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# PUBLIC SPACE. CONFLICTS AND ANTINOMIES

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The idea of public space is crucial for our political imagination, precisely because it is perceived as being not only threatened, but even as on the way toward extinction. Throughout its history, the concept seems to imply both a promise of a more transparent social world, and a threat to which we are exposed: it is a space of free exchange, but also one to which we are subjected, and where conflict seems unending.

In this sense, two competing versions could be given: the first one would tell a story of the rise and fall of public space, and it is probably the most common one; the second, which is less frequent, presents public space as always and structurally constituted by a conflict that will make it into a space of struggle, where the dreams of undistorted communication not only cover over the reality of power, but in fact are instrumental for its deployment. These two can neither be fused into a common story, nor can we simply choose between them; perhaps they can be said to constitute something like the antinomy of public space.

### KANT AND THE ENLIGHTENMENT

The classical origin of most stories of public space is the agora in the Greek polis, which has taken on a symbolic value for all subsequent theorizing, notwithstanding the fact that it must be seen as a retroactive fantasy, similarly to many other such Greek "origins" that have been assumed since the late eighteenth century onwards. That the selection of citizens that were allowed to take part in Greek democracy was indeed small has been brushed aside, which has made it possible to transform it

into a model for various promises of a restored *Gemeinschaft* in modernity, a community that would rest on a direct "representation," as if the exclusionary mechanisms at once had been repressed and sublimated into a kind of ideal space. This trope appears in Winckelmann, Rousseau, the early Romantics, the young Hegel (who would later discard it), and many other thinkers on the eighteenth century that were trying to articulate a new foundation for political theory after the downfall of the absolutist-theological model. (In fact, even though this is rarely made into an explicit theme, the various versions of contract theory seem to require something like a common space, a medium of assembly, in which the first act of signing occurs, since it takes place at one singular point in time, not as a series of individual events separated in space and time.)

The second step in this story is the construction of an ideal public space, which as we noted often looks back to its alleged Greek origin, and yet constitutes something basically new. This is the idea of a world of rational reflection, communication, and judgment that would rely on readers dispersed in space and time, only related through the sense that they share a common rational project. We find this outlined in Kant,[1] in his conception of the Enlightenment and its *Öffentlichkeit* as a spatial and temporal ideal form where all dogmas, theoretical as well as moral and political, can be subjected to debate. To participate in this debate, Kant proposes, one must however act as a "public" person and not as a bearer of official authority, as in the case of the judge, the magistrate, the priest, etc., which in Kant's vocabulary are "private" uses of reason (for us today, this terminology would be inverted). The divide between these two roles comes across in a statement that has spawned many vitriolic remarks, and it seems to make Kant into a late-come proponent of the traditional doctrine of Reason of State, or even a kind of Prussian state philosopher: "Reason as much as you wish but obey!" What Kant in fact means, however, is something different that still today remains a basic tenet of legal theory. Whoever acts as a figure of public authority must uphold what Kant in other contexts calls the "mechanism of society," since processes based on authority must be transparent and predictable once the initial variables are clearly staked out. We may indeed reason as much as we want, and question the soundness of laws. but this reasoning belongs to a space of individual, intellectual license, which as such is not the basis of procedures of authority. When passing a judgment, the court must follow the law, even though each of its members may very well perceive the law as unjust.

While the private use of reason is based on authority and obedience, Kant stresses the processual character of the public debate, which means that it should remain open-ended. We are living in an age of *enlightenment*,

he writes, not an *enlightened* age, since the latter would assume that reason had been perfected. If the process were to be stopped, i.e., if we would attain a perfect "match" between thinking and world, such a state could in a sense not be separated from a metaphysical dogmatism where truth could be decreed, and reasoning comes to an end. Enlightenment is reflexive, in the sense that it must always be prepared to question its own results.

As Kant notes, this is due to a "maturing capacity for judgment" characteristic of that period which allows for the step out of our "self-incurred tutelage" (*Unmündigkeit*), as he writes in the Enlightenment essay which also makes it all the more essential for everyone of us to attempt to "think in the place of everyone else," as he later will say in the *Critique of Judgment* (§ 40).[2] What Kant in fact discovers, as he moves from the first to the third *Critique* and the various essays on politics, is that judgment is not simply "determining," as in theoretical cognition, but also "reflexive," engaging a dimension of intersubjectivity that requires us to change perspective, and to project a possible future where we all would be spontaneously reconciled, while still acknowledging that no empirical state of affairs could ever be said to be precisely such a fulfilled state.

