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**Hannah Arendt,
Political Judgement and
Reconciliation in the Wake of an
Abyss of Violence and Injustice**

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Abstract

Recent debates about transitional justice continue to grapple with the difficulty of how to judge past wrongs and bring about reconciliation in societies deeply divided by violent pasts. Yet, this difficulty is usually approached by envisioning reconciliation as a restoration of a preconceived moral and political order, which risks not only obscuring the often pervasive breakdown of all moral and political standards but also falling short of truly bringing about a just reckoning with the past and a conciliatory future. This paper suggests to reorient these debates by approaching reconciliation through the prism of political judgement as developed in the work of Hannah Arendt, who, in response to the crisis in judgement of her time, acknowledged the loss of all reliable yardsticks and reconsidered political judgement in specifically existential terms, as an activity grounded in and constantly revivifying the fundamental existential condition of being-in-the-world-with-others. Arendt's appropriation of Kant's aesthetic judgement, it is argued, amounts to a conception of political judgement that is, as representative thinking, predicated upon the sense of responsibility for the common world and its members. Political judgement based on such existential concern with the recovery of a common, public world and the dignity of its members as plural equals, this paper argues, can reinvigorate transitional justice debates by approaching reconciliation not as a restoration of (liberal or communitarian) moral and political ideals nor as a postmodern agonistic and irresolvable play of irreconcilable interests, but as an attempt to preserve the memory of past wrongs and of the victims as part of the common world without foreclosing the possibility of a common future and dialogue between former enemies.

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Introduction

Over the past two decades the subject of transitional justice and reconciliation in societies deeply divided by the past of violence and suffering assumed increasing prominence in (international) political theory. Recent debates continue to grapple with the difficulty of how to judge past wrongs so as to allow a community to reconcile with what happened and move from the impasse of suffering, resentment and mutual denunciations to the possibility of a conciliatory future. In much of the literature on the subject, however, surprisingly little attention has been awarded to the processes and workings of judgement itself. Instead, this difficulty is usually approached by constructing a framework of principles of deliberation through which a society is to reach an agreement about the past and revivify a sense of justice and belonging in societies ravaged by violent conflict. These attempts are indebted to either a Habermasian model of a consensus reached by way of 'communicative rationality' or a hermeneutical situated identity politics of recognition (Gutmann and Thompson 2000; Kymlicka and Bashir 2010; see Hirsch 2012, 1–4). Yet, as postmodern critics have recently pointed out, insofar as this model approaches reconciliation with a preconceived vision of consensus and agreement and envisions it as a restoration of a moral and political order that has been violated, it risks obscuring the often pervasive breakdown of all moral and political standards in the wake of grave state wrongs (see Schaap 2005a). Further, it may in fact obliterate difference and threaten not only to fall short of their promise of consensus, but also 'unwittingly perpetuate the very injustice they aim to suture' (Hirsch 2012, 3). Indeed, from this perspective, reconciliation is often seen as 'a public good that ought to be balanced against that of justice within transitional societies' (Schaap 2005b, 68), thus plunging into a number of irresolvable aporias that have recently been amply illustrated by its postmodern critics (see Hirsch 2012).

Rather than embracing wholeheartedly the postmodern agon, this paper proposes to reorient these debates by approaching reconciliation in terms of a reinvigoration of the existential sense of the common world and seeks to do so through the prism of political judgement as developed in the work of Hannah Arendt. Itself a response to what she saw as a pervasive breakdown in judgement in her time, Hannah Arendt's account of judgement starts from a recognition of the radical challenge to established modes and categories of judgement that past injustices represent. This crisis Arendt interprets in specifically existential terms, as an embodiment of a widespread condition of worldlessness, of an atrophy of the distinctly human capacity to relate meaningfully to the world of human affairs and other people (see Arendt 2005a, 161; Hinchman and Hinchman 1984, 185, 202; Biskowski 1993, 65).

In response, Arendt rejected all teleological accounts of judgement that would seek to subsume the particular under broader standards, forces and processes and instead turned to Kant's account of aesthetic judgement, envisioning it as an activity grounded in and constantly revivifying the fundamental existential condition of being-in-the-world-with-others. This

narrative sensitivity has recently caught the imagination of political theorists, who have seen in it a valuable potential for a reinvigoration of the human ability to come to terms with a past of suffering and injustice. Redemptive powers of narrative have been said to be able to provide resources necessary to reach 'a "post-metaphysical" moral understanding of evil', and create possibilities to 'recover humanity' for a viable future (Lara 2001, 241, 245). Especially after the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa, this recognition of the relevance of sharing and exchanging stories about past wrongs flowed also in reconciliation debates, where theorists continue to grapple with the difficulty of how to account for these stories so as to enable a just reckoning with past wrongs and bring about a common future (see Hayner 2001; Rotberg and Thompson 2000).

