 edn used here. Abbreviated in text as HC.

8. For an illuminating discussion of moral judgment, see Charles Larmore, "Moral Judgment," *Review of Metaphysics*, 35 (Dec. 1981), pp. 275–96.

9. Bernstein, "Judging—the Actor and the Spectator," pp. 232–3.

10. Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Judgment*, trans. and with an analytical index by J. C. Meredith (Clarendon, Oxford, 1964), p. 18. This edition will be abbreviated in the text as CrJ. I have also consulted *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, in *Kants Werke, Akademie—Textausgabe*, vol. 5 (Walter de Gruyter, Berlin, 1968).

11. I. Kant, "Critique of Practical Reason," in *Critique of Practical Reason and other Writings in Moral Philosophy*, trans. and introd. L. W. Beck (Garland, New York and London, 1976), p. 176.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid., p. 177.

14. Kant returns to the question of moral judgment in the *Metaphysik der Sitten*, this time in the context of distinguishing perfect from imperfect duties. Perfect duties like telling the truth and keeping promises are ones where the action itself is directly determined by the moral law; imperfect duties, like generosity and benevolence, are ones whose maxims alone are determined by the moral law (pp. 250ff., 250ff.). This distinction between perfect and imperfect duties corresponds to that between the morally right and the morally good; whereas the first are subsumed under the "Rechtslehre" (doctrine of right), the second are subsumed under the "Tugendlehre" (doctrine of virtue). Kant admits that in virtue of the latitude allowed to imperfect duties—strive for your own perfection and the well-being of others—these require the exercise of the faculty of judgment. This faculty ought to determine how a "maxim is to be applied in specific cases"; this in turn requires another subsidiary maxim of application, and we thus land in a "moral casuistic" (p. 256). On Kant's view, the broader the domain of an imperfect duty the broader the scope for the exercise of the faculty of judgment. Kant ends these deliberations rather promptly with the observation that ethics is concerned not so much with judgment as with reason (p. 256). See Immanuel Kant, *Metaphysik der Sitten*, ed. K. Vorlaender, Philosophische Bibliothek, vol. 42 (4th edn, Felix Meiner, Hamburg, 1966).

15. Cf. Arendt, "Introduction," *Thinking*, p. 5; Arendt, "Thinking and Moral Considerations," p. 8. We also know from the notes of her students who attended her course on Kant's *Critique of Judgment* at the University of Chicago in 1971 that "Although Kant withheld questions of right and wrong from the sphere of reflective (aesthetic) judgment . . . Arendt herself was convinced that in doing so he had made a major mistake." Michael Denneny, "The Privilege of Ourselves: Hannah Arendt on Judgment," in *Hannah Arendt: The Recovery of the Public World*, ed. M. A. Hill (St. Martin's, New York, 1979), p. 266.

16. Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, p. 151; Cf. Arendt's discussion of this passage in her *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, pp. 71ff.

17. Arendt, "The Crisis in Culture," in *Between Past and Future: Six Exercises in Political Thought* (Meridian, New York, 1961), pp. 220–1.

18. For a recent attempt to reconcile universalism and moral judgment, see the instructive essay by Otfried Höffe, "Universalistische Ethik und Urteilskraft: ein Aristotelischer Blick auf Kant" *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung*, 44.4 (1990), pp. 539–63.

19. Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, p. 9.

20. Ibid., p. 50.

21. See R. Sorabji, "Aristotle on the Role of Intellect and Virtue," and David Wiggins, "Deliberation and Practical Reason," both in *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics*, ed. A. O. Rorty (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1980), pp. 201–21 and 221–41 respectively.

22. H. G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. G. Barden and J. Cumming (Seabury, New York, 1975), p. 287.

23. Cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, in *Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. and introd. R. Mckeon (Random House, New York, 1966), pp. 1114b5ff., 1142a25ff.

24. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, pp. 37–8.

25. Barbara Herman, "The Practice of Moral Judgment," *Journal of Philosophy* (Aug. 1985), pp. 414–36.

26. Arendt, "Crisis in Culture," p. 221.

27. Arendt, "Thinking and Moral Considerations," p. 30. The passage discussed by Arendt is the following: "It would be better for me that my lyre or a chorus I directed

should be out of time and loud with discord, and that multitudes of men should agree with me rather than that I, *being one*, should be out of harmony with myself and contradict *me*" (translation and emphases by Arendt). Cf. *Gorgias*, in "Gorgias" and *Selected Dialogues of Plato*, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, Bollingen Series 71 (Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J., 1973), p. 265.

28. Walt Whitman, "Song of Myself," in *Leaves of Grass and Selected Prose*, ed. and introd. John Kouwenhoven (Modern Library, New York, 1950), stanza 51, p. 77.

29. Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (Viking, New York, 1969), pp. 68ff., 84ff., and a similar concern with the relation of morality and politics in Hannah Arendt's thought, cf. J. Habermas, "Hannah Arendt's Communications Concept of Power," *Social Research*, 44 (1977), pp. 3–25. I am in agreement with George Kateb who writes: "My fear is that judging is too frail a support for the hope of keeping an only slightly altered Greek conception of action while reducing the dangers of its commencing immorality. . . . All that the faculty of judging can guarantee is that those one recognizes as one's equal will be taken into account. The demand that all be recognized as one's equals, that one not equate humanity with one's group, does not necessarily follow from the activity of judging." In *Hannah Arendt: Politics, Conscience, Evil* (Rowman and Allanheld, Totowa, N.J., 1983), pp. 38–9. Precisely for this reason, it is important to distinguish between moral judgment and moral principles as well as making explicit the foundations of one's concept of the political.

30. J. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1971), pp. 51ff.

31. On the rights of opinion and action, which Arendt describes as the "right to have rights," see Arendt, *Imperialism*, in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, part 2 (Harcourt, Brace and Jovanovich, New York, 1968), pp. 176–7. For a provocative essay that explores and argues against the antidemocratic strain in Arendt's thought, cf. Sheldon Wolin, "Hannah Arendt: Democracy and the Political," *Salmagundi*, special H. Arendt issue, ed. Christopher Lasch, no. 60 (1983), pp. 3–19. The alternative conception of the political which Wolin outlines in this essay is nonetheless much indebted to Arendt's views in *The Human Condition;* cf. Wolin, pp. 17–19.

11

Asymmetrical Reciprocity: On Moral Respect, Wonder, and Enlarged Thought

Iris Marion Young

> Perhaps, first of all, however, one must ask oneself, in a manner that is in some way absolutely preliminary: What is the relation between a language and *giving-taking* in general? The definition of language, of a language, as well as of the text in general, cannot be formed without a certain relation to the gift, to giving-taking and so forth, having been involved there in advance.
>
> —Jacques Derrida

In everyday moral discourse it is common for people to enjoin one another to think about an issue from the point of view of others before drawing conclusions about what is right or just. Those discussing issues of a just health care policy in the United States, for example, might say that people who now get low-cost health insurance coverage through their place of work should imagine themselves in the situation of those low-wage or part-time workers who receive no health care coverage at all. The injunction to look at an issue from the point of view of others differently situated is often effective in pulling people away from selfishness or parochialism in their reasoning about moral issues. For this reason, the ordinary language appeal "Just look at it from their position" is often an important move in moral discourse where people try to reach conclusions about what is right, good, or just.

When this rough-and-ready appeal to look at issues from the point of view of others is systematized into a moral theory, however, problems may arise. In her elaboration and revision of Habermas's theory of communicative ethics, Seyla Benhabib performs one such systematization. She conceptual-