In the third Critique, the discussion of judgment is carried out in terms of taste, beauty, and the sublime, and the link to the political writings does not at first hand seem obvious, although a closer reading of the texts reveals many subterranean links. They are however always tentative, as if experiments in thought that transfer propositional forms by way of analogy, metaphor, metonymy, and a host of other figures. Rather than an aestheticizing of politics, or a politicizing of aesthetics, the twofold temptation that haunts post-Kantian modernity, it is an exercise in what Kant in the third *Critique* calls an "enlarged mode of thought" (*erweitere Denkungsart*), a reflection that does not aim for

grounding in theory of practice, but moves freely between them, drawing on all types of sources and texts, unfolding in the interstices of imagination and judgment.

For instance, when Kant refers to the French revolution, he introduces the idea of a "sign of history" that would account for the way in which empirical events impact not only the affective part of the spectator, but also introduces ideas of reason, and even constitutes a kind of historical teleology, although surrounded by several caveats. The sign introduces a certain temporal dimension, and, as we will see, it at least communicates indirectly with the idea of a public space that would be materialized and embodied in a kind of monumentality. The relevant passages can be found in the second part of Kant's *The Conflict of Faculties*,[3] where the question is whether progress in history can be ascertained or not. No direct empirical facts will suffice, Kant claims, instead we should attempt to find "signs" that indicate—indirectly, precisely as *signs*—the existence of a transformed moral disposition. The French revolution, he suggests, is such a case, not because it has brought about shifts and changes in government (these may be reversed, and even lead to a factually worse state than before), but because it affects the spectators in a particular fashion. It is not the violence, the sound and fury of the *res gestae* that signify moral improvement; in fact, at the end of the day, the effects of the revolution may be such that it actually increases the amount of suffering in the world. The crucial aspect is what Kant calls *enthusiasm*,[4] a particular passion among those who experience it from a certain distance, in this case from across the Rhine: it is the Germans who are filled with enthusiasm, and a whole generation of idealist philosophers and poets in the wake of Kant will corroborate his analysis. The Germans, Kant argues, are precisely by virtue of their distance from the stage of history exempt from the violence of pathological passions, since they have nothing to gain by entertaining them; on the contrary, their passions will be redirected from immediate aims towards moral principles, and in this they indicate a particular receptivity for ideas that is lost in the immediate imbroglio of the French milieu.

First, we must note the theatrical dimension. The drama is organized by the divide between stage and audience, perhaps to some extent drawing on an implicit reading of Aristotle's *Poetics*, where enthusiasm replaces *katharsis* as the desired outcome. But the revolution is as such obviously not a fiction, rather a real event whose moral effect can only be discerned if it passes through a certain distancing and aesthetic derealization. The impact of the political is registered in a quasi-aesthetic space, and even though the real (events and actions) cannot be reduced to an aesthetic phenomenon, the relation to moral principles can only be created by way

of a certain circulation within an aesthetic realm. The entangled nature of these relations no doubt signals a hesitance on Kant's part, but, arguably, just as much the contradictory and entangled nature of the real itself.

To this we must add the temporal nature of the historical sign: it is a *signum rememorativum, demonstrativum et prognosticon*, i.e. a sign of *memory* that tells us that there has always been a certain amount of progress, a sign that demonstrates that there is a case in the present, and a sign that offers the *prognosis* that there will be progress in the future, that hope is not lost regardless of the vicissitudes of the revolution at present. In this sense, it institutes a historical possibility: even though empirical events may lead us astray and even turn out disastrously, this possibility cannot sink into complete oblivion. The same holds for the Enlightenment, which for Kant, as we saw, is not simply an empirical phase in history, but a reflexive move within reason itself, in which it calls upon itself to know itself, from within, without any support from transcendent authorities.