This paper aims to contribute to these debates by drawing on two intertwined aspects of Arendt's narrative account of judgement. First, Arendt's appropriation of Kant's aesthetic judgement amounts to a conception of political judgement that is, as representative thinking, predicated upon an existential concern with and responsibility for the recovery of the common, public world and the dignity of its members as plural equals. As such, it is argued, it displaces the emphasis from the usual placing of attention on how to secure a viable community agreement about the meaning and implications of past wrongs to the existential challenge of how to come to terms with the common reality as it has become and reinvigorate the human capacity to relate meaningfully to the world and to others. Further, in its rejection of all teleological interpretations, envisioning an easy transition from the past of violence to a conciliatory future, and its emphasis on the reality of the gap between the two, it affirms human freedom in the present, thus renouncing the claim of the reality of past wrongs to determine also the present and future possibilities. In this way, the paper argues, it offers a promising perspective through which to rethink the concept of reconciliation by pointing to a possibility of both preserving the memory of past wrongs and of the victims and at the same time recreating a sense of the world as an object of shared responsibility among former enemies, thus opening a space for a new beginning and a common future.

The burden of past evils

Hannah Arendt's political theory in general and her efforts to rethink the nature and workings of political judgement in particular were significantly shaped by her attempt to come to terms with and provide a meaningful response to the catastrophes of the twentieth century (Canovan 1992, 2, 7). The true, and, so to speak, still present horror of totalitarianism, for Arendt, lies not simply in the sheer horrendousness of its crimes, but in the fact that it has, in its unprecedentedness, definitively 'exploded our categories of political thought and our standards for moral judgement' (Arendt 2005b, 309–10). In this way, according to Arendt, totalitarianism has finally 'brought to light' for everyone

to see that the crisis facing modern societies is far more deep-seated and far-reaching than many had hitherto been willing to recognize (Arendt 2005b, 318; Hinchman and Hinchman 1984, 185). Its hallmark Arendt sees in the widespread atrophy of the distinctly human capacity to relate meaningfully to the world of human affairs and other people (see Hinchman and Hinchman 1984, 185; Isaac 1992, 66–7).

Philosophically, Arendt traces this crisis to the inadequacy of the traditional understanding of political judgement as an application of pre-fabricated universal standards and rules to the changing and unpredictable realm of human affairs. What gave rise to this understanding was the predominance within political theory of the so-called 'metaphysical fallacies,' which construed the world of appearances as merely a more or less perfect manifestation of deeper and truer realities, whether Platonic ideas or the modern "pseudo-divinity" called History (see Arendt 1978a, 10–12, 216). For some time these supra-sensory realities continued to provide standards and rules by which human affairs could be judged and understood, thus assuring the meaningfulness of the world and human existence within it (Arendt 2005a, 37, 84). With the unparalleled shifts and transformations in all spheres of human life that characterized the advance of the modern age, however, the validity of these yardsticks started to wane, and was finally shattered when they proved themselves unable to guard against and even to a certain extent implicated in the worst aberrations of the modern age (Arendt 2005a, 38; Isaac 1992, 68–70).

In either case, any attempt to resuscitate traditional patterns and categories of thought by identifying those standards and measurements that have become inadequate and conjuring up new ones, better suited to the ever-changing worldly reality, Arendt thought, is neither possible nor it is desirable (Arendt 1966, 113). For any desire to arrive at a substance or truth thought to reside behind mere appearances, grounding or causing them, Arendt claimed in a distinctly existentialist tone of voice, risks reducing human beings to the manner of being of a substance or a thing, the 'what', and not the 'who' of the specifically human existence (see e.g. Hinchman and Hinchman 1984, 189–97). As such, it misses out on a distinctly human capacity for a new beginning which is ontologically rooted in the human condition of natality and which presupposes a plurality of equals in whose company it is carried out (Arendt 2005a, 45, 82–4). The ensuing haphazardness and unpredictability of human affairs has indeed proved to be of much discomfort to philosophers, who have persistently sought to offset it by proscribing a set of standards and models according to which human affairs are to be conducted and judged, on the assumption that in action, too, 'one man, isolated from all others, remains master of his doings from beginning to end' (Arendt 1958, 220).

