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Towards a less reductive Ethos of Reality

Judging Responsibility-for-Complicity

Gisli Vogler

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The University of Edinburgh

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Abstract

One of the main challenges facing contemporary political theory is how humans should respond to their complicity in systemic injustice and political oppression, so as to facilitate positive social transformation. The problem of judging responsibility for complicity lies at the heart of public and scholarly debates about global poverty, transitional justice, racism, (neo-)colonialism, and climate change. This thesis builds on the works of Hannah Arendt and Margaret Archer to explore the relationship between complicity, judgement, and a person's stance towards reality – what I term an 'ethos of reality'. I argue that the suitability of judgements on complicity depends not only on our receptivity to suffering and our ability to identify marginal contributions to injustice. Instead, judgements need to be informed by an ethos that affirms a multi-layered, shared reality and seeks to engender a more hospitable world-in-common, as the prism through which to evaluate complicity and responsibility. The thesis highlights the kind of focus on structure, agency, and plurality that is needed to develop this less reductive ethos of reality.

The thesis proceeds as follows. Chapter 1 introduces key themes in Hannah Arendt's thought. I relate Arendt's theory of reflective judgement to the problem she faced – totalitarianism and a break in tradition – and discuss her response through pluralist politics as the locus of a new ethic of reality. Chapter 2 analyses the debate around Hannah Arendt's account of judgement. This secondary literature enriches our understanding of judgement and points to a neglected dimension of judgement: its embeddedness in the interplay of structures and agency. Chapter 3 picks up where this literature leaves off. I discuss Margaret Archer's case for theorising causally distinct, but temporally interlinked, powers of agency and structure. Chapter 4 articulates the hybridisation of Arendt's and Archer's work and engages critically with existing conceptualisations of complicity. I argue that the dominant moral and legal framework and its critical alternatives tend to undertheorize structure-agency and risk side-stepping the challenges of judging responsibility. Finally, Chapter 5 illustrates what a judgement that is informed by a less reductive ethos of reality could look like instead. I engage with Nobel laureate Herta Müller's autofiction, written in response to life under the Romanian communist dictatorship. Müller shows how attentiveness to structure, agency, and plurality can help us judge responsibility for complicity and engender resistance to injustice and oppression.

Lay Summary

One of the main challenges facing contemporary political theory is how humans should respond to their complicity in injustice and oppression, in order to help change society for the better. The problem of judging responsibility and complicity lies at the heart of debates about (neo-)colonialism, global poverty, transitional justice, racism, and climate change. In this thesis I argue that the suitability of a person's judgement for tackling complicity depends on its focus on the world humans have in common, which allows them to enlarge their sense of reality and identify and address issues of general interest. In other words, the project departs from an immediate concern with suffering and injustice and highlights the need to respond to the underlying challenge of how we engage with reality together. This orientation towards a shared reality is in turn dependent on a consideration of the interplay of three key components to social reality: structure, agency, and plurality. The thesis proposes that judgements attentive to the common world in its multi-layered and shared character can be described as fulfilling a less reductive 'ethos of reality' – a normative project dedicated towards creating a hospitable common world. To make these points I bring together Arendt's influential work on judgement and her reflection on how humans are dependent on others for making sense of reality, with Margaret Archer's contribution to debates about the interrelationship between structures and human agency. I engage critically with theoretical debates about complicity and turn to the work of Nobel laureate Herta Müller to illustrate what a different engagement with complicity could look like.

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Introduction

Recent public debates instigated by social movements have put a spotlight on patriarchal society (#me too/ Time's Up), institutional racism (Black Lives Matter), environmental challenges (350.org/ Extinction Rebellion), and capitalist exploitation (Occupy Wall Street), amongst many other contemporary political problems. The discussions highlight that taking responsibility for complicity in systemic injustice¹ has become an important part of everyday life, especially in affluent Western societies. Amidst the global condemnation of unjust practices, those profiting from injustice seem increasingly less able to maintain their innocence and proclaim their ignorance of any wrongdoing that they contributed to.

Yet, late modern² societies continue to be characterised by a general failure to act upon the omnipresent demands for facing up to one's involvement in complex oppression. The unwillingness or inability to tackle complicity in racism, sexism, or the destruction of the environment, has been further exacerbated by the recent re-emergence of reactionary populist forces and parties in the US and large parts of Europe. The enduring failures by unresponsive, complicit actors are cause for much despair and frustration. However, they could also serve as catalysts for a sustained public and theoretical deliberation about the complexities of responsibility and complicity. It is my intention in this thesis to contribute to this interrogation. I seek to refine the theoretical toolkit available for thinking through the problem of complicity and the potential and limitations of political actors taking responsibility for injustice.

Scholars tackling what I will call the problem of 'responsibility-for-complicity' have formulated a wide variety of interpretations of what philosophers, scientists, and

¹ I follow Iris Young's (2011: 45) use of the concept 'structural injustice', which she defines as someone being in a position that they should not be in, as a result of specific social processes. I avoid the term structural in order to capture the contribution of both structures (the system of relationships between social positions or of social wholes, e.g. MPs and constituents, the state structure, the structure of capitalism) and human agency (the capacity of humans to act and respond to their context) to injustice. At times, I also refer to political oppression, problem and violence to capture wrongs that go beyond merely being unjust, for example apartheid or climate change, which is not to claim that these concepts can be easily separated. Overall, I wish to capture a wide range of unjust, violent, and oppressive practices that are facilitated by entrenched forms of complicity, in full awareness that there are significant differences between for example racism, capitalist exploitation, or political violence and indeed between racism in different countries, e.g. in South Africa or Japan.

² I take late modernity to refer to the period from the 1980s onwards that began with the launch of the World Wide Web, the rise of multi-national corporations and the deregulation of finance markets, drawing closely on (Archer, 2012: 4).

legal practitioners mean by complicity. Their formulations range from accounts that focus on individual acts of participation in complex, pervasive injustice (Kutz, 2000), to theories that identify in complicity an inescapable part of being human (Sanders, 2002). The differences in their interpretations of what constitutes complicity are important, because they translate into different demands of responsibility (Young, 2011). Broadly speaking, debates on complicity and responsibility can be divided into a dominant moral and legal philosophical framework and several critical alternatives.

The dominant position focuses especially on (relatively) easily identifiable acts of contributing to wrongdoing that are morally problematic and that sometimes ground legal culpability (Kadish, 1985; Lepora and Goodin, 2013). Typical examples include a lookout during a heist or a police officer who turns a blind eye to a crime. This literature provides sophisticated means to capture contributions far removed from the principal act of wrongdoing. Critics of this legal-moral framework nonetheless reject the individualism underpinning its conception of complicity and responsibility. Alternatives informed by critical theory and post-structuralist thought instead focus on contexts where a concern with identifiable wrongdoers is no longer adequate, because of the systemic nature of wrongdoing (Afxentiou et al., 2016). Such approaches zoom in on the structural dimensions of capitalism and colonialism and their role in thinking through responsibility and complicity. Recent literature has therefore turned to the problem of how to cultivate responsiveness to systemic injustice when there are no clearly identifiable, unencumbered agents (Beausoleil, 2014, 2017; Coles, 2016; Hayward, 2017; Locker and Muhr, 2009; Oliver, 2010; Schiff, 2014).

Neither the dominant paradigm nor its alternatives, I argue, capture fully what is at stake in understanding complicity and responsibility for such systematic wrongs. Engaging with existing accounts critically, this thesis proposes a turn to the underlying problem of political judgement. We need to ask ourselves how each of us can *judge* our complicity in unjust practices in order to facilitate positive social transformation. As academics, we also need to think about how we can theorise appropriate ways of *judging* responsibility-for-complicity. The existing debate on complicity and responsibility centres around human's capacity for judgement in at least three important ways: it asks whether a person could have judged and recognised their involvement in wrongdoing; how their complicity should be judged

and responded to by, for example, a court; and how these judgements are related to judgements about how society is formed, how wrongdoing occurs, and how positive social change is possible. I add to these investigations by turning to the debate on political judgement for further insights.

Whatever the context of complicity, I maintain that judgement is a capacity essential to making sense of, and giving meaning to, the reality we³ have in common. Judgement is not merely a tool to choose between different options and to judge the degree of our complicity, but a process embedded in what I will call an 'ethos of reality'.⁴ This ethos describes a normative project that all humans pursue throughout their life, more or less well, and that is distinctive for each person. It consists in establishing a stance towards reality that mediates our context so that we may come to terms with our situation and meet our concerns, needs, and desires. Because of the close connection between judgement and human's sense of reality, I identify a distinct ethico-political challenge in how we can suitably engage with the world that precedes the problem of judging responsibility-for-complicity. In particular, this thesis highlights that the starting point for tackling complicity in the varied ways suggested by the literature on complicity, must be the cultivation of an ethos attentive to the interplay of three components of reality, structure, agency, and plurality.

Admittedly, what 'attentiveness' and 'structure', 'agency', and 'plurality' mean, can vary extensively. I nonetheless challenge reductive positions that put unwarranted weight on only one of these three components in their account of social change – for example on the cultivation of responsive individuals (over-emphasising receptive agency), or on the role of structural crisis (displaying an overarching focus on structure), or on the dissolution of conflict through consensus among a plurality of views (over-estimating the potential of collective responses to injustice). As representative of this type of reductive theorising, the thesis criticizes the dominant

³ Throughout this thesis I rely on the first-person plural we, us, our, alongside 'humans' to address the subject of this investigation. I am aware of the dangers that come with these descriptors: they obscure differences between people and potentially hide the hierarchies of domination that are central to debates on complicity and responsibility. I follow Arendt in interpreting 'we' as not a pre-defined category, e.g. political theorists or citizens of Western society, but as an imagined community that in the process of reading and writing comes into being and is open to contestation. Insofar as I address key characteristics of the human condition, the person judging responsibility-for-complicity that I have in mind can include a wide range of people around the world. I accept that the thesis is biased towards my own perspective as a privileged citizen of one of the richest countries in the world.

⁴ My description of an ethos of reality builds on and extends Patricia Owens's interpretation of the work of Hannah Arendt as an 'ethic of reality' (Owens, 2008).

legal-moral framework on complicity, as well as post-structuralist and critical theory alternatives. I will argue that, because they lose sight of the contribution that all these three elements – structure, agency, plurality – *continuously* and *simultaneously* make to social transformation, such positions fail to address adequately how we should judge responsibility-for-complicity.

To find the right balance between making concrete judgements on complicity and the need to attend to the complex interplay of structure, agency, and plurality is difficult. More often than not, we are likely to end up reducing reality to our preferred vision of the world. The challenge of establishing a suitable engagement with reality can also be at odds with our (immediate) reactions to the problem of responsibility-for-complicity. The desire to alleviate the suffering of oneself or others, for example, may prevent us from caring for a world that is shared by the privileged and suffering alike. The difference – often formulated in terms of Arendtian worldliness and a post-structuralist self-other binary – will become clearer throughout the thesis. As I will show, any hope we might have of humans actively⁵ participating in the transformation of unjust practices depends on avoiding, and indeed combating, the reductionisms of reality that plague (late) modernity. To advance this argument, I build on the work of Hannah Arendt and Margaret Archer with a view to outlining a more complex, more accurate and thus hopefully more inspiring – account of judgment.

Political Judgement – Hannah Arendt and Margaret Archer

To get to the core of the problem of judging responsibility-for-complicity, I propose to delve deeply into the conceptualisation of judgement. My interpretation of judgement as being both the source of, and informed by, our ethos of reality, emerges out of a turn to a central scholar of political judgement, Hannah Arendt. Throughout much of her life, Arendt faced the destructive forces of totalitarianism and mass society on humans and their engagement with reality. In response, she sought to find new ways for human beings to grapple with the (violent) past and create a flourishing, hospitable⁶ world that could be shared in common (Arendt, 1973). She considered

⁵ I do not wish to suggest what exactly an *active* participation entails, for example to what extent it requires intentionality, but the role of human agency should be more than coincidental and be recognisably human.

⁶ With the term ‘hospitable’, I respond to Arendt’s negative observation on ‘the irritating incompatibility between the actual power of modern man [...] and the impotence of modern men to live in, and understand the sense of, a world which their own strength has

the negative and positive implications that arise out of the fact that humans inhabit the world together – each with a distinctive and partial perspective on the world. In particular, Arendt highlighted the potential of politics as a space for producing meaning, which helps people refine their partial perspectives on the world by exchanging opinions with others (Arendt, 1998). Judgement plays an important role in this politically sustained sense of reality, because it gives meaning to what appears in the public sphere, provides the standards through which to evaluate action, and articulates what seems worthy of (future) political judgement.

My Arendtian interpretation of judgment and its relationship to an ethos of reality emerges in contraposition to debates about heightened pluralism in late modernity. The dominant position in political theory, commonly associated with the works of Jürgen Habermas and John Rawls, interprets the pluralism of values and beliefs characterising contemporary societies as ‘burdens of judgement’ (Rawls, 1996: 54ff.). Seen through this lens, pluralism and the inevitable conflict that arises between views and judgements in society, pose a threat to decision-making processes that needs to be ‘managed’. In response, democratic theorists turn to a model of deliberative democracy that adheres to rational standards. In contrast, Arendt and her followers, commit to seeing human plurality primarily as a *source* of – rather than an obstacle to – good judgement.⁷ They are concerned with the loss of a world in which human plurality can find its expression and objects of shared interest are made tangible for judgement and action.

The scholarship on Arendt’s reflective judgement acknowledges that, in moving away from the narrow concern with consensus and validity claims, the conceptualisation of judgement still faces the following challenge: how to maintain the critical potential of judgement to gain purchase on reality and give it meaning, without introducing transcendental standards for judgement. This is also sometimes formulated as the problem of how to judge new appearances in the public sphere in ways that do not reduce them to what has been. For a suitable answer scholars turn to the potential in formulating a refined approach to the relationship between the person judging and their context. Judgements are neither the outcome of

established’ (Arendt, 1973: viii). A hospitable world accordingly reconciles the powers of humans to create a common world in their own fashion and a human need to come to understand that world together.

⁷ Albenaz Azmanova (2012) and Linda Zerilli (2016a) provide projects that seek to replace the scepticism towards pluralism found in deliberative democratic theories through an embrace of the potential of human plurality for democratic practices.

deliberations by a dis-embedded, unencumbered person, nor merely the direct expression of underlying social structures such as gender, race, or class. Understanding this complex relationship between judging person and context is key to any project that affirms the potential in plurality to improve⁸ judgement without seeking unwarranted claims to objectivity.⁹ This thesis therefore proposes to formulate an account of social conditioning that is compatible with the pluralism that emerges out of Arendt's thought.