The sign can in this sense be understood within a logic of the monument: it preserves a moment in time, embodies an idea, and projects it into the future. Orienting the affective response of the beholder towards the domain of moral principles and supersensible ideas, it points to a possibility to be realized in the future. But it also points to the transcendence of such a future in relation to all empirical presents; the aesthetic affect must remain in an imaginary realm, if it is to retain its force in the realm of political, whereas any collapse of the two into each other would be precisely a "transcendental illusion" in the sense Kant had already outlined in the first Critique.

The sign of history is only one of the many intermediary figures that Kant proposes to create a bridge between the sensible and the supersensible, nature and freedom, and it is no easy task to sort them in a clear order, or to see if they are connected,

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hierarchically or otherwise. As Lyotard points out (and in this he often comes close to Arendt),[5] if the "critique of political reason" remained in a state of fragmentation and suspension, it was because the political for Kant couldn't be subsumed under a priori principles, but always mobilized concepts drawn from cognition, ethics, and aesthetics, even religion, in a way that blurs the line between proper and improper uses.

## THE RISE AND FALL OF PUBLIC SPACE

In the tradition from Kant, this lack of a priori principles has often been taken as a positive characteristic: it is the absence of univocal rules that constitutes the idea of society as a kind of ongoing mediation and reflection, an open-ended process of legitimization and production of consensus that neither acknowledges the decrees issued by a sovereign power, nor those of any alleged science of politics. Thus, many have claimed that the creation of a modern political space would have Kantian Criticism and the French Revolution as two founding moments. As Claude Lefort puts it, the end of the eighteenth century would have been the moment of the "democratic invention" or the "invention of democracy,"[6] which as such was marked by a constitutive ambivalence: the subject that speaks (the "people") is at the same time to be brought forth in this very same address, via a kind of political performativity. But rather than simply a contradiction that in advance would undermine this new political logic, the performative is what dismantles the theological and/or ontological foundation of politics, to the effect that we can say that there *is* politics, in the modern sense of the term, precisely to the extent that the very idea of a foundation has eroded. There is an absence at the heart of society, a void that many are indeed eager and even desperate to fill, which is why a certain totalitarian temptation always follows modern democracy like a shadow (for instance, as we noted earlier, by letting the aesthetic fill out this gap, not just as a "bridge," as Kant writes, but as a common positive ground).

A somewhat different narrative is provided by Jürgen Habermas, from his early analysis of the public sphere to the later theories of communicative action.[7] For him, the idea of a constitutive void or indeterminacy is not enough to safeguard a modern idea of the political; instead, he suggests that the theory of communication must be given a "transcendental" status if the respective roles of discourse are to be safeguarded. Despite these differences, Lefort's and Habermas's theories both delineate powerful and highly influential narratives of the emergence of political freedom as connected to the space of public life, and for both the Kantian moment occupies a central place.

It is however also crucial that in both accounts (more emphatically in Habermas), the public sphere is perceived as under threat. When Habermas in his classic 1962 study on the transformations of the public sphere begins by locating the promise of a public sphere, he points to the time of Kant and the emergence of what could be called modern media as a site of free reflection (they create a "world of readers," *eine Leserwelt*, as Kant says). But at the same time, this account seems already from the outset destined to end with the corruption of this very same system, at a point where it is absorbed by commercial interests and becomes part of a culture of the spectacle. One can ask to what extent the public sphere that Habermas's whole discourse mourns for ever existed; if it was there as a promise at the end of the Enlightenment, as an idea (but nothing more) in Kant, then as soon as its real and material infrastructure was set in place, it began to deteriorate.

It seems clear that the idea of a single public space governed by the rules of rational communication was never, or will ever be, instantiated empirically, and in this sense it can only be taken as a "regulative" idea in the Kantian sense: it is there in order to make sense of, or more precisely to judge and evaluate, a given empirical manifold, but it is never instantiated as such, which is probably why Habermas in his later writings comes to understand the ideal communicative situation as a transcendental requirement (or in terms of a "transcendental pragmatics," as proposed by Karl-Otto Apel).[8] The problem with this however is whether such a regulative idea is at all capable of accounting for a factual development: it achieves its authority by adopting a normative transcendence with respect to the vicissitudes of history, while it remains unclear to what extent any of these factual developments were ever directed by this ideal. Similarly, one could ask if the ideal of a transparent communication could ever account for what goes