Yet, all such attempts in fact threaten to eliminate human plurality and with it a sense of the reality of the common world. Indeed, for Arendt, it is only by appearing publicly, in common, in a variety of different standpoints and perspectives that are nevertheless concerned with the same object, that the things of this world gain true reality and 'objectivity' (Arendt 1958, 57–8). This is especially true for the most fleeting and perishable of worldly objects, words

and deeds of humans, which depend on a plurality of spectators to judge them, 'testify to their existence' and transform them 'into the tangibility of things' to find their place in the world at all (Arendt 1958, 95). Without such a public space of 'collective remembrance' constituted by a plurality of perspectives that testify to the world's commonness, Arendt claims, the world can never become a welcoming home for human action and speech (Arendt 1958, 173). The plurality of perspectives for Arendt is then not something to be eliminated but the very condition of endowing the world of human affairs with meaning, the stability and permanence, out of which arises the ability to act anew (see Schaap 2005a, 61).

Arendt's appropriation of Kant's aesthetic judgement: sharing the world with others

It is precisely this possibility to honour the plurality of perspectives on each event that Arendt finds in Kant's account of aesthetic judgements of taste. Its specific appeal for Arendt lies first in the fact that it corresponds to the ability of reflective judgement, where, like in the case of a beautiful object that we cannot simply subsume under the pre-given universal concept of Beauty, 'only the particular is given for which the general has to be found' (Arendt 1989, 76, 13; D'Entrèves 1994, 113). And second and even more importantly, taste, even though it is a highly idiosyncratic sense, perhaps the most private of human senses, presupposes the presence of a plurality of others, and thus makes of human sociability not only the highest goal, but the very condition of individual's ability to judge (Arendt 1989, 14, 74).

This taste can do because it is no longer bound by the traditional will to truth, but parallels 'a merely contemplative pleasure or inactive delight' that we experience at the sight of art objects, things that have no external purpose or end, but contain the whole meaning within themselves, in their appearance and their beauty (Arendt 1989, 15, 30–1, 76–7; Arendt 1993, 207–15). Unburdened by the quest for deeper causes and realities, purposes and ends, taste's 'interest in the world is purely 'disinterested';' determined neither by 'the life interests of the individual nor the moral interests of the self,' taste is free to judge each particular deed in its particularity and gauge from it a general meaning (Arendt 1993, 219). As such, it is able to honour human dignity that demands that each individual be judged, like a work of art, as an end in him or herself and at the same time 'as reflecting mankind in general' (Arendt 1989, 77).

In this reflective process of moving from the particular to the general, aesthetic judgement constantly checks the transcendent aspirations of thought by employing imagination to "go visiting" and consider a plurality of other perspectives on the world. This process of distancing ourselves from our private subjective conditions which shape our particular perspective on the world so as to be able to consider the tastes of other people and take them into account while forming our judgement Arendt calls an ability of 'enlarged

mentality' or 'representative thinking' (see Arendt 1989, 67, 71–2). It is this ability that corresponds to the actual 'operation of reflection', approbation and disapprobation, the approval or disapproval of taste's initial subjective choice between it-pleases or it-displeases (Arendt 1982, 67–9):

Political thought is representative. I form an opinion by considering a given issue from different viewpoints, by making present to my mind the standpoints of those who are absent; that is, I represent them. This process of representation does not blindly adopt the actual views of those who stand somewhere else, and hence look upon the world from a different perspective; this is a question neither of empathy, as though I tried to be or to feel like somebody else, nor of counting noses and joining a majority, but of being and thinking in my own identity where actually I am not. The more people's standpoints I have present in my mind while I am pondering a given issue, and the better I can imagine how I would feel and think if I were in their place, the stronger will be my capacity for representative thinking and the more valid my final conclusions, my opinion (Arendt 1993, 241–2).

By reflecting upon the world from a plurality of different standpoints, representative thinking cultivates what Arendt, following Kant, calls *sensus communis*, a 'specifically human sense' that makes our judgements communicable to others and enables us to orient ourselves in the common world (Arendt 1989, 70, 74; 1993, 218). For Arendt judgement represents a crucial political ability because, by virtue of choosing which perspectives on the world to represent, it 'decides how the world is to look and who belongs together in it' and effects a 'sharing-the-world-with-others' (Arendt 1993, 218). By representative thinking, individuals 'humanize the world,' they come to recognize each other as equal members of the public realm, worthy of being seen and heard, and strengthen the sense of the world's commonness, thus creating a space for human freedom and action to make its appearance (see Arendt 1995, 24–5).