Arendt scholars have fruitfully turned to social theoretical insights to cross-pollinate Arendt's commitment to pluralism with an account of social conditioning that foregrounds the role of structure in practices of judgment. Some invoke Bourdieu's contribution to the debate on the relationship between structure and human agency to counterbalance the intellectualist tendencies in the Arendt-inspired judgement scholarship (Azmanova, 2012; Kornprobst, 2014; Mihai, 2016b; Weidenfeld, 2013). Indebted to their insights on the imbrication of judgement with issues of power and injustice, my turn to British social theorist Margaret Archer serves a related, but different purpose: to complement Arendt's theorising on judgement and plurality by shedding light on the interplay between structure and agency that frames pluralism. In her own words, Archer continues Arendt's project 'to put forward a model [of society] that is *recognisably human*' (Archer, 2016: 138).¹⁰ She helps clarify Arendt's

⁸ Improvement is here not understood in terms of providing better arguments but in the sense of refining our sense of reality which always entails understanding how the world is objectively, subjectively, and intersubjectively constituted.

⁹ I understand objectivity as the desire to depart from all that is partial, dependent on individual opinions and perspectives, towards a position of impartiality that claims to be neutral and context-independent. This move towards objectivity is particularly familiar from logical positivism and is implicit in debates about the validity of political judgement, i.e. how can we presuppose that some judgements are necessarily better than others? Throughout the thesis I will recuperate the term objectivity to refer to an acceptance that there are objects that are intersubjectively shaped and accessed, but irreducible to our perspectives on it. Unlike the former sense of objectivity, this form of *object-ivity* is always both situated and impartial.

¹⁰ The full quote reads: 'to put forward a model that is *recognisably human*; one that retains Arendt's notion of the "Human Condition" as entailing a reflexive "Life of the mind"' (Archer, 2016: 138). This quote provides a rare example of Archer explicitly acknowledging the affinities and overlap between her and Arendt's projects. The secondary literature on their thoughts seldom makes the connection between Arendt's and Archer's work, with the exception of Philip Walsh (2015) and Daniel Chernilo (2017). Walsh is primarily concerned with what sociology can learn from Arendt and Chernilo addresses the humanist projects of both Arendt and Archer without seeking their hybridisation. Together with recent scholarship that links Arendt's thought with political theory and IR realisms (Klusmeyer, 2011; Owens, 2008; Vogler and Tillyris, 2019), these authors provide a novel opportunity for a fruitful investigation into the commonalities between various forms of realism, too easily obscured

commitment to plurality by addressing the dependence of this notion of plurality on an appropriate account of structures and agency that remains obscured in Arendt's thought.

Archer (1995) responded to tendencies in the social sciences to explain social phenomena by emphasising either structural or agential capacities, or by highlighting their inseparability. According to Archer, these forms of conflation cannot explain the contribution of both structures (networks of relationships between social positions) *and* agency (distinct capacities of each human being). In response, she proposes a model of social transformation in which structures pre-date agency which, in turn, transforms structure. The analytical distinction allows a closer look at their interrelated but distinct properties and causal powers. She calls this model analytical dualism, as opposed to an emphasis on the inseparability of structure and agency, which she terms 'duality' and criticises for its inability to theorise the experience of feeling *both* free and constrained and for oscillating between receptive agency and recursive social processes. The distinction gains in importance, and will be further sharpened, as my argument develops. Following investigations into the role of structure, Archer spent the last two decades working on a systematic account of human agency freed from a reduction of agency to social explanations. She has shed light on the development of a sense of self and personal identity, and more recently, on modes of reflexivity through internal conversations and their transformation in late modernity (Archer, 2000, 2003, 2007, 2012).

In this thesis, I seek to hybridise Arendt's theory of reflective judgement with Archer's realist social theory in order to critically evaluate current responses to the problem of responsibility-for-complicity outlined above. Through their hybridisation, I propose an account of judgment guided by a less reductive ethos of reality – which, I believe, illuminates what is at stake when we grapple with our own implication in widespread injustices.

Main Objectives

The thesis aims to bring together three debates – on complicity and responsibility, on political judgement, and on structure-agency. At different stages of my argument,

by their different language games. While my argument does not depend on articulating to what extent realisms share a family resemblance, the thesis draws its strength from a commitment to an attentive facing up to and caring for a world not of our choosing common to political and social forms of realism including Arendt's ethic of reality and Archer's critical realism (but cashed out in various different ways).

the thesis provides an overview of the current state of the three debates. I start with political judgement literature and highlight that, in recent years, the debate has focused on complementing Arendt's emphasis on human plurality with a suitable description of social conditioning (chapter 2). I then show how debates on the relationship between structure and agency have turned to disagreements about the role played by habitual and reflective action, and the changes that come with late modernity, with a particular focus on Archer's contribution to these discussions (chapter 3). Finally, I observe that the debate on complicity has increasingly turned to the challenge of receptivity towards suffering, as indicated above (chapter 4).

Attentive to these developments and their combined potential, my argument proceeds along the following steps that I take to be essential for arriving at an adequate theory of judging responsibility-for-complicity. First, I turn to the underlying problem of how to *judge* complicity and responsibility. Secondly, I highlight that the question of how we judge responsibility-for-complicity is preceded by the problem of how we can make sense of reality. Without an answer to that question, responses to complicity and responsibility are unlikely to achieve their overall goal, i.e. positive social transformation. Thirdly, building on Arendt scholarship I argue that this ethically distinct problem, i.e. giving meaning to reality, cannot be addressed by turning to radical forms of subjectivism or objectivism.¹¹ Instead, Arendt offers a commitment to the potential in intersubjectivity, which helps find the right balance between objectivity and subjectivity. In engaging with the plurality of perspectives in a community, judgements on complicity can become critical without losing sight of the 'it-seems-to-me'¹². Fourthly, this means that debates on, and practices of, responsibility-for-complicity must be orientated towards the common world that sustains our intersubjective sense of reality. The concept 'common world' refers both to the objects, structures, ideas, and interactions, that a group of people have in common insofar as their judgements and actions refer to shared objects, and that becomes common by interchanging opinions and views and through the ability to

¹¹ With radical or impossible subjectivism, I refer to a position that reduces reality to human perceptions of it, drawing closely on Zerilli (2016a). In its place, I delineate a subjectivism that highlights the causal efficacy of human's sense of self, which is connected to each human being's unique perspective on the world. Radical objectivism entails a desire for transcendence of the merely 'subjective' or 'partial' understanding of social formations. In its place, I highlight an objectivism that demands of us attention to a reality that is irreducible to our perspectives on it.

¹² The 'it-seems-to-me', *dokei moi*, is 'the mode [...] in which an appearing world is acknowledged and perceived' (Arendt, 1981a: 21).

see it from each other's perspective. This common world can be impoverished, meaning that humans no longer make references to the same object *and/or* are no longer able to see the object from the other's perspective. Fifthly, and this is where the thesis extends recent discussions on judgement *and* debates on complicity, a commitment to intersubjectivity fails unless it is combined with an adequate account of subjectivity and objectivity. The common world is equally intersubjectively, objectively, and subjectively constituted, i.e. it emerges out of the interplay of structure, agency, and plurality. To articulate the right balance between these three components to the common world, I turn to Margaret Archer's contribution to debates on structure-agency. Together, Arendt and Archer provide a theoretical framework that reveals how structure, agency, and plurality must be understood so that a focus on any one of them does not come at the cost of, or fall back on, the other two. In simple terms, my hybridisation of their work reveals how we can account for the role that structures such as gender or class play in shaping our world, without denying the contribution that humans, individually and collectively, make to our context. I conclude that a response to the problem of responsibility-for-complicity entails an orientation towards a common world that draws its strength from our affirmation of the multi-layered, shared character of reality.

From these steps taken in developing a refined theoretical toolkit arise the following contributions to the debates on complicity and responsibility, structure-agency, and political judgement. With regards to political judgement literature, I take up the challenge of complementing Arendt's emphasis on human plurality with an appropriate subject- and object focus, or theory of social conditioning. The thesis turns to Archer's realist social theory to add a subjectivism and objectivism that avoid tendencies towards reducing plurality to a plethora of perspectives that can be managed through certain 'immanent' or 'transcendent' principles. Through the hybridisation of Arendt's and Archer's work, I maintain an emphasis on the importance of the 'it-seems-to-me', the intersubjective constitution of the common world, and the fact that the objects of judgements are irreducible to the perspectives on that object. In relation to debates on structure-agency, I bring into focus Arendt's unique concern with plurality. The discussion on structure-agency has traditionally centred around individuals. More recently, social theory has experienced various turns to relationality, including in the form of relational sociology (Dépelteau, 2018; Donati, 2011). Arendt's pluralism can continue to offer key insights that complement formulations of the interplay between structure and agency, due to her unique

concern with the political implications of the fact that humans live in the world together. Finally, with regards to debates on complicity and responsibility, I highlight the problematic formulation of structure-agency that befalls the ethics of responsiveness, which can be amended by articulating a less reductive ethos of reality. Whatever else we might wish judgement to achieve, without acknowledging its dualism and pluralism any project relying on the human capacity for judgement is prone to failure. This is because these two dimensions draw on key features of the human condition. They account for the distinct causal contributions of structure, agency, and plurality, without which no social transformation could be explained.

Thesis Structure

The thesis consists of five main chapters. Each chapter addresses a different aspect of my response to how humans can judge their responsibility-for-complicity in systemic injustice and political oppression.

Chapter 1 focuses on Arendt's thought, which provides important insights into the pluralist dimension to judgement. Arendt argued that plurality has three components: the fact that humans share certain conditions in the world, that they remain unique in their perspectives on reality, and the fact that a world exists in-between people that enables them to maintain this *sameness* and *distinction*. Only an approach to plurality attentive to all three components can respond appropriately to the fact that humans have a world in common that they can only make hospitable together. To unpack this pluralist dimension to judgement, I focus on the following key concepts in Arendt's thought: reality, politics, and judgement. I begin by introducing the potential of politics to help create a hospitable common world. My discussion secondly turns to reality: Arendt highlights that her pluralist politics can help humans find new ways of refining and confirming their sense of reality together as the source for adequate judgements. The final section of the chapter turns to reflective judgement. Arendt teaches us that non-determinate forms of judgement, which simultaneously draw on a political community and constitute that community, can help maintain a public sphere in which a plurality of views can be expressed and objects become of common interest.

Chapter 2 analyses the scholarly debate on Arendt's concept of reflective judgement. I identify two phases to the debate and my discussion centres on four recent projects that seek to valorise and expand on Arendt's theory. The projects provide important insights into concepts related to how humans judge politically:

imagination, the affective and unconscious domains, storytelling, and common sense. These insights help in providing a more sophisticated conception of political judgement. They also highlight in different ways that the issue of social conditioning is key to understanding how we can say that some judgements are better than others, without following narrow concerns with validity and rationality. An emphasis on the first dimension to judgement, i.e. its capacity to engage a plurality of perspectives, is no longer seen as enough to gain critical purchase on political issues. Instead, scholars seek to say more about the situated agency preceding judgement.

Chapter 3 continues the Arendtian project on judgement outlined in chapter 2 and delves more deeply into the issue of social conditioning. I argue that Archer's critical realism offers insights into the relationship between structure and agency that enhance Arendt's project of political judgement. In drawing on Archer, I suggest that the dualist dimension of judgement entails two key elements. Firstly, it involves a suitable *objectivism*, by which I mean an orientation towards a multi-layered reality that is independent from our epistemic access to it, yet always socially mediated. Secondly, dualism requires attention to *subjectivity*, by which I mean a sense of self that is embodied, relational, emotional, but also irreducible to the social or discursive dimensions to reality, and that draws on reflexivity in the form of an internal conversation to mediate between the internal and external context of its agency. Archer thus adds to the conceptualisation of political judgement a focus on both structure and agency alongside plurality.

Chapter 4 hybridises Arendt's and Archer's theories to engage critically with the conceptualisation of responsibility and complicity. Following a brief discussion of the dominant legal and moral philosophical conception of complicity and responsibility, inadequate in its focus on de-contextualized individuals and their intentional contributions to wrongdoing, I evaluate several recent critical alternatives. Chapter 4 contributes to this literature by showing how even these critical alternatives fail to account appropriately for the dualism of structure and agency: their arguments fall back on cultivating an improved moral self independently from the world, which, in turn, affects their ability to orientate judgement adequately towards a common world. I argue that they, too, have a diminished capacity to conceptualise responsibility and complicity because they do not capture the dualism of structure and agency underpinning political judgement. The chapter concludes with a sketch of the key

features of judging responsibility-for-complicity informed by a less reductive ethos of reality.

Finally, chapter 5 renders my theoretical analysis more tangible, by engaging with Nobel laureate Herta Müller's autofiction. Written in response to the reality of life under the Romanian communist dictatorship (especially in the 1980s), her essays, novels, interviews, and collages entail and reflect on a resistant practice of 'living in the detail'. Müller hoped that accounting for concrete action, objects, and moments – to live in the detail – could give her life some meaning and stability beyond the uncertainty produced by state terror. The practice is also part of a normative project, which I interpret as exemplary of my proposed ethos of reality: she extends this focus on the concrete through attentiveness to the distinct qualities and interplay of structure, agency, and plurality. Müller's writing seeks to create, build, maintain, and protect a common world, one that remains open to innovation and transformation. To a regime that through its repressive apparatus sought to systematically undermine individuality and the creation of a flourishing common world, she opposes a fictionalised acknowledgement of the complexity of reality. Her example will hopefully materialise the main objective of this dissertation: to think about responsibility and complicity in a way that avoids reductionisms of various kinds.

Chapter 1 – Hannah Arendt & the Pluralist Dimension to Judgement

‘What is at stake here is this common and factual reality itself, and this is indeed a political problem of the first order’

(Arendt, 2006a: 232)

This thesis responds to debates on how humans should judge their complicity in injustice in order to take responsibility and facilitate positive social transformation. The problem of ‘responsibility-for-complicity’, as I label it in this thesis, raises difficult questions about the nature of complicity and the potential and limitations of acknowledging responsibility. I contribute to these hotly debated issues in and beyond academia, by thinking through the force of political judgement as a faculty and practice that is central to assuming responsibility. To this end, the present chapter turns to a prominent scholar in the debates on political judgement, Hannah Arendt. Unfortunately, Arendt’s theorising on judgement was left unfinished at the time of her death in 1975. Nonetheless, the remarks on judging scattered throughout Arendt’s work provide ample evidence of her views, views that I will later bring to bear on the problem of judging complicity in systemic injustice and political oppression.

Arendt described judgement as ‘the ability to say “this is wrong,” “this is beautiful,”’ (Arendt, 1981a: 193). She understood it as the process that helps individuals position themselves in relation to particular events, issues, and people. Through judgement, humans disclose something of themselves and of the world as they see it, they reveal differences and communalities between themselves and others (Arendt, 2006a: 220). In so doing, judgement helps make sense of reality and give it meaning.¹ In facing up to and coming to terms with events that are never fully under our control, judgement enables us to affirm our freedom to respond to whatever happens in a way that is neither pre-determined, nor fully idiosyncratic. Any contribution that judgement can provide to responding to the problem of ‘responsibility-for-complicity’ is thus related to its capacity for making sense of reality, to produce meaning, and to situate humans in relation to events, issues, and other people. This is the first point I wish to emphasise in this chapter, the connection between judgement and our sense of reality.