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on in communication; simply reiterating the traditional divide between *is* and *ought* may seem like evading the question, or at least to remain deaf to what goes on in language. The later claims by Habermas that the problems could be settled through a "procedural rationality" (a minimum set of rules that safeguard rationality without making any substantial claims about the content of debates) seems to go in the same direction, and appears to assume that the basic questions have already been solved, or at least could be bracketed because of their technical, specialized nature.[9]

Drawing on Habermasian ideas, but in a way that stays closer to concrete problems of public space, the urban theorist Michael Sorkin has suggested an analogous account of the privatization of public space, which ends on an even more apocalyptic note and predicts the "end of public space".[10] Many other similar cases could be cited; a conclusion would be that it seems almost unavoidable to inscribe the idea of a public "site" (whose spatial characteristics may vary) for rational political discourse in a story that tells of rise and decline. If such a site once existed—be it the Greek *agora*, the Renaissance city, the ideal space of the Enlightenment—it is now a memory, an object of nostalgia. At the same time, this narrative cannot simply ascribe the demise of its object to some external cause: the rise of an affluent class that only looks to its own interests, the commercial press, the proliferation of information, technological changes; all of these are both what made this site, space, or sphere possible, and that which lies behind its inevitable deterioration in the present.

### GENEALOGIES OF PUBLIC SPACE

Other narratives than those of rise and fall are obviously possible, not just in the sense that they would cite other empirical cases, but also, and more profoundly, in that they would question its underlying assumptions. In some cases, they could amount to what looks like an inversion of the first story. So in the case of Richard Sennett, whose *The Fall of Public Man* attempts to show how the nineteenth century, with its emphasis on personal authenticity and psychological truthfulness, displaced an Enlightenment culture of conversation and of the salon.[11] In the eighteenth century "public man" was at liberty to stage a self, in a kind of enactment of the self in terms of rhetoric rather than psychology, whereas the nineteenth century would instead demand that one should appear as one truly is and condemn the split between inside and outside as a sign of moral inaptitude.[12]

Other stories take us beyond the figure of reversal, and instead opt for a different and more conflict-ridden understanding of the historical process, tending to something that, following Nietzsche and Foucault, could be

called a "genealogical" model.[13]  In these stories, it makes no sense to ask if public space in the "true" sense existed at one point of another, if it was once a promise that was later betrayed for some reason, or if there has been a fall from one state to another. Public space has always been both an object of dispute, and a disputed space of the dispute itself, to the effect that it has no true or ideal sense beyond all the ways in which it has been appropriated, rejected, contested, and redefined. If such a space has a constant feature—this time not in the sense of a regulative idea but rather that of a pervasive empirical fact—it is that it has always been based on various exclusions and hidden or explicit privileges, as any analysis of the actual composition of the alleged origins in the Greek political assemblies and the *agora* will unambiguously show.

As Rosalyn Deutsche suggests, the kind of analysis that we have previously discussed, which mourns the downfall of an ideal public domain, might even, somewhat provocatively, be called "agoraphobia."[14] What it profoundly fears, she argues, is to acknowledge that all public discourse is marked by asymmetries and power relations, not just incidentally and contingently, but structurally and constitutively. Non-violent discourse might in this sense fulfill a very traditional definition of ideology: an imaginary solution to real contradictions, transposed to the realm of regulative ideas that always *ought* to be realized, but in fact never *are* (similarly to way in which the idea that all humans are equal in principle can serve to obscure that fact that they are never equal in reality). Such an ideal will always appear as distant in time or space, always lost or to come, and this temporal projection is what holds fear at bay by rationalizing it.

In a similar vein, Chantal Mouffe claims that "the political," which for her must be distinguished from "politics" in the empirical sense of processes of policy-making and decision-making, has to do with the way in which a society is symbolically instituted

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in terms of a fundamental *antagonism*.[15] This she distinguishes from liberal conceptions, which are based on an "aggregative" model that understands the political in terms of the economy and the market, and from a deliberative model that understands the political as the application of morality. For Mouffe, the political has to do with *passions*, and to take a political stance will always involve a separation between an "us" and a "them," which creates an asymmetry in the space in which the two parties are to meet. The problem for Mouffe becomes to what extent this antagonism can be transformed into an "agonism" that would allow passionate encounters while still mitigating or sublimating the violence of antagonism. How can we acknowledge the legitimacy of the opponent, without reference to a set of rules or a rational consensus to be achieved as the outcome? Does the shift to agonism not presuppose some standard according to which it can be construed as successful—or, inversely, as has been argued by Slavoj Žižek, must the idea, or ideal, of agonism, not have recourse to a more basic liberal-capitalist order that itself cannot be challenged?