Reflective judgement, reconciliation and the recreation of a common world

Reconciliation with reality that arises from the exercise of reflective judgement then is not determined by a quest for ends. It does not aim at a standpoint 'altogether above the melée' that would again reach 'the generality of a concept' able to be applied to and adjudicate between multiple perspectives (Arendt 1989, 42–4). Instead it hinges on the ability to tell a story about the past and its sorrows in their particularity and their commonness, thus broaden and enrich our understanding of reality and reinvigorate our sense of the common world as an object of shared responsibility.

Arendt's distrust of abstract truths and standards of judgement stems precisely from her concern that they might prove unable to account for the contingent and plural nature of reality and thus in effect thwart the reconciliatory project of building and tending to a common world. She thus found little comfort in appeals to a universal moral standpoint that *pace* Kant presupposes a moral law at work in all beings endowed with reason and is considered valid irrespective of particular circumstances and plural perspectives that constitute the world of human affairs (see e.g. Arendt 1995, 27). From this detached perspective, they were helpless, Arendt believed, to acknowledge let alone resist the often pervasive breakdown or perversion of this universal moral law as it manifested itself, for instance, in the widespread phenomenon of 'coordination' in Nazi Germany, of individuals willing to participate in Nazi policies without any evil or sadist motives but simply because they unquestioningly abided to the reversed legal order of the land (see Arendt 2003, 24–43). Seeking to understand past evils from the standpoint of the universal moral law thus effectively risks obscuring the conditions that made horrors possible and perpetuating them in the future.

Arendt's reflective judgement instead retains its ground in the world of appearances and the particular perspectives it had to travel through to arrive at its own general standpoint (Arendt 1995, 5–6; 1989, 43–4). In this way, it gives birth to what Disch (1993, 686, 668) calls 'situated impartiality' or a 'committed moral perspective'. Yet, at the same time, Arendt refused to embrace any doctrine that claimed a privileged understanding for the oppressed and sought to write history from the standpoint of the victims (see Arendt 1953, 77). The other side of traditional Archimedean thinking, such 'polemical writing' about the past again presupposes a pre-articulated framework of values that serves to provide categories with which to understand and judge reality, but that may be far from adequate to deal with actual events (see Disch 1993, 667, 672; Arendt 1995, 5–6; Arendt in Disch 1993, 672).

In particular, Arendt was wary of letting political judgement lose itself in a bottomless abyss of suffering, a suspicion that lent her thought to much criticism. To be sure, as evident in her *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, Arendt praised the value of victim testimony in disclosing past wrongs in their particularity and unprecedentedness that may escape the reach of law's universalizing language and abstract justice, and in thus building the common world. Yet, she feared that the focus on victim's suffering in itself might in the end draw attention away from the particular (and unprecedented) nature of the crime and the particular guilt and responsibility of the wrongdoer (see Stonebridge 2011, 55; Arendt 2006). In other words, what lay behind Arendt's criticism of the use of victim testimony in *Eichmann in Jerusalem* was the fear that it might give birth to an overwhelming and indiscriminate pathos that would again inundate the capacity for reflective and representative judgement and thus actually betray the very cause of the suffering that it was so eager to promote (Stonebridge 2011, 31, 66).

Although Arendt saw compassion as a natural human response at the sight of another's suffering, she also thought it corresponds to an unworldly form of

human togetherness, 'the humanitarianism of brotherhood' that rests on a solidarity with the oppressed without the mediation of a world common to all and that, as a privilege of the oppressed and the persecuted, cannot be easily extended to those who do not belong (Arendt 1995, 14–16). As a passive identification with the suffering, compassion alone, Arendt thought, can hardly provide a satisfactory ground on which to reinvigorate the human capacity to judge and is, as Schaap (2005, 3) notes, incapable of fostering a sense of the commonness of the world between the victims and perpetrators. What is more, any attempt to introduce this feeling into the political realm as a guiding force of action risks distorting its attentiveness to particular suffering persons into the boundlessness of pity with its 'curious insensitivity' 'to reality in general and to the reality of persons in particular' and its willingness to sacrifice their dignity to abstract principles or causes of liberation (Arendt 1963, 80).