¹ Arendt argued that humans, ‘in so far as they live and move and act in this world, can experience meaningfulness only because they can talk with and make sense to each other and to themselves’ (Arendt, 1998: 4).

Arendt rarely referred to *political* judgements. Political judgement for her does not describe a distinct type of judgement that could be differentiated from other judging practices by its content. Instead, according to Arendt judgement becomes political wherever a person formulates it through engagement with a plurality of perspectives. The contribution that judgement provides in addressing political problems such as ‘responsibility-for-complicity’ is, for her, dependent on this orientation. I therefore draw on Arendt’s thought to outline the first of two dimensions to judging politically that I seek to articulate in this thesis: the *pluralist* dimension to judgement.²

In talking of ‘pluralism’, I seek to capture what it means for judgement to be attentive to plurality as a key feature of being human. By plurality, I refer to the fact that humans have a world in common that they can only make hospitable together. Arendt stands out as a scholar who spent most of her career dedicated to emphasising that a response to a variety of political and philosophical problems must acknowledge the fundamental plurality of human existence. To map out the implications of plurality for judgement, I engage with three key concepts in Arendt’s thought: politics, reality, and judgement.

Section 1.1 considers the close connection between plurality and politics. Arendt raised the question, *what is politics?* and concluded that plurality is central to its constitution (Arendt, 2002: 15). Their interrelationship means that plurality can only be suitably addressed through the creation of a public sphere in which a diversity of views on a shared reality can be expressed and lead to collective action. Through this emphasis, Arendt cleared the political sphere of its conventional association with instrumental, interest-driven thinking. This instrumentalism is primarily orientated towards how politics benefits a particular individual or pressure group. We

² In my engagement with Arendt, the focus lies more on excavating the importance of pluralism for judgement and less on providing a new reading of her work. Chapter 1 continues a (loose) tradition of interpretations started by Margaret Canovan (1992) and Lisa Disch (1994), who turned towards the ‘political realist’ themes in Arendt’s thought, especially her preference for political practices over ethical deliberations. They emphasised how the negative impact of totalitarianism on the ontological human fact of plurality proved definitive of her thought. I build on recent proponents of this realist view, Waltraud Meints (2014) and Linda Zerilli (2016a), who put political judgement at the centre of their interpretation of Arendt’s work. Lastly, I follow into Patricia Owens’ (2008) footsteps who identifies in Arendt a different understanding of ethics as orientated towards reality. I discuss the uptake of Arendt’s theory of judgement in more detail in chapter 2 to capture how debates have substantiated the pluralist dimension to judgement and increasingly turned to a second dimension – the relationship between structure and agency.

might call the orientation a *thin*³ conception of plurality, as it reduces plurality and politics to the competing individual interests within a community.⁴ In contrast, Arendt formulated a *thick* conception of plurality that takes the wellbeing of the relationships between the members of a community into account. I highlight three elements to her understanding of politics embedded in a thick notion of plurality: the individuals who appear and reveal their unique, partial perspectives on the world by acting together, the spectators who confirm and judge these appearances and give them meaning in relation to their own perspectives on the world, and the common world that exists between all members of the political community.

In section 1.2, I tackle Arendt's political realism. The purpose of a re-orientation of politics towards plurality is to protect people's capacity to come to understand and give meaning to events and issues. Understanding entails the 'unpremeditated attentive facing up to, and resisting of, reality' (Arendt, 1973: viii) and describes a 'specifically human way of being alive; for every single person needs to be reconciled to a world into which he⁵ was born a stranger and in which [...] he always remains a stranger' (Arendt, 2011: 308). For Arendt, this capacity to understand was increasingly undermined in modernity by a break in tradition, as an expression of the loss of unity between tradition, religion, and authority. The break inhibits ways of engaging with reality that have relied on tradition as standards for judging the past, present, and future. In their place, Arendt proposed a political sphere in which diverging views on shared objects can be articulated as the source of a stronger sense of reality.

Section 1.3 introduces Arendt's discovery of reflective judgement as a uniquely political capacity. Its exercise depends on incorporating a plurality of perspectives and is not primarily guided by tradition and universal standards. My discussion highlights how reflective judgement is uniquely capable of connecting the immediacy

³ The terms thin and thick have been used by scholars in various ways, for example by Michael Walzer (1994) to distinguish two types of moral arguments, but any similarity between my use and theirs are coincidental and do not bear on my argument.

⁴ Arendt rejected any attempt to deduce ideas about humanity by analysing an individual human being in isolation. Such a reductive approach would fail to grasp the togetherness and with-each-otherness, as an irreducible experience to human life that follows from living in a world with different people (Arendt, 2002: 17).

⁵ Throughout the thesis, I reproduce quotes in their original version and refrain from rewriting problematic gendered language, as it is visible in this quote. In the rest of the text, I use variations of the pronoun 'they' instead of he or she, to promote an inclusive use of the description human being, individual, person, and actor.

of political action with the critical distance of judgements. I show how for Arendt political judgement draws on common sense, on our capacity to tell stories, and on exemplarity to create and protect a shared world in which a plethora of perspectives can be evaluated.

Put together, I draw on Arendt to conclude that the pluralist dimension refers to judgement's ability to help create and maintain a world that is home to a diversity of views on shared objects, which, in their difference, make lives more meaningful. I will later combine this pluralist dimension with a second dimension, the dualism of the interplay between structure/objectivity and agency/subjectivity from within which judgement emerges. Arendt's pluralism is uniquely attentive to how both the subjective 'it-seems-to-me' and the objective world are intersubjectively constituted through political action. I seek to complement this focus with an appropriate account of structure and agency. I argue that their hybridisation can be usefully formulated as the foundation for a less reductive ethos⁶ of reality. The practice of such an ethos, attentive to the dualism and pluralism of judgement, provides my suggestion for how we might fruitfully take responsibility-for-complicity in ways that help reduce systemic injustices.

⁶ The experience of life under totalitarianism taught Arendt that moral frameworks are easily revealed in moments of crisis as nothing more than customs and habits. She (2003: 75) argued that morality and ethics, far from providing absolute frameworks of right and wrong that are or should be universally accepted, are closer in meaning to their original names *mores* and *ethos* that tie morality and ethics to customs, habits and manners. I therefore adopt the term *ethos* to indicate a stance towards the world that potentially encourages forms of routine and habits that help reduce injustices.

1.1 The Human Condition and the Meaning of Politics

In her book *The Human Condition* (1998), Arendt put forward an analysis of the way society transitioned in modernity. She tracked the costs and benefits that come with the changing relationships between different activities and spheres of human existence. This approach enabled Arendt to provide a crystallised conception of what politics is uniquely about – in her reading. I introduce central features of *The Human Condition* insofar as they bear directly on Arendt's pluralism. The analysis of her specific conception of plurality and its connection to a different practice of politics, helps capture a key insight into the pluralist dimension to judgement: the need for a public sphere in which to express, judge, and act on a diversity of views on a shared reality.

Arendt described plurality as part of her characterisation of different human conditions, that is, constraints on being human that are the product of certain characteristics of the world in and around us.⁷ The conditions of biological life, worldliness, plurality, natality, and mortality arise from a person's earthly existence. Human activities and relations further condition human existence as anything that 'enters the human world of its own accord or is drawn into it by human effort becomes part of the human condition' (Arendt, 1998: 9). Plurality offers according to Arendt '*the condition – not only the *conditio sine qua non*, but the *conditio per quam* – of all political life*' (1998: 7).

The term plurality in Arendt refers to the fact that 'men, not Man, live on the earth and inhabit the world' (Arendt, 1998: 7). It also captures the conviction that human existence develops 'only in the shared life of human beings inhabiting a given world common to them all' (Arendt, 2011: 186). Plurality is thus both an ontological fact to be acknowledged and something that is made manifest in human interaction. There are three elements to this conception of plurality. Firstly, humans, in plural, are characterised by sameness, for they share the same basic constraints on their lives and have a world in common. Sameness enables them to communicate meaningfully with each other and to treat the other members of society as political

⁷ References to human conditions are not to be confused with remarks on a human 'nature'. Arendt was sceptical of the idea of a human 'nature', because its existence would mean that we could talk 'about a "who" as though it were a "what"' (1998: 10). Instead, the constraints do not condition humans absolutely. They may also vary extensively over time, especially when the circumstances of human life change dramatically. Arendt illustrated this point with the scenario of moving to a different planet.

equals (1998: 175). Secondly, humans are characterised by distinctiveness. Plurality refers to the fact that everybody is human 'in such a way that nobody is ever the same as anyone else who ever lived, lives or will live' (1998: 8). Distinctiveness for Arendt is unlike the kind of otherness that all things share by virtue of their unique location in time and space. Distinctiveness emerges as part of human's capacity for speech through which to express one's perspective on the world as irreducible to any shared characteristics (1998: 176). Thirdly, plurality means that 'a world of things is between those who have it in common, as a table is located between those who sit around it; the world, like every in-between, relates and separates men at the same time' (1998: 52). A *thick* description of plurality accounts for the common world as an irreducible feature of human plurality alongside an insistence on the sameness and distinctiveness of all human beings. The aim has to be to protect and build a common world that brings together a diversity of distinctive perspectives on shared objects.

Before I explain how Arendt re-orientated politics in order to strengthen and protect these three elements of plurality, let me briefly indicate why she concentrated on plurality in the first place. Arendt saw plurality as under threat from various modern developments that reduce society to isolated individuals or inseparable collectives. I focus on her critique of modern mass society and the rise in human alienation. In conditions of mass society, communities have lost the power to simultaneously bring people together and ensure their separation. Contemporary society 'expects from each of its members a certain kind of behaviour, imposing innumerable rules, all of which tend to "normalize" its members, to make them behave, to exclude spontaneous action or outstanding achievement' (1998: 40).⁸ In other words, modern mass society directly attacks the human condition of plurality, because it consists of social processes that are orientated towards a conformism of behaviour. Such conformity denies the possibility of sharing a world from a plurality of different positions, because it prefers sameness at the cost of distinction and a common world in-between people.

Mass society affects plurality through increased alienation of humans from their own unique selves and the world they have in common. Arendt highlighted two variants

⁸ Arendt saw a similar move happening in the social sciences, where behavioural sciences reduced 'man as a whole, in all his activities to the level of a conditioned and behaving animal' (1998: 45).

of this problem, earth and world alienation. *Earth alienation* refers to the negative effects of a desire in modern science to escape the confines of human earthly conditions through technological advances. It is a consequence of increased exploration of the earth over the past centuries, whereby the formerly distant and unknown became familiar. Continued discovery was thought to require an increase in distance between the worldly conditions and the scientist, for example through space exploration or laboratory experiments, which is claimed to ensure more detailed knowledge of earthly existence (1998: 250f.). Mathematics and its pure symbolic language became the arbiter of truth and knowledge. The consequence is that human experience of reality becomes irrelevant or reduced to elements in complex macro-scale formulas. Plurality is under-theorised as research focuses merely on patterns of human behaviour.

World alienation refers to the loss of an intersubjectively constituted, hospitable world through which to give life adequate meaning. This form of alienation is caused by a wide array of developments. It emerged from expropriation and wealth accumulation, which were allowed to develop their own laws, alien, and even hostile, to political practices (1998: 257). World alienation is furthermore an expression of the modern sense of an increased loss of certainty about the way things are, which led to the tendency in modern philosophy to 'reduce all experiences, with the world as well as with other human beings, to experiences between man and himself' (1998: 254). Such a move, it was hoped, would ground knowledge of the world in the rational processes and logical consistency of the enlightened person. What humans 'now have in common is not the world but the structure of their minds, and this they cannot have in common, strictly speaking; their faculty of reasoning can only happen to be the same in everybody' (1998: 283). Both forms of alienation displace the role that plurality plays for human existence.

In light of the modern threat to plurality, Arendt's main project was to provide an alternative conception of politics that accommodates the three elements to plurality outlined above. Politics played a crucial role because, as I indicated above, Arendt challenged a thin conception of plurality prevalent in contemporary conceptions of politics. Associations of the political with force, authority and sovereignty reduce plurality to the interrelationships between inherently unequal citizens. Politics becomes a matter of control by the strongest – including the state. Contra the dictum of politics 'to rule or be ruled' (1998: 32), Arendt demanded an equal

treatment and exchange between members of a political community without which plurality cannot be maintained. To strengthen plurality, Arendt proposed an alternative conception of politics as a practice that affirms freedom through the public appearance of different perspectives on shared objects, which I elaborate in the following.

Arendt understood politics as a practice of acting-in-concert, or action. She wished to highlight the 'joy and the gratification that arise out of being in company with our peers, out of acting together and appearing in public, out of inserting ourselves into the world by word and deed' (Arendt, 2006a: 250). Political action is non-instrumental, orientated first and foremost by the freedom we experience in acting together. Arendt separated action from two other, pre-political, human activities: labour to produce consumer goods that help us survive, and fabrication to create durable things like houses or tables that can help make us less vulnerable to our biological condition (1998: 95, 144). Both are embedded in a means-end process that meet the human conditions of life – the cyclical movement of the biological process – and worldliness – the fact that humans create things that become new conditions for their lives and beyond.⁹ In contrast, the purpose of Arendt's politics is, first of all, to enable the public manifestation of plurality by providing a platform on which to express the distinctive 'who' of a person. Political action is a form of self-disclosure. The individual enters the public stage and presents their unique socio-political position towards the world – how it appears to me – in relation to others (Arendt, 2003: 12f.).

A second way in which Arendt captures plurality in politics is her emphasis on action's dependence, as a form of world disclosure, on an audience. Action is in some sense short-lived, because it does not leave anything physical behind. Instead, to be made manifest, actions need to be heard, seen, and remembered – action continues to exist only through its acknowledgment. For this reason, action is closely connected to communicating through speech.¹⁰ Alongside the plurality of

⁹ Arendt did not deny the importance of all activities coming together to respond to the various human conditions, as one might infer from her separation of action from the biological demands on our bodies and the need to create a stable and durable world. The distinctions also do not mean that Arendt ignored the fact of politics' close relationship with violence and domination. Nonetheless, for the sake of a thick conception of plurality Arendt rejected the idea that politics must be about violence and authority.

¹⁰ Speech is closer to revelation and action without speech loses its revelatory character (1998: 178). Arendt describes action also as founding political institutions; scholars have

actors who act together, Arendt thus adds a second plurality, the *judging spectators*. The dependence on a community of others is simultaneously action's potential and its limitation.

Thirdly, a thicker conception of plurality refers additionally to the in-between of people. Politics is according to Arendt not 'so much about human beings as it is about the world that comes into being between them and endures beyond them' (2007: 175). A suitable common world must accommodate both sufficient separation, so that each person provides a distinct perspective on an object, and connection, which ensures that the perspectives remain communicable and related to the same object. Action contributes to this common world by producing the 'fabric of human relationships and affairs' (1998: 95) between those that disclose and those that judge and confirm that appearance. Action must therefore entail a consideration of the implications of human endeavours for a common world and its continued existence beyond one's own generation.