Just as for Deutsche, this has important consequences for the notion of public space. Mouffe places her theory in clear opposition to the one proposed by Habermas, but also, although less clearly, to Hannah Arendt, whose conception of an "enlarged thought" and a political intersubjectivity draws on Kant's aesthetics.[16] For Mouffe, public space cannot be seen as one entity that could subsequently be occupied or compromised by external forces, rather it is a constitutive plurality in a sense that goes beyond the peaceful "space of appearance" as delineated by Arendt: it is a multiply contested and non-symmetric space, a battleground traversed by struggles for hegemony. If public space is the space where politics is realized, this can only occur through acts of confrontation and unmasking. What Mouffe proposes is that the public domain must be seen as an ongoing experimental construction, rather than as a regulative idea against which all empirical domains should be measured and against which they all will appear as deficient.

### THE ANTINOMY OF PUBLIC SPACE

How should we judge the conflict between those two stories? To some extent it is reminiscent of what Paul Ricoeur once called a "conflict of interpretations,"[17] i.e. between a restorative hermeneutics that wants to return to an original sense buried under sediments of history, and a "hermeneutics of suspicion" in the wake of Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud, for which the given—consciousness, texts, or, as in this case, this strange entity called public space—always harbors inner contradictions that must be unearthed, and that eventually will destroy the unity of the object in question.

But perhaps the choice of the word "hermeneutics" as an overarching term is misleading, since it glosses over the highly different conceptions of thought itself that we find in these two conceptions. At stake are not just methodologies of interpretation, but a kind of antinomy that lies deep in the heart of thought itself. But what, then, is this antinomy?

The term seems as such to already settle the conflict, since it belongs to the Kantian vocabulary. For Kant, an antinomy results from two conflicting interests, and his chief example is the notion of freedom: for the understanding, as the faculty that legislates over the science of nature, the interest lies in maximizing the scope of causality, and freedom is an impossible concept, since it would disrupt the causal chain. For the faculty of reason (as opposed to the faculty of understanding, and directed towards ideas), the interest is to safeguard a sphere of the supersensible that preserves the autonomy of rational agents. In natural science, causal chains must be seamless, and that free actions do not exist is not an empirical discovery, but an a priori requirement. For ethics, freedom is inversely what is required for the moral law to be at all applicable, and its status cannot be revoked by any reference to physics. What holds together these two claims is the architectonic of reason, which allows the sensible (nature) and the supersensible to co-exist.[18]

Now, in the case of public space, just as in Kant's analysis of freedom, both parties can argue their respective cases forcefully: the idealist account lays claim to an ethical necessity (no empirical facts can settle the question of what public space should be), whereas the genealogical seems to refer to a kind of sensible manifold (ethical ideals are not what matters, but rather significance lies in what people in fact do). What is striking, and rather different than in Kantian philosophy, is that the first version, which stresses universals and communicative action, tends to be pessimistic about the present and even more so about the future, whereas the

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second version, which stresses contingency and forces, tends to see the future as open an undecided. What seems to be at stake here is thus not the difference between theoretical and practical reason, or between nature and freedom, as Kant would have it, but rather between two versions of freedom, which is why we cannot solve the issue by an appeal to some putative architecture of reason. The antinomy of public space in this sense testifies to division between two ideas or even ideals of philosophy, rather than to a split inside a particular philosophy.

ENDNOTES

1. The classic text is Immanuel Kant's 1784 essay, 'An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?' in Immanuel Kant, *Political Writings*, trans. H. B. Nisbet, ed. Hans Reiss (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1990).

2. Immanuel Kant, 'What is Enlightenment?' Mary C. Smith, tr. http://www.columbia.edu/acis/ets/CCREAD/etscc/kant.html.

3. Translated in *Political Writings* (as in note 1).

4. I draw here on the commentary by Jean-François Lyotard, *L'enthousiasme: La critique kantienne de l'histoire* (Paris: Galilée, 1986).