Indeed, attempts to envision reconciliation in terms of a struggle for recognition, that can be broadly said to operate within the hermeneutical tradition of political theory, as Schaap notes, tend to, somewhat paradoxically, both presuppose an authentic, essential identity of the victims that needs to be restored and envision as its desired end a conciliatory fusion of horizons through which initially opposing and conflicting identities will meet in a community of reciprocal recognition (see Schaap 2005a, 41–4). In this way, however, it risks ingraining social identities as essentially opposed, and remaining in the trenches of past wrongs that have no future (Schaap 2005a, 50). For by positing these identities as predetermined ends to be retrieved and restored in their proper worth, it again confronts the world with the certainty of its moral truth or cause at the expense of obliterating plurality and diversity of perspectives that constitute it, perhaps to the point of vindicating the postmodern challenge that the identity politics of recognition resembles less a progression towards 'mutual reciprocity' than a movement 'from domination to domination' (Foucault in Schaap 2005a, 48).

Arendt, on the contrary, remained very much wary of letting the desire for recognition and liberation fixate upon some or other essential identity of the victims thought to reside outside of the world and the web of human relationships constituting it, and thus lapse into the same patterns of thought that made the injustice against them possible in the first place. In any such tendency to envision an easy transition from the past to the future, she saw an untenable and ultimately dangerous propensity to evade freedom and responsibility in the present. If judgement is to provide an ontological support to human freedom, if it is to truly become 'the other side of action,' Arendt felt, it must itself affirm its ground in freedom (see Arendt 2005, 321). This for Arendt meant that its turn to the past must itself represent a new beginning (Arendt 1978b, 212). Only thus, Arendt felt, can the past yield meaning able to reorient human minds in the present and for the future, without retaining its hold on the present.

This freedom, as noted above, manifests itself in taste's disinterested interest in people and things in the world, an interest that retains its ground in the world and other people, in its ability to distance itself from personal interests and

think reflectively from the standpoint of everybody else. Reflective judgement of taste thus displaces the prevalent tendency among political theorists to subsume the new and the unprecedented under preconceived categories of thought and 'explain it away' in terms of its supposed 'origins' or 'causes' as if events in the realm of human affairs could too be seen as inevitable results of abstract ideas or historical processes (see Arendt 1978b, 198; 2005, 319–20). Against such teleological, causal fallacies of historical understanding, aesthetic judgement affirms any single deed or event as meaningful in itself and upholds the view of history as 'a story which has many beginnings but no end' (Arendt 1993, 42, 64; 2005, 320). Instead of deducing whatever comes to pass from past causes, Arendt was convinced, the event should be allowed to 'illuminate/ its own past' (Arendt 2005, 319). By reflecting upon a given event in its particularity from a variety of different perspectives, reflective judgement enables just that: to ascertain from a particular constellation of elements as they have 'crystallized' in the present 'some humanly comprehensible meaning,' and provide human existence with a worldly anchoring without eliminating freedom and contingency (Arendt 2005, 319; Arendt 2004, 617–18; see also Benhabib 1990, 172; Zerilli 2005, 161–3).

This impartial form of remembrance is then not based on either moral or historical teleologies that could adjudicate between right and wrong from the outside and orient our minds in the future with the certainty of absolute truth. A judgement on past wrongs that represents a move 'from experience to critical understanding' and towards a reconciliation with reality instead arises from exercising an 'enlarged mentality,' that is, from considering a particular situation, injustice or crime from a plurality of opposing perspectives in which these events can be seen and understood (Disch 1993, 686). By considering each occurrence in its particularity and unprecedentedness, reflective judgement affirms human freedom as a source of worldly events and salvages it from submersion under various abstract or historical forces and movements, fostering the view that the world is above all 'a scene for action' (see Vollrath 1977, 182; Hill 1979, 298). Within this framework, it is thus possible to hold individuals individually and collectively responsible for the particular deeds they committed within unjust or oppressive structures or regimes (Marso 2011, 10). Yet, this responsibility and guilt is not imputed in the name of an identification with the suffering of the victims. This practice, Arendt insisted, all too easily lapses into the oversimplified categories of absolute innocence of the victims and collective guilt of the perpetrators that may fail to perceive the suffering in their particularity, obscure the nature of the crime perpetrated against them, and in fact render impossible the discriminating imputation of responsibility to the wrongdoers, thus threatening to perpetuate the state of moral confusion within the community and result in a further denial of the shared responsibility for rebuilding and preserving a common world (see Arendt 2003, 21–9; Schaap 2005, 117–27; Stonebridge 2011, 50, 71). Arendt was, for instance, highly critical of the way in which the Eichmann trial, and in particular the suffering of Jews, was used to further the narrative of eternal Jewish hatred and harvest legitimacy for Israeli national awakening, and

instead judged and condemned Eichmann in terms of a 'commitment beyond a specifically Jewish solidarity,' that is, on behalf of the common world and the plurality of perspectives inhabiting it (Marso 2011, 20).