Arendt's thicker conception of plurality and its connection to politics brings with it specific frustrations that shape the way we should approach political problems. Action is characterised by a threefold frustration, the 'unpredictability of its outcome, the irreversibility of the process, and the anonymity of its authors' (1998: 220). Politics is always exercised in a pre-existing web of human relations, which is likely to feature numerous conflicting interests, so that action's effects are seldom controllable; on the contrary, the outcome of action is often unintentional, almost never fulfilling its original purpose (Arendt, 1998: 184). Embedded in complex processes, action is also the activity with the closest connection to the human condition of natality. Arendt emphasised the political freedom that arises from a human affirmation of the capacity to begin something new (Arendt, 2006a: 151).¹¹ It

nonetheless struggled with its seemingly empty character, as speaking, void of interests (cf. Pitkin, 1981). This tension cannot be resolved as Arendt's conception remained fragmented and incorporated Homeric, Athenian, Roman, Christian, and revolutionary elements. However, Canovan (1992: 137ff.) builds on unpublished lectures to identify Arendt as even critical of an overemphasis on action as speech. I suggest that it is therefore more helpful to think of her separation of action from instrumentalist projects not in absolute terms but as an attempt to show that politics is more than mere zero-sum games of domination and violence.

¹¹ Arendt describes action and its capacity for novelty as a 'miracle-working faculty' (1998: 246). Novelty is here not to be understood in absolute terms, because action is always conditioned and preceded by previous actions (Arendt, 1981a: 29). Events are *new* in the sense that they change that which has come before in an irrevocable manner (Arendt, 1972: 5). New beginnings in politics depend on the arrival of new generations of distinct perspectives on an object that continuously reshape what a community has in common.

is action's power 'to break through the commonly accepted and reach into the extraordinary, where [...] everything that exists is unique' (1998: 205).

In light of the frustrations that come with political practices, their unpredictability and capacity to begin anew, people constantly attempt to constrain action or to replace it through labour and fabrication. Individuals are tempted to instrumentalise politics for their specific ends in an endeavour to control the effects of one's actions and avoid the frustrations that come with it. However, to displace acting together in such a way is to take away its ability to produce meaning, which reveals itself only through the unique direction that interaction takes (1998: 179f.). Such a reduction of politics and its uncontrollable, unpredictable qualities misconstrues the plurality that is intrinsic to political practices. Politics is instead at its best, when it makes human existence memorable in unprecedented ways and, in so doing, expands the sense that humans have of the kind of shared reality that they live in.

This concludes my investigation into *The Human Condition*. Arendt's discussion of a thicker conception of plurality brings with it a different understanding of politics as acting-in-concert. Arendt sees the public sphere not merely as a site of domination and violence, but potentially as a space of freedom dedicated to the practice of strengthening human plurality. Politics enables a community to discuss appropriate action in maintaining and improving the world that its members have in common, by ensuring that equal attentiveness is given to the three elements of plurality, sameness, distinction, and the common world. Political action is always contingent, complex, and open-ended. It is non-instrumental, a practice of freedom to begin anew and to disclose among equal peers how the world appears to me. Section 1.1 thus provides the first insight into the pluralist dimension to judgement: the human condition of plurality, in its thick description, necessitates a public sphere, in which to express a diversity of views on a shared reality. In the following, I wish to discuss further the content and purpose of the political sphere, by turning to Arendt's political realism.

1.2 Arendt's Political Realism founded on Pluralist Politics

With Arendt's re-orientation of politics towards a thicker conception of plurality in place, I seek to flesh out what Arendt understands by reality, before turning in the final section to the conceptions' implications for political judgement. Arendt undoubtedly had a complex understanding of reality. This is visible in her mixed response to realist political thought. On the one hand, Arendt's writing offers extensive engagement with the realist canon, including Thucydides, Machiavelli, and Hobbes. She shares with various forms of realism an emphasis on a distinct conception of the political as crucial to human existence, and a rejection of any attempt to displace politics.¹² Commentators have drawn on this connection to highlight a unique realism in Arendt's writing that could be fruitfully exploited as part of the realist tradition.¹³ Patricia Owens, for example, has put forward the claim that Arendt's thought can be read as an 'ethic of reality' (Owens, 2008: 106). She argues that in Arendt's work we can 'find a form of "realism" in which attentiveness to reality itself and the cultivation of a character trait in which to face and enlarge one's sense of reality are ends in themselves with serious ethical implications' (Owens, 2008: 105). Rei Terada (2008) similarly identifies a theory of reality – not to be understood in terms of a concern with metaphysical reality, but as a project that considers the hold of reality, events and facts, on human activities.

Arendt's political thought seems, on the other hand, un- or even anti-realist when contrasted with these canonical figures of realism.¹⁴ This 'anti-realism' finds its expression particularly in her rejection of the association of politics with interests, violence, and conflict. As I seek to show in this part of chapter 1, Arendt's account of politics embraces the tension between her realist commitments and her rejection of certain elements associated with realist political thought. Arendt protected the political sphere for the sake of a human need to account for and give meaning to

¹² As Arendt put it, politics is more than a necessary response to the fact that we are not rational beings, philosophers, or even angels (2007: 85). For an overview of recent formulations of realism in political theory that reject the displacement of politics, see (Galston, 2010).

¹³ In particular, commentators emphasise the link between realism in International Relations, as represented by canonical figures such as Hans Morgenthau, and Arendt. Recent examples include Douglas Klusmeyer (2011) and Felix Rösch (2013).

¹⁴ Typical of this stance is her rejection of the Weberian reduction of politics to interests and coercive power. Peter Baehr (2001) suggests that Arendt provides a comprehensive alternative to Max Weber while seldom directly addressing Weber.

reality together. This need demanded, for her, an opposition to a thin conception of plurality that reduces politics to the coordination of particular interests, often associated with realism.

The following discussion brings together Arendt's scattered remarks about reality, to outline what her 'ethic of reality' entails as the foundation of her writings on political judgement. My analysis proceeds in two steps. Firstly, I introduce the break in tradition that for Arendt created unprecedented uncertainty and prevented individuals from reconciling with reality. This break in tradition is also an opportunity to face reality unmediated by philosophy or other forms of authority. Through her analysis of the break, Arendt helps us see the full potential of the role that a pluralist politics could play for humans. Secondly, I turn to Arendt's realism as a particular way of facing and coming to terms with reality that has plurality and politics at its centre. I conclude by considering Arendt's response to criticisms of her ethic through an affirmation of the centrality of plurality for a sense of reality.

1.2.1 A Break in Tradition

My discussion of *The Human Condition* pointed towards the importance of politics for strengthening a sense of reality: politics enables the sharing and discussing of one's perspective on the world with others. Arendt understood that in a world inhabited by human beings, reality is inextricably linked with the political sphere and its mediation of individual, partial perspectives on the world. Reality is 'a world of appearances [...] first of all characterised by "standing still and remaining" the same long enough to become an *object* for acknowledgement and recognition by a *subject*' (Arendt, 1981a: 45f.). Without the testimony by others on the *realness* of an appearance, reality 'comes and passes away like a dream, intimately and exclusively our own but without reality' (1998: 199). This intersubjective understanding of reality connects three elements to plurality discussed in section 1.1: the common world that appears to us, the person who is affected by the appearance¹⁵, and the plurality of spectators and actors who confirm that appearance. A strong *sense of reality* is thus only achievable as part of a judging

¹⁵ In Arendt's words all 'that existentially concerns you while living in the world of appearances is the "impressions" by which you are affected. Whether what affects you exists or is mere illusion depends on your decision whether or not you will recognize it as real' (1981a: 155).

and acting community, that recognises and engages with how things appear to different people.¹⁶

But why would we need a sense of reality that is strengthened through the encounter of a thicker notion of plurality in politics? One of the main purposes for a strong sense of reality is reconciliation – to come to terms with reality. In pre-modernity, this function was primarily assured by the tradition on which a (political) community was founded and which provided the standards of how to render experiences intelligible.¹⁷ The value of tradition is put poignantly in relation to prejudices ‘that we share, that we take to be self-evident, that we can toss out in conversation without any lengthy explanations’ (Arendt, 2007: 99). Arendt emphasised that humans

‘cannot live without prejudices, and not only because no human being’s intelligence or insight would suffice to form an original judgment about everything on which he is asked to pass judgment in the course of his life, but also because such a total lack of prejudice would require a superhuman alertness. This is why in all times and places it is the task of politics to shed light upon and dispel prejudices, which is not to say that its task is to train people to be unprejudiced or that those who work toward such enlightenment are themselves free of prejudice [...] an epoch in which people could not fall back on and trust their prejudices when judging and deciding about major areas of their lives is inconceivable’ (Arendt, 2007: 99f.).

The reconciliation with reality is threatened in modernity by a break in tradition, as an expression of the loss of unity between tradition, religion, and authority. This unity had offered standards – of ethics and morality – that gave a satisfactory meaning to ongoing occurrences and enabled the community to continue in their set ways. During her time, Arendt argued, the break in tradition had become a fact to be reckoned with. How humans can gain an adequate access to reality thus became the central problem of the 20th century.¹⁸ We can

¹⁶ Arendt even stated that to ‘be deprived of it [(the space of appearance)] means to be deprived of reality, which humanly and politically speaking, is the same as appearance [...] and whatever lacks this appearance comes and passes away like a dream, intimately and exclusively our own but without reality’ (1998: 199). Did Arendt then maintain an absolute intersubjectivism where all reality is reducible to partial perspectives and the confirmation by others? This seems unlikely. Arendt concluded her essay *Truth and Politics* by suggesting that truth and reality is what we cannot change but must accept (Arendt, 2006a: 259).

¹⁷ Tradition for Arendt ‘selects and names, [...] hands down and preserves, [...] indicates where the treasures are and what their worth is’ (Arendt, 2006a: 5).

¹⁸ The centrality of the break in tradition in Arendt’s thought, and the role totalitarianism plays in it, is widely accepted (cf. Birmingham, 2006; Canovan, 1992; Villa, 1999).

'no longer afford to take that which was good in the past and simply call it our heritage, to discard the bad and simply think of it as a dead load which by itself time will bury in oblivion. The subterranean stream of Western history has finally come to the surface and usurped the dignity of our tradition. This is the reality in which we live. And this is why all efforts to escape, from the grimness of the present into nostalgia for a still intact past, or into the anticipated oblivion of a better future, are vain' (Arendt, 1973: ix).

To explore the temporal significance of the break in tradition, alluded to in the quote, Arendt returned repeatedly to Kafka's parable 'He' (Arendt, 1981a: 202, 2006a, 2011). Kafka depicts the individual caught between the antagonistic forces of *not yet* and *no longer*, between the past and the future. In Arendt's re-interpretation of the parable, another, irreducible force, the present, emerges out of past and future.¹⁹ The present had however little impact on human lives insofar as it was embedded in, and bridged by, the certainty provided through traditions. The break in tradition therefore does not create a gap between the past and future. Instead, it exposes the non-linear movement of time in which the present takes place. This means that the break is not only the origin of a highly problematic existential and epistemic crisis of humanity, but an opportunity for a different engagement with reality that for Arendt draws on the distinct potential of a practice of acting and judging politically.

The break in tradition provides a chance to move beyond a problematic project of establishing universal standards of meaning outside the everyday activities outlined above – labour, work, and action. The project began in Ancient Greece and found its extreme conclusion in totalitarianism.²⁰ It included a form of teleological progress thinking that denied the present any impact on human development (Arendt, 2007: 74). Arendt joined an illustrious group of critics of the philosophical tradition, including Kant, Marx, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche, in their attempt to undo this universalising project. However, according to Arendt, these central figures of modernity succeeded merely in turning the primacy of transcendental and theoretical activities on its head. Their attempts continued the philosophical project

¹⁹ Human's capacity for new beginnings plays an integral part in the interruption caused by the third force to the otherwise continuous flow of events between past and future. The break in tradition, in other words, enables an 'analysis of the temporality of natality itself' (Birmingham, 2006: 18).

²⁰ We should not read Arendt's analysis of this project as embedded in a continuous historical narrative. Arendt was averse to causal historic narratives, preferring an analysis of the elements, or the conditions that under certain circumstances may or may not come together to form certain outcomes (Arendt, 1973; cf. Disch, 1993).

by other means (Arendt, 1998: 17, cf. 2006a, 2007).²¹ Arendt followed her predecessors' efforts to dismantle metaphysics, but she also moved beyond them through a new form of political realism orientated towards the role of plurality for our sense of reality. It is to this realism that I turn next.

1.2.2 Love of the World

An insistence on the close connection between plurality, as made manifest by politics, and reality led Arendt to a unique 'realist' position that is encapsulated by the concept *amor mundi*, love of the world. Arendt asked whether 'one was capable of loving the world more than one's own self. And the decision indeed has always been the crucial decision for all who devoted their lives to politics' (Arendt, 2006c: 286). She opposed *amor mundi* to any nihilistic thoughts and any desire to deny the political realities of one's time. While it is only understandable that people may wish to suppress reality during (20th century's) dark times, such attempts are only acceptable, according to Arendt, if they are connected with an honest acknowledgement of one's escapism (Arendt, 2007: 203). Arendtian realism, or love of the world, properly sets in when we have to come to terms with facts and events that we accept as being real even if we do not wish them to be so. Arendt encouraged an 'attentive facing up to, and resisting of, reality – whatever that may be' (1973: viii). Coming to terms with reality does not simply mean that we normalise extreme phenomena such as totalitarianism. Instead, Arendt suggests that we seek to *understand* – that is, by making our knowledge of its unique reality meaningful.

A commitment to love the world, led Arendt to be highly sceptical of any attempt to resolve political problems by applying frameworks with only limited attentiveness to the particularities of politics and reality. This scepticism expressed itself in a number of ways. Arendt questioned the traditional role of ethics in politics, which she identified as providing a framework for judgement that, in moments of crisis, turns too easily into mere customs. She rejected a reduction of politics to conflict, but was similarly critical of the liberal belief in progress as the peaceful resolution of the interrelationship between violence and politics. Her thought aligned with Carl

²¹ Arendt's own appreciation for the Greek and Roman polis has been read as making her a 'reluctant modernist' (Benhabib, 2003) who turns to ancient political thought to flee from reality. I suggest such a reading underestimates her attempt to formulate a distinctly modern political project that responds directly to the threat in modernity to plurality.

Schmitt and Hans Morgenthau in suggesting that moralism and fighting wars on behalf of political ideals, e.g. equality, liberty or justice, would only lead to a worsening of war's brutality (Arendt, 2007: 3; cf. Owens, 2008: 108). Finally, she rejected any reference to 'lesser evils', because it opens the door to seeing evil-doing as an acceptable and legitimate course of action (Arendt, 2003: 36). In short, her bet, as Terada puts it, was that

'an empirical scepticism that asks, "Is that the way things really are?" is more likely to support a tolerable world, and less likely to support an intolerable one, than affirmative fidelity to anything else, no matter how universally or singularly good. There are more politicians whose imperial fantasies could be corrected by realism than there are ones who could be corrected by ethics' (Terada, 2008: 103).