5. Which is not to say that their readings coincide: in many respects they differ sharply, in a way not unrelated to the antinomy between the two stories of public space that will be sketched in the following section.

6. See Claude Lefort *L'invention démocratique: Les limites de la domination totalitaire* (Paris: Fayard, 1981).

7. Jürgen Habermas, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit: Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft* (Luchterhand: Neuwied, 1962), and Jürgen Habermas, *Theorie des kommunikativem Handelns* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1981).

8. See for instance Karl-Otto Apel, *Understanding and Explanation: A Transcendental Pragmatic Perspective*, trans. Georgia Warnke (Cambridge, Mass: MIT, 1984).

9. In another terminology, the idea of a procedural rationality endowed with an intentionally "thin" definition seems to deny the possibility of "deep conflicts", i.e., conflicts where the very nature of rules is at stake. Interestingly, such conflicts are abundant at the level that many (though not all) philosophers would see as the basic one, the foundations of mathematics and logic.

10. See for instance the contributions in Michael Sorkin (ed.), *Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City and The End of Public Space* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992). For a critical discussion of Sorkin's account, as well as of similar proposals by Mike Davis, see

Rosalyn Deutsche, 'Men in Space,' in Rosalyn Deutsche, *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996). This is obviously not to deny the empirical pertinence of the analyses of late capitalist space and of the commodification of the urban landscape proposed by Sorkin and Davis; it does however mean to question their underlying narrative structure, which tends to project a past and more ideal situation or possibility that at one point were betrayed.

11. Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man* (New York: Random House, 1977).

12. While doubtless effective as an antidote to the traditional story, the image of a fall occurring at the beginning of the nineteenth century, should not lead us into believing that free public sphere once existed, and then vanished, but we should rather see one contradictory and tension-laden structure displacing another, as Sennett shows. That the ideal of public man was highly disputed can be seen in the writings of Rousseau and Diderot. If Diderot in his *Paradoxe sur le comédien* shows how the actor's distance from himself is a precondition for theater, then Rousseau can be said to invert this theory by making theater itself into a paradigm for false social relations, as in his *Lettre à d'Alembert sur les spectacles*.

13. For Foucault's account of Nietzsche, see 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,' in: Michel Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard, trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Simon Sherry (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977). Foucault says little about public space, but it would no doubt be fruitful to enter this complex via his analysis of Greek democracy and his discussion of parrhesia, "fearless speech," which always introduces a difference that breaks with the merely formal symmetry of equals. See the

two last courses at the Collège de France, *Le gouvernement de soi et des autres: Cours au Collège de France (1982-1983)*, ed. Frédéric Gros (Paris: Seuil ; 2008), and *Le courage de la vérité: Le gouvernement de soi et des autres II: Cours au Collège de France (1983-1984)*, ed. Frédéric Gros (Paris: Seuil: 2009).

14. See Rosalyn Deutsche, 'Agoraphobia,' in: Roslyn Deutsche, *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996).

15. For Mouffe's views, see Chantal Mouffe, *On the political* (London: Routledge, 2005), and Chantal Moufe, 'Agonistic Public Spaces, Democratic Politics, and the Dynamics of Passion,' in: Joseph Backstein, Daniel Birnbaum, and Sven-Olov Wallenstein (eds:), *Thinking Worlds: The Moscow Conference on Philosophy, Politics, and Art* (New York and Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2008). For the relation to Carl Schmitt and the conception of the political as oriented along the axis friend-foe, see her anthology Chantal Mouffe, *The Challenge of Carl Schmitt* (London: Verso, 1999).

16. See Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, ed. Ronald Beiner (Chicago: University of Chicago press, 1992).

17. See Paul Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, new ed. 2007).

18. I disregard some of the more objectionable moves that permit Kant to close the gap between theoretical and practical reason, above all the reference to the thing itself, of which he says that it is at least not contradictory to assume would be the locus of a free, supersensible causality. Kant is perhaps too eager to close the gap, because of the demand for an architectonic unity of reason, even though his "dissolution" (*Auflösung*) of the antinomy is dependent on it, as I think is evinced by respective developments of the theme in Arendt and Lyotard.