What such a judgement embodies is a specifically political form of validity that Arendt traces to Homeric impartiality, the 'saying of what is', which, unburdened by the interests of its own side or by the "objective" judgement of history,' was able to praise and preserve the memory of glorious words and deeds of both the Greeks and the 'barbarians', and which thus represents up to this day 'the highest form of objectivity we know' (Arendt 1993, 51, 258). Even though it shuns all 'objective' and universal criteria, then, aesthetic judgement does not end in the postmodern agon, envisioning reconciliation as an endless and irresolvable play of irreconcilable interests.¹ Instead, in taking sides, understanding and judging each action, injustice or crime 'for the world's sake,' 'in terms of its position in the world at any given time' (Arendt 1995, 7–8), it links victims and perpetrators indissolubly together through the mediation of the shared reality and strengthens a sense of the common world that needs to be rebuilt. At the same time, its reflective nature refuses to fixate individuals in their past identity as passive victims or evil perpetrators, wherein lies the possibility 'to resist the reality of the world created by past wrongs' (Schaap 2005, 83). In fact, such worldly representative judgement of past wrongs always already entails a new beginning, a reweaving of bonds of solidarity among fellow human beings and a recreation of a common world (see Berkowitz 2011, 18).²

Reflective judgement and the reconciliation with 'what is' then is not oriented towards disclosing lessons in history that are supposed to provide for a straightforward transition into the future but that in fact risk keeping the contemporary minds still dangerously in the past, only to miss out on the challenges and possibilities of the present (see Arendt 2003, 270). Rather, reconciliation brought about by reflective judgement of past wrongs, involves a coming to terms with the world as it 'has become', which enables to both acknowledge and take into account the troubled past, yet renounce its claim to determine the present and future possibilities (Arendt 2003, 270; Berkowitz 2011, 18). This it does not by seeking to find in the troubled past a 'blueprint' or a 'normative basis' for political action in the future, but by judging past wrongs in a way that reinvigorates the existential being-in-the-world-with-others, the sense of the common worldly reality, thus creating and preserving a space fit for human action and speech, 'the space without which no such objects could appear at all' (Arendt 1989, 63; Zerilli 2005, 178–9; Berkowitz 2011, 4). From this perspective, judging the past and its horrors, understanding how they became possible at all and preserving the memory of the victims as

¹In this respect, it may seem fair to ask with Biskowski (1993) as to whether the postmodern agon is not in many respects still very much indebted to the framework of traditional teleology, even though one shorn of universal standards.

² See Lara (2007) for an in depth examination of the ability of reflective judgement to weave the stories of past evil into intersubjective moral understandings, able to re-humanize the common world.

part of our common reality is then not understood as a potential hindrance to a restoration of community among former enemies, but its very condition. For by judging the past from the standpoint of 'worldly plurality' (Marso 2011, 20), reflective judgement simultaneously broadens our sense of reality and enriches the web of human relationships composing it (Marso 2011, 20; Zerilli 2005, 178). In this way, it recreates a sense of the world's commonness and permanence, thus creating a space for a new beginning in the company of one's peers.

Conclusion

This paper sought to contribute to debates about reconciliation and transitional justice in societies divided by past wrongs by reorienting the focus away from the predominant goal of securing agreement about the past among former enemies and on this basis restoring the moral and political order that has been violated by violence and justice, and instead approach reconciliation in terms of a reinvigoration of the existential sense of the common world. This it proposed to do by drawing on Arendt's account of political judgement that rejects all teleologies and that is instead grounded in and constantly revivifies the fundamental existential condition of being-in-the-world-with-others. In judging past evils from the standpoint of the common world and the plurality of perspectives inhabiting it, it, as I have attempted to show, always already entails a reimagining and a recreation of the common world and a reweaving of bonds of solidarity among fellow human beings. As such, it offers a promising perspective through which to approach reconciliation that goes beyond both its usual conceptualization in terms of a restoration of preconceived moral and political ideas and orders and its reverse side, the postmodern agonistic power-play of irreconcilable interests, by pointing to a possibility of both preserving the memory of past wrongs and of the victims and at the same time reinvigorating an existential sense of the common world, humanizing it and positing it as an object of shared responsibility among former enemies, thus opening a space for a new beginning and a common future.

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