Ethics and reality are no longer seen as opposites, as conventional approaches that measure reality against external universal principles would have it. Instead, coming to terms with reality together *is* the foundation of ethics. Arendt emphasised that the need to engage with reality can be a normative project in and of itself – this insight will become a key feature of the argument in this thesis.

Arendt's practice of this ethic of reality consisted in a continuous engagement with the political events of her time, including totalitarianism, the student demonstrations of the 1960s, and American foreign policy. Her political interventions were often received critically, an infamous example being the angry responses that followed her report on the Eichmann trial. Eichmann had been responsible for the mass deportation and extermination of Jews in Nazi Germany, and Arendt stood accused of seeking to understand and judge Eichmann in isolation from the effects that such a desire to understand might have on others (Arendt, 2006b; cf. Rabinbach, 2004). In her response to the controversy surrounding the report, Arendt asked 'what kind of reality does truth possess if it is powerless in the public realm, which more than any other sphere of human life guarantees reality of existence to natal and moral men' (Arendt, 2006a: 223). Her investigation into the potential of factual truth reinforces the connection she provides for judgement between plurality, reality, and politics.

Factual truth is central to politics and emerges out of the partial perspectives of a political community. It is susceptible to power and interest conflicts in the public sphere, and can even be lost permanently, due to its dependence on experience and agreement. Factual truths can nonetheless prove sufficiently stable; take Arendt's example of the enduring factual truth that Germany invaded Belgium and

not the other way around (Arendt, 2006a: 245). In contrast, philosophical truths that enter the political sphere are much more at risk, as they move from one part of human existence to a radically different one. Rational truth, like all truths, is turned into one opinion amongst many, and its unique qualities, which make rational truth so valuable for contemplation and theorising, provide no privileged status in a public debate (2006a: 233).²²

In modernity, fraught with the break in tradition, factual truths became increasingly undermined and no longer found widespread acceptance. At stake is therefore the 'common and factual reality itself, and this is indeed a political problem of the first order' (Arendt, 2006a: 232). In response, Arendt insisted that it is not a problem that factual truth depends on appearance and witnesses, and that it is bound up with opinions, interests, and passions.²³ On the contrary, in light of the threats to plurality outlined in section 1.1, contemporary society is dependent on factual truth and its ability to engender a diversity of perspectives that, crucially, remain connected to concrete objects and events. Factual truth is important for politics because it provides the confines in which politics occurs, defining what at any point is seen as unchangeable foundation on which to begin something new, to act together and give reality meaning (Arendt, 2006a: 259). To ensure that factual truth continues to hold this role for humans, Arendt suggested that we replace its connection to tradition, by embedding facts in action-in-concert and, as we will see next, political judgement.

In summary, in this section, I added to the pluralist dimension to judgement, by considering the role that politics plays for how humans are able to come to terms with reality. My discussion sketched how Arendt positions pluralist politics as a suitable alternative to traditions and their capacity to give meaning to a transition from the past into an uncertain future. In light of a break in tradition, which forces humans to find their own ways of coming to terms with reality, she routinely encouraged people to face reality together, in order to come to understand it and reconcile themselves with it.

²² Arendt was of course fully aware of the continuous tendency of philosophers to seek to establish rational truths as maxims of political action, but she emphasised that their establishment would only provide a 'pyrrhic victory' (2006a: 245). Only in the guise of examples can these truths be valuable for politics, and they must not be used to transcend politics' unique qualities or for an attempt to coerce assent.

²³ Indeed, she was particularly concerned about the many attempts to prove factual truths, which misconstrue its vulnerability, and the contemporary need to be right for the sake of objectivity, which so easily comes at the sacrifice of humanity and friendship.

As the second part of my discussion of Arendt's 'realism', I highlighted her insistence that ethics start with the political realm and the sense of reality that emerges through action's world disclosure. She proposed a love of the world contra comprehensive ethical frameworks that are orientated towards universal principles and, according to her, displaced rather than tackled the political problems of her time. Her sceptical realism insists on acknowledging factual truths when faced with occurrences that go against our view of the world, in the hope of building a common world through which to understand these events. My reconstruction of Arendt's thought thus already marks a key shift in how we approach the problem of complicity. Arendt offers us a way of thinking about an ethico-political problem as preceded and complemented by the challenge of how humans can engage appropriately with reality. This problem is, as I have shown, not simply an issue to be considered separately, but the foundation of normative projects *tout court*, without which responses to complicity cannot succeed.

1.3 Judging Politically through Reflective Judgement

In the previous two sections I turned to one of the most influential thinkers on judgement, Arendt, in order to map out the pluralist dimension to judgement. I drew attention to how she re-orientated politics and humans' engagement with reality towards a thicker conception of plurality. I also indicated that Arendt understood judgement as the ability of humans to position themselves towards events, issues, and people, and through this process to sharpen their sense of reality. In this final section of chapter 1, I discuss reflective judgement. Arendt re-interpreted reflective judgement as a capacity that, akin to action, is inherently connected to plurality and essential to politics.

Arendt drew on a wide variety of sources to formulate her understanding of judgement. In particular, a creative appropriation of Kant's conceptualisation of aesthetic judgement helped her clarify the role that judgement can play for a different understanding of human plurality. In a series of posthumously published lectures, Arendt interpreted Kant's *Critique of Judgement* as providing the political philosophy that he never wrote.²⁴ This idiosyncratic interpretation helped her displace Kant's focus on reason and his moral and historical philosophy in the earlier *Critiques*. In its place, as I will demonstrate, she emphasised that plurality and intersubjectivity are integral to political judgement.

In his *Critique of Judgement* (2000), Kant put forward a formalistic account of aesthetic judgement dedicated to theorising the universal conditions, rather than the substance, of judgements of taste. He portrayed judging as subsuming particulars under universals. When dealing with moral issues, judgement becomes a determinate process, where the universals are already given. Aesthetic judgement, in contrast, relies on a reflective process where the universals are found through abstraction from the particular (Kant, 2000: 5, 179).²⁵ Arendt was particularly

²⁴ Ronald Beiner later published the series of lectures on Kant's political philosophy. In his accompanying interpretive essay (Beiner, 1982), he maintains that these lectures can provide an appropriate interpretation of what Arendt would have written as the final book of her unfinished trilogy *Life of the Mind*. Because the interpretation of her theory relies on a reading of her lectures on Kant, it is difficult to criticise Arendt for not sufficiently separating her own standpoint (cf. Borren, 2013: 226).

²⁵ Aesthetic judgement is further contemplative, non-moral, immediate, i.e. independent of needs, and dissimilar from either Humean sense or Platonic reason.

attracted to the latter.²⁶ Judged in the singular, autonomously, reflective judgement is difficult and uncertain – it lacks a universal rule to subsume the particular under, and relies instead on the engagement with other's perspectives for its validation.

My analysis of Arendt's writing on political judgement proceeds in three steps, starting with judgement's role as part of the mental activities that Arendt discussed in the trilogy *The Life of the Mind*. The incomplete project hinted at the potential of judgement to connect the autonomous qualities of thinking and willing with political action. The two capacities, in turn, provide judgement with the means to connect ongoing processes of politics with the past, through imagination and memory, and the future, through the 'I will'.

Arendt raised the question how judgement can incorporate withdrawal, which is necessary in order to gain critical purchase on appearances and an essential feature of all mental faculties, and contribute to political practices. To answer this question, I move on to Arendt's re-formulation of two features to political judgement, the actor-spectator dichotomy and common sense. Commentators traditionally turn to both in search of Arendt's unfinished theory of political judgement. With regards to the actor-spectator dichotomy, I highlight that Arendt's spectators seek a critical vantage point that takes into account a plurality of perspectives without losing sight of the 'it-seems-to-me'. I also emphasise that community sense is both a framework preceding judgement, and therefore limited to particular contexts, and the product of acting and judging. Community sense provides an open-ended process that continuously enables the re-establishment of a shared sense of reality.

1.3.1 The Faculties of the Mind

Arendt complemented her re-orientation of politics towards a thicker conception of plurality, by writing a trilogy on three mental activities, thinking, willing, and judging, called *The Life of the Mind* (1981a, 1981b). She never wrote the final book on judgement, due to her death in 1975, and commentators have instead relied on earlier and unpublished work to debate what Arendt might have written. This suggestive theory of judgement must be read in relation to the challenge central to

²⁶ Arendt was hopeful that 'even though we have lost yardsticks by which to measure, and rules under which to subsume the particular, a being whose essence is beginning may have enough of origin within himself to understand without preconceived categories and to judge without the set of customary rules which is morality' (Arendt, 2011: 332).

The Life of the Mind: how to bring together mental activities, which are uniquely characterised by a 'Withdrawal from the world as it appears and a bending back toward the self' (Arendt, 1981a: 22), with a prioritisation of pluralist politics and the creation of a hospitable world?²⁷ Arendt's remarks on judgement form also part of her investigation into the complex relationship between mental activities and evil that Arendt concentrated on following the Eichmann trial. In response to both puzzles, Arendt acknowledged that judging, willing, and thinking are all dependent on some form of withdrawal from the space of appearance. As I show in the following, she also addressed the importance of plurality for the life of the mind and denied any attempt to detach the functioning of mental activities from their effects on politics. *The Life of the Mind* thus offers an initial insight into the connection between judgement as a mental, detached activity and a plurality strengthened through politics.

The first book of *The Life of the Mind* deals with the faculty of thinking.²⁸ Of interest for the present investigation is that Arendt saw judgement as connecting thought with the space of appearance: judgement is the 'by-product of the liberating effect of thinking, [it] realizes thinking, makes it manifest in the world of appearances, where I am never alone and always too busy to think' (Arendt, 1981a: 193). The connection between judgement and thought, gains in importance in relation to two dangers to thought in modernity: thoughtlessness and the ever-present nihilistic tendencies inherent in all forms of thinking.

Thoughtlessness describes the failure of the internal conversation through which humans deliberate about themselves and the world and decide upon the right actions to take. It may also refer to a troublesome desire for rules that can be applied automatically with little need for independent thought (Arendt, 1981a: 177; cf. Schiff, 2013). Such a thoughtless disposition could prove disastrous for a society, because the thoughtless person shows little concern for the effect that the application of rules has on other people and the common world. This was, Arendt argued, Eichmann's main shortcoming, leading to a devastating failure of

²⁷ The mental activities are also not directly conditioned by the human conditions outlined above, and they can neither be derived from each other nor reduced to a common denominator (1981a: 69f.).

²⁸ Thought as contemplation seems inherently passive and invisible. Yet, Arendt insisted that thought, despite its tendency to withdraw from the world, is an activity. Thinking is active by virtue of its inherently dual nature: I think with myself, both raising questions and answering them (Arendt, 1981a: 185).

judgement. She noted his constant references to clichés, 'stock phrases, [his] adherence to conventional, standardised codes of expression and conduct' which provide 'the socially recognised function of protecting us against reality, that is, against the claim on our thinking attention that all events and facts make by virtue of their existence' (Arendt, 1981a: 4, 2006b).

Thought can similarly be dangerous as it lacks a precise end goal, disrupts other activities and occurrences, and seeks the withdrawal from the world (cf. Arendt, 1981a: 176). Arendt identified such problematic tendencies in the projects of professional thinkers. She accused philosophers, including Heidegger and Descartes, of committing metaphysical fallacies²⁹ that are the result of a struggle of the thinking ego with the world of appearance. Drawn to contemplation as the maxim of their lives, they seek to close the 'abyss of pure spontaneity' (Arendt, 1981b: 215) of action, by reducing new appearances to what is already known or knowable through thought. Philosophers and social scientists share a thirst for objective knowledge via an Archimedean point, which requires the withdrawal from human affairs but nonetheless claims coercive power in that sphere.³⁰

Judgement offered Arendt a hopeful response to both failures, thoughtlessness and the dangers of thoughtfulness, insofar as it manifests thought in a pluralist politics. Judgement links the continuous critical investigation back to action and the appearances that caused humans to think in the first place (cf. Arendt, 1981a: 193). By anchoring thought in the space of appearance, political judgement denies a withdrawal from sense experiences and the engagement with others. Judgement prevents a flight into thoughtlessness by ensuring that one's thoughts come into contact with potential opposition and the kind of contradiction in views which is likely to be found in other people's perspectives.

²⁹ One such basic fallacy, which she imputes to Heidegger, concerns the conflation of truth with meaning. Similarly problematic is the two-world-theory, affirming the absolute distinction between being and appearance, and, related to it, the reduction of effects and appearances to some underlying cause.

³⁰ In terms of the social sciences, Arendt was averse to the Marxist-sociological strategy of unmasking – which she later condemned as naïve, sinister, and cruel – and showed contempt for 'functionalism' (Arendt, 1981a: 27; Baehr, 2007: 343). For Arendt, sociology obsessively aimed to reduce any peculiar phenomenon 'into something that it is not, denying its reality and claiming that it is a symptom or token of a deeper substratum remote from the world of appearance' (Baehr, 2002: 808). By constantly perceiving something as a façade with an underlying 'real', phenomena are reduced to their function (Arendt, 2011: 374f.). This functionalism allows the researcher simply to ignore what is actually being said or done.

Arendt framed thought, in turn, as the negative pre-condition of judgement: thought frees judgement from habitual processes of non-thinking. In addition, the foundation of judgement in thought brings with it for judgement the capacity for memory and imagination, through which the mind can represent that which is no longer present. Together, imagination and memory enable thought – and by extension judgement – to transcend temporal and spatial distances. They help ‘anticipate the future, think of it as though it were already present [...] [and] remember the past as though it had not disappeared’ (Arendt, 1981a: 85). In the context of the break in tradition, which disrupted the flow between past and future, the ability of imagination and memory to invoke the past, present, and future are vital tools for judging politically.

In the second book of *The Life of the Mind*, which remained less developed than the first, Arendt considered the activity of willing. The faculty of the will has become an essential part of modern moral theorising in the form of free will. It is seen as the source of choice, new beginning, freedom, individual sovereignty, and responsibility. Arendt challenged this role, because she identified a troublesome tension at the heart of willing. Whereas thought largely deals with the past, the activity of willing is orientated to the future, dealing with things that never actually existed; the projects produced by a person’s will are therefore inherently uncertain and constantly challenge the will as humans cannot stop willing (Arendt, 1981b: 37).³¹ For this reason, the activity is caught in a conflict between the individual freedom of ‘I will’ and the constraints that arise from one’s past and present context and shape the ‘I can’. Arendt concluded the book with the insight that the faculty of willing, as understood in modernity, left her investigation into mental activities at an impasse to be resolved by judgement (1981b: 217).

There have been many different approaches to dealing with the challenges that come with the unstable activity of willing, starting with fatalism. Fatalism provides a common response to willing and its connection to an uncertain future through the claim that what will be, as necessarily being so (Arendt, 1981b: 35f.). Fatalism leads to an infinite regress and is dangerous because it annihilates any desire to act – for, whether one acts or not has already been decided. Alternatively, one may wish to

³¹ Thinking and willing have a strenuous relationship, as the willing faculty aims at doing something, whereas thinking is doing nothing. Arendt sought to capture these differences by conceiving of tonalities of mental activities. They led her to the description of mental activities as the *life* of the mind: thought’s mood is serenity and tranquillity and willing’s mood is tenseness, impatience, and disquiet.

embrace the freedom and ability to begin anew found in willing. Such a move however sits uneasily with a pluralist public sphere. As Arendt highlighted drawing on Nietzsche, the sovereign freedom of 'free will' is 'essentially a passionate superiority toward a someone who must obey' (1981b: 161). Freedom has wrongfully become bound up in an activity of commanding and rule over others (Arendt, 2006a: 145). The problematic reveals that willing, too, can be a dangerous activity with significant impact on the public sphere and plurality.

Arendt identified in willing a capacity to start something unpredictably new, which links free will with action (1981b: 29, 158). However, the freedom that Arendt was after is not one of free will, which is orientated towards the individual, domination, sovereignty, and the future. Instead, political freedom expresses itself in the practice of acting-in-concert. We can thus read the role of judgement in resolving the impasse of willing as follows: judgement, as a capacity to make sense of events in their irrevocable and contingent character, could help willing by providing reconciliation with the past as a starting point for new forms of action. Judgement connects the backwards glance of thinking with the future-centrism of the will to be brought to bear in the present through acting and judging in concert.

This brief introduction of *The Life of the Mind* gives us a sense of the context in which Arendt sought to formulate the second crucial activity for her focus on plurality alongside action, judgement. Arendt's insights into judgement are marred by the incomplete state of the trilogy. Nonetheless, my discussion delineated some important points. In her re-orientation of the activities of the mind, Arendt pointed out that willing helps judgement move from an impulse of withdrawal to a motivation to act upon the world. The activity of willing brings with it a capacity for new beginnings (cf. Fine, 2008). Thought helps judgement break from the immediate worldly activities to gain critical purchase on the world, and provides the means of memory and imagination. Judgement in turn links the two capacities of thinking and willing to political practices and anchors their focus on the past and future in the freedom found in acting together and the meaning that emerges from evaluating public appearances. The discussion shows that the pluralist potential of judgement emerges out of a complex interplay between different mental activities, including their often strained relationship to politics. The question remains how judgement, as an ultimately individual, detached act, can tie mental processes to pluralist practices.

1.3.2 The Judging Spectator

The binary of actor and spectator in Arendt's theorising on judgement has been hotly debated in the past (cf. Yar, 2000).³² The discussion centred on how she brings together Aristotle's conception of practical wisdom with the Kantian formulation of aesthetic judgement.³³ My aim is instead to articulate how Arendt seeks to re-formulate the relationship between actor and spectator to accommodate her understanding of plurality and reconcile the urges for withdrawal and public appearance.³⁴

I highlight two features of Arendt's re-interpretation of the actor-spectator binary. Firstly, she connects political judgement to taste rather than objective knowledge. Arendt attributes judgement to a spectator who experiences an appearance and is affected by it. The spectator also enlarges their view on the matter by incorporating other perspectives on the object to be judged. Secondly, the actor and spectator remain deeply intertwined and both rely on plurality for their functioning. The section will go through these two features in more detail in that order. I substantiate the insights by discussing how storytelling helps express a form of judgement that is neither fully affected nor impartial and relies on actors and spectators working together.

³² Richard Bernstein, for example, argued that Arendt's interpretation offers a 'flagrant contradiction' (1986: 230) and more questions than answers. Commentators have also pointed towards a 1957 letter to Karl Jaspers, to identify a shift in Arendt's reading of Kant's third *Critique* (Beiner, 1997: 2; Marshall, 2010: 380). The different readings of Arendt's account will be the subject of chapter 2.

³³ Aristotle remains the main source for a discussion of *phronesis*, i.e. practical wisdom or prudence. In his work, *phronesis* is said to be the virtue essential for achieving the good life, by enabling access to the universal as it is identifiable in the particular (Aristotle, 2002: VI). Prudence enables us to do the 'right thing, at the right time, and for the right reason' (Surprenant, 2012: 221). Aristotle also has a notion of judgement, *krinein*, which Arendt adopts as judging and deciding (cf. Marshall, 2010: 377). *Krinein* deals with the essential appearance of things and is limited to situations where different judgements are possible. *Phronesis* and *krinein* are interrelated and, to put it starkly, '*phronesis* minus *praxis* equals judgment. *Phronesis* is the union of an act of good judgment and the action which is the fitting embodiment of judgment' (Beiner, 1983: 75). In other words, it is possible to make good judgements but fail to translate them into an appropriate action. Through its interrelation with prudence, good judgement in Aristotle's thought depends on habituation, familiarity, practice, and experience.

³⁴ It is not my intention to locate Arendt, once more, between Kant and Aristotle, for her contribution is precisely to move beyond the two. This point is put succinctly by Disch (1994: 142f.) contra Beiner's reading of Arendt through a Kantian lens.

The binary spectator and actor emerged in Arendt's thought as part of the critique of professional thinkers addressed in the last section. She was particularly concerned with the role of the detached observer, familiar in logical positivism, who relies on a strict object-subject distinction and puts an unwarranted emphasis on objectivity. Her own spectator is closer to what usually comes to mind when we talk about spectators, a crowd that, for example, attends a football game (Arendt, 1981a: 94). This spectator exists in the plural (fans, commentators, pundits) and is part of the appearances without being directly involved in the action, i.e. playing football. Their observations are not orientated towards objectivity, but the production of meaning, e.g. which team deserved to win. Spectators, as judges who are not distant observers, do not escape the political partiality of their role (Bilsky, 1996: 138).

For Arendt's rewriting of the role of the spectator, Kant played an important role. He provided her with the image of a judging spectator who looks for the enjoyment of the aesthetically pleasing, as an alternative to the philosopher who searches for truth and objectivity. The relationship between politics and aesthetics is complex, but Arendt drew on judgements of taste because they share with politics that they are largely concerned with the unique and particular. Taste and smell are 'discriminatory by their very nature and [...] only these senses relate to the particular *qua* particular' (1982: 66). The 'point of the matter is: I am directly affected. For this reason there can be no dispute about right or wrong here' (1982: 66). Taste triggers humans' sense of what is meaningful in the world and mobilises us to take up a position towards it – whether we consider it beautiful, right, or good.

The question is how to move from a sensation of the particular to the pluralist politics that Arendt had in mind as the source of coming to terms with reality. After all, it is difficult to communicate and discuss one's experience of this extremely subjective and private sense. To move from the private to the political, Arendt drew on Kant's emphasis on disinterestedness, the transcendence of 'what we usually call self-interest, which, according to Kant, is not enlightened or capable of enlightenment but is in fact limiting' (Arendt, 1982: 43). The transformation of a personal sense of taste succeeds with the help of imagination through what Kant terms an 'operation of reflection' (Kant, 2000: §40, 294b). Disinterestedness means that judgements withdraw from the direct perception of an object that has caught our interest towards a contemplation of the image of an object which may attract our

approval or disapproval (1982: 65). This process allows judgements to include further parameters of evaluation alongside the immediate sensation.

For Arendt the process of disinterestedness can be achieved through training 'one's imagination to go visiting' (Arendt, 1982: 43). This practice builds on Kant's notion of enlarged mentality³⁵, but replaces his concern with universalising assumptions – the desire for a priori agreement on one's judgement – with her emphasis on plurality. Arendt is also informed by a form of impartiality which she attributes to the Ancient Greeks who learned to 'look upon the same world from one another's standpoint, to see the same in very different and frequently opposing aspects' (Arendt, 2006a: 51). Going 'visiting' (1982: 43), or 'representative thinking' (2006a: 237), transcends the subjective experience by anticipating the future communication with other members of society and their distinctive perspectives on the world. Having moved beyond self-interest, it helps look at an object from many different standpoints, without simply adopting them – representative thought is orientated towards the world and does not require us to share another person's perspective. The establishment of an enlarged perspective is meant to provide 'a viewpoint from which to look upon, to watch, to form judgments, or [...] to reflect upon human affairs' (1982: 44). Unlike with the use of reason, enlarged judgement, aesthetic or political alike, does not produce instructions on how to act, but gives meaning to objects and refines our sense of reality.

The incorporation of an affective and representative dimension to judgement has become known following Arendt scholar Lisa Disch as 'situated impartiality' (Disch, 1993: 666) – the critical vantage point from within a community and plurality. One way in which judgement can express this situated impartiality is through the telling of a story about the event to be judged. Storytelling, for Arendt, could help judgement by representing a 'dilemma as contingent and unprecedented and [...] [by pushing] its audience to think from within that dilemma. It invites the kind of situated crucial thinking that is necessary' (Disch, 1993: 669) to judge in modernity.

Arendt's use of storytelling is indebted to Walter Benjamin and his rejection of a linear conception of time, particularly of history as progress (Arendt, 1970: 165; cf.

³⁵ By enlarged mentality Kant means the general perspective that emerges when the object is viewed from different standpoints (Kant, 2000: §40; cf. Arendt, 1982: 55f.). Enlarging one's mentality remains for Kant a theoretical, mental adoption of other people's perspectives.

Benhabib, 1990; Herzog, 2000).³⁶ Decades before the extraordinary interest in narrativity from the 1980s onwards, Arendt followed Benjamin as she identified in storytelling the capacity to give meaning to information without reducing it to that information. Exemplary stories avoid providing definitive interpretations of events and facts, i.e. they avoid defining the meaning of their content and open it up to a plurality of interpretations.³⁷ Arendt's use of storytelling was further informed by Ancient Greece, particularly the way stories were told by Thucydides and Homer (Arendt, 1982: 5, 56). They, too, faced extreme forms of violence and showed Arendt how to judge through telling a story from a second-person perspective that avoids reducing judgement to empathy for the 'victims of history'.

This concludes my investigation into the first feature of Arendt's reformulation of the actor-spectator binary: the connection that Arendt put forward between a spectator who goes visiting and tells representative stories, and pluralist politics. The second feature concerns the interrelationship between spectator and actor. As I highlighted, the spectator in her thought becomes a much more active part of politics. Arendt at the same time clearly separated their judgements from action; reflective judgement is linked to certain features of the spectator, in particular the capacity for withdrawal from the world of appearances. She emphasised that the actor who 'acts never quite knows what he is doing' (Arendt, 1998: 233), in part, as action leads to irreparable and unforeseen consequences. Arendt also clarified that all actors have to take up the position of spectator from time to time to avoid acting foolishly and unaware of action's consequences. The spectator and actor are ideal types of the judging and acting capacity in every human, and all humans deploy a mixture of both positions in their everyday lives. In Arendt's words, 'this critic and spectator sits in every actor' (Arendt, 1982: 63).

The interrelationship between actor and spectator expresses itself in politics as follows: while action provides the content and origin of politics, which emerges out of humans inserting themselves into the world and engaging with each other (Arendt,

³⁶ Benjamin famously captured his scepticism towards progress through the metaphor of the angel of history. This angel moves into the future by looking backwards at the devastation of civilisation (1970; Schöttker et al., 2006).

³⁷ Arendt also emphasised the role of the theorist as storyteller who 'dives for pearls', especially when the political sphere is lost. To dive for pearls, in reference to Shakespeare's *Tempest*, means to turn to the past, not to reminisce and resuscitate it, but to find what over time crystallised, survived and was turned into something worth saving (Arendt, 1970: 205; cf. Herzog, 2000: 3).

1998: 199), the spectators constitute the public realm and give the appearance in it meaning (1982: 63). Arendt therefore points readers towards the need to acknowledge both the spectator and the actor. The quality of political judgement depends on a moving back and forth between them. Action cannot fulfil its role without judgements that give it meaning, define what of the appearance is relevant and important. Similarly, the spectator's political judgement relies on the possibility of its communication and translation into action. Otherwise, it returns to the untenable position of the detached observer. As Arendt emphasised, the 'condition *sine qua non* for the existence of beautiful objects is communicability' (Arendt, 1982: 63). The spectator only opens up the public space through their ability to judge and give meaning, if their judgement is communicable.

A return to Arendt's use of storytelling illustrates this point. Storytelling provided Arendt with the *modus operandi* of the political sphere that brings together actor and spectator. Political actors take to the public stage and reveal their own story. Action, with its capacity for natality and unpredictability, continuously produces unforeseen stories (Arendt, 1998: 184). The judge, in turn, delineates the political by stating what is relevant and meaningful in action. The meaning is only fully revealed at the end of the story and only to the storyteller, 'that is, to the backward glance of the historian, who indeed always knows better what it was all about than the participants' (1998: 192). As I suggested above, the historian for Arendt is a storyteller and judging spectator that aims for a second-person perspective and for situated impartiality. In telling a story the judge also becomes once again an actor, inserting their view into the world and continuing the movement between judging spectator and actor.

In sum, in her interpretation of the role of actors and spectators, Arendt fruitfully shows that the capacity of judgement to make sense of reality depends on the interplay between spectator and actor. Political judgement is always negotiated between the particular and the universal, impartiality and partiality. Fully aware of this fact, Arendt insisted on tying judgement to a plurality of spectators and on anchoring the spectator in experience and the political community. For judgement to move beyond mere affectedness and a partial perspective on the world, it has to become political, and this means to think representatively, to take into account other spectators and to communicate with fellow political actors. To judge politically is

however also to consider the world from a diverse range of perspectives without losing sight of the 'it appears to me'.

1.3.3 Community Sense

My discussion of Arendt's theorising on judgement has thus far highlighted two features to political judgement, as Arendt understood it. Firstly, I considered how Arendt turned to judgement in order to connect the mental activities of thinking and willing to a pluralist politics. Judgement is able to make this link between life of the mind and politics, because it uniquely combines withdrawal with interestedness and plurality. To understand how judgement is able to do so, my investigation highlighted, secondly, that for Arendt the judging spectator and the political actor are inextricably related, and that the quality of the spectator's judgement depends on a capacity for disinterestedness and 'going visiting'.

This section deals with a second way in which plurality comes into play for judgement to combine withdrawal and appearance, situatedness and impartiality. Judgement simultaneously draws on a shared world as a framework of reference to evaluate political problems and helps reproduce and strengthen the common world for future action and judgement. Arendt calls the connection between judgement and the community in which judgements are embedded, community sense. I focus on how Arendt formulates common, or community, sense as a point of reference that never transcends the context and the individual's position, but neither makes judgement merely subjective, contextual, or even impartial. Instead, community sense is the product of a continuous, open-ended practice of creating a world in which to judge through engagement with a diversity of perspectives on a shared object.

Common sense describes the relation between humans and their common world. From Plato's cave myth onwards, philosophers have looked down upon common sense and the philosopher has sought to escape from its constraints to access transcendental knowledge. In contrast, Arendt valued common sense. She identified the originality of totalitarianism in the loneliness it caused by succeeding in separating people from their common world, their common sense and thereby, from each other (Arendt, 1973: 475). Modern mass society brings with it a lack of common sense. People communicate with only limited references to their common

world – a situation that is exacerbated by the emergence of totalitarianism (Arendt, 2006a: 89f.). Common sense is thus both a necessary precondition of modern political judgement and uniquely under threat by the effects of modernisation.

There are two uses of common sense in Arendt's work: common sense and community sense. Both rely for their functioning on the commonality of the world and I discuss them briefly to show what role they play for Arendt's reflective judgement. Common sense, in French 'le bon sens', refers to a cognitive capacity for truth and knowledge considered in the *Life of the Mind, Thinking*. Common sense responds to the worldly context of perception, the feeling of its *realness*. It builds on a

'threefold commonness: the five senses, utterly different from each other, have the same object in common; members of the same species have the context in common that endows every single object with its particular meaning; and all other sense-endowed beings, though perceiving this object from utterly different perspectives, agree on its identity. Out of this three-fold commonness arises the *sensation of reality*' (Arendt, 1981a: 50).

Common sense enables the unification of different sensual frameworks (the object I see is experienced as image, the object I hear as sound), because it allows us to trace their communality to the same object. The sixth sense offers the bridge between private and public sphere, linking up our private sensations that are by nature difficult to communicate, with other people's perceptions.³⁸ Common sense is therefore a necessary and important foundation of judgement, without which representative thinking could not get off the ground.

The second use of common sense by Arendt, community sense, refers to a capacity for judgement and meaning which Arendt discussed in her lectures on Kant's political philosophy. Arendt drew on Kant's *gemeinschaftlicher Sinn*, which refers to an ability to judge the communicability of sensations and to gain validation by appealing to others (1982: 71f.). Community sense relies on communicability and enlarged mentality as the foundation for good judgement. It is neither objective nor arbitrary but is called upon by political judgement, through which one can only reach agreement, if one manages 'to "woo" or "court" the agreement of everyone else. And

³⁸ Common sense is incomparable to the experience of the other senses. It can also not simply be reconstructed by thinking, as the sense of realness that comes with common sense is outside the grasp of thinking (1981a: 51f.). Indeed, for Arendt, there is a natural tension between thinking and common sense, for, thought aims to withdraw from the use of sense data and the common world. In spite of this, the common sense has often been subordinated to thought.

in this persuasive activity one actually appeals to the “community sense”. In other words, when one judges, one judges as a member of a community’ (Arendt, 1982: 72). The possibility to refer to a community of peers, Arendt realised, is vital to judgement in politics, where the standards of judgement are often obscured and changing.

Although Arendt embedded judgement in a community, she did not reduce judgement to what is culturally accepted. Membership of a political community does not mean that political judgements must trigger an actual public acceptance of one’s perspective on the world. Similarly, she did not make the quality of judgement dependent on particular characteristics of the judging person, or seek a transcendental, a priori process of agreement as visible in parts of Kant’s third *Critique*. Instead, Arendt’s community sense is concerned with the coming together of a plurality of differing views on shared objects. Arendt shows how action and judgement are embedded in a common world, but also create and maintain that world through new ways of giving meaning to experiences together (cf. Borren, 2013; Degryse, 2011).

Arendt’s community sense is given concreteness by two further qualifications. Firstly, community sense does not demand that one consider all perspectives in one’s society, but appeals according to Arendt to the community of judges who have similarly gone through a process of affectedness and representative thinking upon the matter to be judged (Arendt, 2006a: 221). The community sense is limited to incorporating the perspectives of those who have judged, those who one relates to in judging, and to those to whom the phenomenon to be judged has appeared and matters. Secondly, far from an abstract ideal held in society, the community sense is a product of cultivating a practice of judgement in interaction with other members of the community. The community sense that a person refers to is characterised by the different perspectives one has encountered throughout one’s life, and the perspectives and judgements one relies on in making one’s own judgement. The quality of judgement is therefore largely dependent on the kind of company we keep (Arendt, 2006a: 226).

These qualifications find their expression in the key mechanism through which community sense links the common world and judgement. Exemplarity was Arendt’s ‘favoured means of improving judgment’ (La Caze, 2010: 78) and refers to a particular, for example a table, that ‘one judges to be the best possible table’

(Arendt, 1982: 77) and thus representative of what tables actually should be like.³⁹ Arendt identified exemplars as bestowing judgement with a general validity, by capturing characteristics of many particulars and by often being held by a large number of people (Arendt, 1982: 83).⁴⁰ Examples, such as Achilles' courage or Jesus kindness, lend judgement 'exemplary validity' to the extent that they are adequate for the particular and contain a concept or general rule of relevance for this particular. They provide political judgement with at best a general, but not a universal validity: the moment 'I speak about Bonapartism I have made an example of him. The validity of this example will be restricted to those who possess the particular experience of Napoleon, either as his contemporaries or as the heirs to this particular historical tradition' (1982: 84f.). Exemplarity thus provides illustrative cases as standards to follow in judging and acting, but it also links judgement to shared meanings of a political community. Furthermore, judgement and action continuously create new exemplars to follow and, in doing so, expand our community sense.

This concludes my introduction of central elements to political judgement as formulated by Arendt. The actor and spectator, taste, disinterestedness, representative thinking, common and community sense, are concepts through which Arendt attempted to delineate a form of judgement orientated by a practice of plurality. Judgement constitutes the political by evaluating what appears, giving it meaning and expanding our sense of reality. To this end, judgement draws on a community of spectators who, in plural, respond to the world-disclosure in action and in turn sharpen our sense of reality by making manifest their position towards the world.

Arendt provides important insights into the pluralist dimension to judgement. My discussion of her understanding of politics, reality, and judgement showed that she put forward a thicker conception of plurality, consisting of three parts: of the distinctiveness and sameness of humans and of a common world. Arendt

³⁹ Arendt provided many illustrations of what she saw as good exemplars to follow. The list ranges from historical, literary, to philosophical figures, from Socrates and King Lear, Lessing, Karl Jaspers, Rosa Luxembourg, to Berthold Brecht. Although historical events can also be exemplary for Arendt (cf. Passerin d'Entrèves, 2000: 251), her particular focus on writers and thinkers reveals a problematic tendency towards an intellectualist account of political judgement.

⁴⁰ The term exemplarity refers to 'a particular that in its very particularity reveals the generality that otherwise could not be defined' (Arendt, 1982: 77).

responded to the impoverishment of plurality through mass society and totalitarianism, by highlighting the potential in human plurality to i) affirm freedom and novelty in politics, ii) strengthen a sense of reality otherwise undermined by a break in tradition, and iii) judge without falling back on transcendental principles or mere subjectivity. The following chapter turns to the reception of Arendt's project. The ensuing debate has highlighted that the pluralist dimension is deeply interrelated with a second dimension to political judgement: the relationship between structure and agency that frames how humans judge politically. Following a discussion of this second dimension in chapter 3 using the works of Margaret Archer, I return to the overarching problem that this thesis seeks to tackle, how to judge responsibility-for-complicity.

Chapter 2 – The Debate on Judgement following Arendt

My aim in this thesis is to think through the practice of political judgement central to taking responsibility-for-complicity in systemic injustice, global poverty for example. Chapter 1 turned to a prominent scholar in the debates on judgement, Hannah Arendt. Arendt draws our attention to the pluralist dimension to judgement, which refers to judgement's capacity to respond to the fact that humans can only make the world hospitable together, by thinking representatively and judging objects in their *commonness*. Political judgement depends on and helps create a common world that is home to a plurality of perspectives on issues of shared interest, whether it is Brexit, humanity's reliance on fossil fuel, or the introduction of a basic income. Chapter 1 also highlighted that, according to Arendt, in modernity the challenge of finding new ways for humans to engage with reality precedes ethical theorising. I conclude that judgements on responsibility-for-complicity should attend to plurality, to gain into focus the common world as a prism through which we can understand the effects of complicity in injustice and the ways to address them.

At the time of her death, Arendt had hardly begun the book on judgement that was to form the final part of the trilogy on the life of the mind. Her conceptualisation of this faculty is therefore, possibly more than with any other concept, about its reception, i.e. about how scholars use her unfinished remarks to articulate what would have likely been her theory of judgement. Chapter 2 provides an outline of the developments in the debate on political judgement that followed Arendt. I map the debate by delineating two phases, the second being composed of no fewer than four projects. These projects offer important insights into aspects related to how humans judge politically: the contribution of the imagination, the affective and unconscious dimensions of being human, the role of storytelling, and of common sense.

My investigation does not seek to provide a direct contribution to the debates surrounding these concepts. Instead, their introduction helps move my overall argument on complicity forward in two important ways: firstly, a discussion of imagination, the affective and the unconscious, storytelling, and common sense, complements Arendt's path-breaking contribution on judgement and renders it more complex. In particular, judgement scholars articulate different ways in which judgement can gain a *critical* purchase on reality, without reliance on transcendent values and universal standards and without falling back into relativism. The commentators move further away from the Neo-Kantian concerns with agreement

and validity¹, and each project opens the space to discuss further, what the contributions of the judging person and their contexts are to a particular judgement.

Arendt judgement scholarship rejects the claim that we must choose between subjectivity and objectivity, situatedness and social criticism, and universalism and relativism. Commentators argue that any notion of objectivity necessarily arises out of the interplay between judging person and their context – as well as out of the interaction of a plurality of judges and actors – that demands further theorisation. To give an example, if we wish to tackle (the various forms of) homelessness, the challenge is not how we, people interested in fighting injustice and theorists, can ‘correctly’ judge homelessness according to some general standard. Instead, it is about finding ways of refining our sense of what homelessness is, who it affects, and how to prevent it. For this approach to judgement, we must concern ourselves with the existence of a common world that allows us to affirm and broaden our sense of homelessness, and this necessarily includes a better understanding of how the interplay between social context and judging capabilities shape the common world.

This brings me to the second important movement: each project builds on Arendt’s insights into pluralism and shows how it connects to another key dimension to judgement, the interrelationship between structure and agency from within which judgement emerges. In other words, they turn to the issue of social conditioning (and transformation) that underpins plurality. I use the term ‘dualism’ in the following to characterise this second dimension, for reasons that will become clear in the next chapter. An emphasis on the intersubjective capacities of judgement is no longer seen as enough to gain critical purchase on political issues. Instead, scholars seek to clarify the relationship between subjectivity and objectivity in judgement that frames the pluralist potential, by turning to radical imagination, emotions, the unconscious, storytelling, and the pre-discursive structuring of judgement.

¹ Contemporary political theory sought to overcome the difficulties of judgment in the context of increasingly pluralist liberal democracies. This led to a convergence of two dominant positions in political thought between the 1960s and 1990s. European Critical Theory, emerging from the Frankfurt School, overlapped with the tradition of Anglo-American Philosophical Liberalism, captured in Rawls’ theory of justice. They shared an increasing concern with finding an appropriate link between universal standards and public debate, without sacrificing moral universalism for mere public acceptance. However, this mistrust of unreasonable debate as foundation for justice norms prevented any full commitment to or completion of this hermeneutic turn. The consequence is that the ‘concept of judging is eliminated and the just enjoys a pyrrhic victory: freed from the limitations of the politically particular, it becomes politically futile’ (Azmanova, 2012: 120).

My interest in these debates is therefore an indirect one: I am interested in the questions they raise about structure and agency/ objectivity and subjectivity. The purpose of the next chapter will be the further articulation of this dimension – the interrelationship between the judge and their context – through the works of social theorist Margaret Archer. I then turn to how these two dimensions, dualism and pluralism, come together and help respond to the problem of judging responsibility and complicity in chapters 4 and 5.

2.1 The First Phase of the Debate on Reflective Judgement

The first response to Arendt's conception of judgement was to weigh the benefits of her idiosyncratic theory against what commentators considered to be significant limitations.² It is not my intention here to respond to their concerns directly. The initial reception of Arendt's unfinished theory tended to read Arendt through a Kantian lens, foregrounding validity and truth. This approach failed to fully capture the centrality of freedom and plurality in judgment that Arendt had in mind. Their insights nonetheless warrant a brief introduction, because they continue to shape the ongoing debates on Arendt's project that I address in this chapter.

From the perspective of the early commentators, Arendt can be seen to provide an important contribution to conceptualising political judgement. At the same time, these scholars were concerned that her idiosyncratic reading provides such a problematic reinterpretation of Kant that it is no longer supported by his insights and concepts. A transformation of his aesthetic judgement into a political one, so the argument goes, only leads to confusion about what her own position entails. The scholars claimed that, ultimately, this confusion severely undermines the potential of Arendt's innovative contribution to the debate.

One of the triggers of the first attempts at piecing together and evaluating Arendt's theory of judgement lies in Habermas' (1977) article on Arendt's communicative concept of power. The article created a particular, paradigmatic reading of Arendt.³ Habermas points to Arendt as a source for a revival of practical philosophy and especially to her account of communicative action. However, he criticises her for idealising the Greek polis in opposition to modern polities, which Arendt saw as pathologies of modernity. Habermas also identifies her as undermining the value of rational discourse.

Of particular concern to the first phase of commentators was Arendt's use of aesthetic judgements for politics and its detrimental effect on truth claims in politics. Arendt seemed to share Kant's concern with how a consensus secured through

² This first phase includes the works of Ronald Beiner, Seyla Benhabib, Richard Bernstein, Jürgen Habermas, and Peter Steinberger (Beiner, 1982, 1983; Beiner and Nedelsky, 2001; Benhabib, 1988, 1990; Bernstein, 1986; Habermas, 1977; Steinberger, 1990).

³ Arendt, following Habermas, became known for her humanist side and the emphasis on intersubjective communicative forms of action and power which are claimed to contribute to her being a modernist (Benhabib, 2003).

judgement can gain validity (Arendt, 2006a: 217). Kant's *Critique of Judgement* assumes that judgements of beauty, e.g. this rose is beautiful, are not simply statements of preferences of the kind 'I like wine'. Instead, these judgements entail an *a priori* premise of assent as they go beyond individual preferences (Kant, 2000: §22).⁴ Aesthetic judgements can thus gain a general validity. Yet, according to Kant, they cannot become universally valid, because the principle 'beauty' does not exhaustively describe whether a rose is beautiful or not, i.e. there is no universal rule to subsume the particular rose under. Arendt, in contrast to Kant, extended the limited validity of aesthetic claims to political judgement and emphasised furthermore its intersubjective, situated validity. This move led Ronald Beiner (1982: 136f.) and Habermas to claim that Arendt ultimately left behind a 'yawning abyss between knowledge and opinion' (Habermas, 1977: 23), because she did not wish for rational arguments to close that gap.

In parallel with this concern over Arendt's reading of Kant, interpreters also worried about Arendt's decreasing concern with public life. As Arendt emphasised the spectator in her later work, judgement became seemingly more retrospective and moral: it ironically 'now seems to be the faculty that comes into play when politics breaks down' (Bernstein, 1986: 233). The interpreters took issue with the increasingly historic, distant character of judgement, because Arendt at the same time continued to object to the transcendental arguments and immanence found in Kant's moral and political philosophy. What grounds the spectators' judgements, they asked, if it can no longer rely on Arendt's commitment to pluralism? As I suggested at the beginning of the section, this reading remains too focused on concerns with validity and truth. In reading Arendt through Kant's understanding of reflective judgement they miss the re-formulation of his theory towards plurality that I have outlined in chapter 1 and that has been clarified by a second phase of Arendt judgement scholarship.

2.1.1 Phase Two

A second phase, from the 1990s onwards, showed the virtues of Arendt's account contra these earlier criticisms and responded through various attempts at extending

⁴ In other words, in making a judgement that the rose is beautiful, I expect others to come to similar conclusions based on specific, shared circumstances, e.g. following a similar process of reflection.

her theory of judgement. Exegetes belonging to this phase reread Arendt's work, incorporated archival material and previously unpublished work, and even re-examined her theoretical sources – especially Aristotle, Heidegger, and Kant – to provide a more nuanced understanding of her contribution.⁵ From this literature emerges an emphasis on how judgement is a key capacity that is present throughout Arendt's thought of the 1940s to 70s.⁶ Arendt is read as purposefully defining judgement both from a political perspective and from within the life of the mind. Her theory gains its value precisely through the tension between the two, as they have to work together in order to maintain a strong political sphere.⁷ My reading in chapter 1 is indebted to this interpretation, which I find more attuned to Arendt's intentions, and additionally brought the connection between reality, plurality, and judgement to the fore.

The second phase also includes various projects aimed at the extension of Arendt's theory.⁸ For example, commentators like Zerilli (2012) attempt to show the value of liberating judgement from current concerns with validity in political theory. In place of this focus, they are concerned with what gives judgement the potential to be world-building and freedom-affirming. Others have turned to social theorists, notably Pierre Bourdieu, to substantiate or balance Arendt's focus on reflection in judgement (Azmanova, 2012; Kornprobst, 2011, 2014; Mihai, 2016b). A large part of the

⁵ This phase offers a wide scholarship in defence of Arendt's account of judgement, which includes Leora Bilsky (1996), Annelies Degryse (2011), David Marshall (2010), Waltraud Meints (2014), Remi Peeters (2009a, 2009b), Jonathan Schwartz (2016), and Linda Zerilli (2005b, 2012).

⁶ The coherence of all of Arendt's major works via her reflections on the mid-century political catastrophes is found already in Richard Bernstein (1996) and Margaret Canovan (1992). For the specific link between totalitarianism and Arendt's response through judgement, see Lisa Disch (1994).

⁷ Waltraud Meints' (2014) comprehensive analysis suggests, for example, that Arendt fruitfully upheld a double paradox in her account of judgement, which is present throughout her thought: Arendt anchored her thought in a philosophical tradition – that often rejected the value of political action and common sense – which she criticises and takes apart to develop her own liberated reflective judgement. In addition, Arendt's work attempts to understand the political events of the 20th century that often seem beyond comprehension. This approach allowed Arendt to develop numerous binaries throughout her work, binaries that gain their value precisely through their tensions, helping her to transcend traditional dichotomies, e.g. between praxis and theory, spectator and actor, science and common sense, opinion and truth, power and violence, action and thought.

⁸ This category contains scholarship more or less explicitly influenced by Arendt's theory, which does not necessarily seek to respond to the first phase. Beyond numerous articles, this category includes Albena Azmanova (2012), Alessandro Ferrara (1999, 2012, 2014), Bronwyn Leebaw (2011), Leslie Thiele (2006), Jonathan Schwartz (2016), Maša Mrovlje (2018) and Linda Zerilli (2016a).

scholarship has also explored specific concepts from Arendt's theory, especially the spectator's judgement, exemplarity, common sense, and storytelling to make sense of contemporary political issues. In what follows, I engage with four representative approaches that take forward Arendtian insights in ways relevant for my overall project.

Before I turn to these, one caveat: the ability to judge politically should not be romanticised. Robert Fine (2008) notes that judgement has become a philosopher's stone of Arendtian political theory. The sole focus on the mental activity obscures the various other aspects of her work. Some judgement scholars (Bourke and Geuss, 2009; Krause, 2008; Weidenfeld, 2011) instead choose to avoid Arendt's contribution altogether, generally arguing that the influence of Arendt's unfinished work can be a hindrance to moving the debate on (political) judgement further. I take these concerns seriously, but they are problematic insofar as they are shaped by the image of Arendt's theory that emerged from the first phase of scholarship. In contrast, I suggest that the various extensions and re-valorisations of Arendt's account can offer a suitable point of departure for current and future scholarship on judgement and democratic theory more generally.

In summary, this chapter has thus far identified two general phases to the debate on Arendt's theory of political judgement. Phase one emphasises problems with Arendt's reading of Kant and a move towards detached, non-political judgement in the later works of Hannah Arendt. Phase two responds through revalorisation, extension, and rejection of Arendt's contribution to the political judgement debate. The identified positions are not mutually exclusive and can only provide some indication of the multifaceted nature of the Arendtian political judgement debate. This thesis locates itself within the second phase and its emphasis on the fact that judgement played a continuous role in Arendt's thought. I follow Arendt in her creative combination of existential philosophy, Kantian, and Aristotelian influences and agree with those scholars who suggest that we give up on the quest of identifying an earlier and later Arendt.⁹ The following sections of this chapter explore four contributions to the second phase in more detail. I argue they provide crucial extensions to Arendt's theory of political judgement that turn the focus onto the complex interplay between judging person and context.

⁹ For such a close reading of Arendt on judgement, see David Marshall (2010).

2.2 The World-building Capacity of Imagination

For the first project that extends Arendt's theory of political judgement, I turn to Linda Zerilli, who, over the last two decades, has continuously built on Arendt's reflections about judgement.¹⁰ Zerilli substantiates our understanding of the pluralist dimension to judgement in at least three different ways: she refines the interpretation of Arendt's thought (Zerilli, 2005b, 2012), explores judgement's value for feminist theory (2005a, 2015), and draws on Wittgenstein in order to better capture what motivates humans to act (2016a, 2016b). Together these three projects enable her to articulate a comprehensive alternative to the Kantianism of earlier political judgement scholarship.

I highlight two movements in Zerilli's writing towards what she terms, following Cornelius Castoriadis, 'radical imagination' (2005b: 174, 2005a). Firstly, Zerilli helps move Arendt further away from elements of Kant's theorising on judgement that have undermined her pluralist project. Instead, she reads Arendt as concerned with the danger of logical reasoning in politics, which seeks to coerce and compel – rather than foster – agreement. A turn to Wittgenstein enables Zerilli to insist not only that Arendt was not focused on validity concerns, but also to reveal the problematic assumptions in rationalism and how they hinder the imaginative processes necessary for judgement. Secondly, Zerilli expands the conception of imagination found in Arendt, by highlighting imagination's ability to extend concepts beyond their original meaning.

Zerilli helps us understand more fully the freedom-affirming and world-building potential of judging politically that Arendt was after. At the same time, her reliance on the capacity to persuade and to imagine, also raises difficult questions about how context and judge can come together in ways that enable political judgement to affirm freedom and build a common world. This section outlines both the potential

¹⁰ Zerilli (2005b, 2012, 2016a) takes up Arendt's theory in a new context of 21st century's pluralist, multi-ethnic Western societies. Instead of an engagement with the collapse of moral principles in Germany and the modern break in tradition, she considers – in dialogue with public reason theorists – the difficulties arising from an increase in competing standards and claims in the public space. Rawls (1996: 54–61) summarised this challenge as 'the burdens of judgment' and he, for Zerilli, develops a conservative response, one that limits the perspectives and positions admissible to political debate. Drawing on Arendt she develops an alternative that emphasises critical judgement as a democratic, 'world-building practice' (Zerilli, 2012: 8), which ensures the possibility of politics, and therefore, of freedom. For recent discussions of her theory of judgement, see (Zerilli et al., 2018) and (Steinberger, 2018).

and limitations of Zerilli's work, in order to highlight the movement in judgement scholarship towards a concern with the interplay between judge and context alongside Arendt's pluralism.

My discussion starts with Zerilli's attempt to disentangle Arendt further from the Kantian position towards judgement, and what she terms the epistemological problem of the political judgement debate. Arendt, Zerilli reminds us, had made plurality 'the condition of, rather than the problem for, intersubjective validity'; she shifted the 'question of opinion formation and political judgment from the epistemological realm, where it concerns the application of concepts to particulars and the rational adjudication of knowledge/truth claims, to the political realm, where it concerns opinion formation and practices of freedom' (2005b: 166). Arendt however undermined her concern with plurality in theorising judgement, by holding on to the distinction between reflective and determinate judgement, which leads to two problematic implications. Firstly, Arendt upheld the possibility of pure determinate judgement, in the form of logic judgements, e.g. that two plus two must be four, which automatically compel us (Arendt, 1982: 72). Thus, only reflective judgement is for her truly political. Secondly, her adoption of aesthetic judgement for politics led to accusations that she left behind a yawning abyss between knowledge and opinion, and failed to account for how rational standards may help validate judgements and differentiate between good and bad judgements in a meaningful way. Both steps hide the crucial contribution Arendt provided in capturing the political qualities of judgement through a thicker conception of plurality. They formulate reflective judgement as an incomplete rational process that must rely on other means, i.e. a turn to the potential for deliberating with others, to ensure adequate judgement.

Building on Wittgenstein, Zerilli (2016b) questions whether distinguishing between purely determinate and purely reflective judgement is possible, by insisting on the necessarily aesthetic dimension to knowledge.¹¹ Wittgenstein offers, in Zerilli's reading, a way to break the stronghold of logic on judgement, by questioning why something must be a certain way, e.g. why two plus two must always lead to four. He helps shed light on what happens if we imagine that someone simply does not follow our logic, which we assume to be so intuitively reasonable. What instead

¹¹ Zerilli expands on this argument in relation to affect theory and recent psychological insights into judgement (2013, 2015).

seems to play a crucial role as to whether we follow a rule and whether it has a compelling, logical character, is its *acknowledgement*.¹²

Judgements of a particular gain their compelling character not from their cognitive compulsion, but from 'finding the right expression, one that I accept because it satisfies me' (2016b: 142). This means that all judgements, even more determinate ones, presuppose aesthetic values about what ought to be. Validity arises out of persuasion; that is, giving facts the appropriate, *satisfactory* meaning according to these values. To judge compellingly, Zerilli concludes, is possible because, and not despite, of the aesthetic character of judgement. Judgements do not require an adherence to narrow conceptions of truth and logic (Zerilli, 2016b: 130f.). A suitable (democratic) theory of political judgement should therefore leave behind the search for coercive rational standards, to support a practice of giving meaning to particulars through persuasion.¹³

The second contribution that I wish to highlight in Zerilli's work concerns her insistence on the freedom-affirming potential of imagination. Zerilli criticises Arendt for her failure to utilise imagination beyond its reproductive contribution (2005b: 163). In connection with *The Life of the Mind* and the spectator's judgement, I pointed out in chapter 1 how Arendt identified in the imagination a faculty that enables humans to make present what is absent, and to view an issue from different perspectives, thus transcending the limitations of subjectivity. Zerilli suggests that this interpretation of the activity of imagination is not sufficient to respond to 'the problem of the new' that Arendt brought to judging politically. The use of imagination in Arendt's thought does not help us understand how 'members of democratic communities, can affirm human freedom as a political reality in a world of objects and events whose causes and effects we can neither control nor predict with certainty' (Zerilli, 2005b: 162). For this project, a notion of imagination is needed that is not reproductive, but generative and spontaneous, and thus able to extend the reference of judgement beyond its original meaning (Zerilli, 2005b: 163). For Zerilli, radical imagination goes beyond this representative function, because it opens the

¹² Because logic *is* generally compelling – 'obvious' to humans, what seems to characterise these forms of determinate judgements is actually their unique ability to combine compellingness with a lack of reasons for it: four must be the answer.

¹³ The art of rhetoric thus gains in importance for judgement; persuasion – representing facts as satisfactorily meaningful to a person – and rhetoric become a legitimate part of opinion-formation.

public space to 'values that have not yet found expression in the sense of a determinate concept'; through imagination, humans 'hold to an imaginative extension of a concept beyond its ordinary use in cognitive judgments and affirm freedom' (2005b: 171). Judgement that exercises the imagination becomes for Zerilli the capacity to create new connections in the shared world and to help give them meaning without returning to an application of existing rules or given concepts. The spectators' judgement creates 'the *space* in which the objects of political judgement, the actor and actions themselves, can appear, and thus alter our sense of what belongs in the common world' (2005b: 179).

To illustrate the shift in focus on political judgement, Zerilli turns to Frederick Douglass' famous speech 'The Meaning of July Fourth for the Negro', from 1852, as exemplary political judgement at the boundaries of deliberative discourses. She shows how the aim of the speech is not an immanent critique of public reason, in the hope of conveying the rational character of anti-slavery argumentation. Instead, Douglass attempts to reveal the hypocrisy of claims to rationality, through various means of rhetoric, including sarcasm and irony. The aim is not to convince his audience by reference to shared beliefs, but to 'gain critical purchase on what each takes for granted' (Zerilli, 2012: 18). Our responsibility as theorists and listeners therefore cannot be to redeem Douglass' public unreason as public reason, but to acknowledge the political, transformative force of 'a form of speaking and judging that unsettles how we understand those principles and the apparent coherence of the "we" that denies its contingent and exclusionary character' (Zerilli, 2012: 19).

This introduction to Zerilli's argumentation gives us a sense of the position she seeks to adopt. Her work helps move Arendt and her insights into the pluralist dimension to judgement further away from a Kantian concern with validity and the subsumption of the particular under universals. Zerilli turns Beiner's and Habermas' 'yawning abyss' on its head: it is not the case that Arendt failed to account for the need for rational standards in politics because she turned to aesthetics. Instead, Beiner and Habermas neglected the necessarily aesthetic dimension to the functioning of rational standards. Zerilli's emphasis on the importance of persuasion also raises a number of difficult questions: what makes persuasion a tool that contributes to democracy rather than one that simply manipulates? Specifically, what can we say about the social practices from which persuasion emerges in order to formulate the relationship between judging person and community in positive

ways? How can we ensure that judgement helps affirm freedom and strengthens a community's sense of reality – without returning us to a concern with validity and epistemology? I show in chapter 3 that much more can and should be said along this dimension by engaging with the relationship between structure and agency.

Zerilli's work is attentive to the issue of social conditioning, including through her contribution to feminist debates. Zerilli challenges feminists' overwhelming concern with the 'subject question' (Zerilli, 2005a: 10) which fails to recognise the conception of political freedom found in acting together as an alternative to the freedom associated with free will and domination which feminists critique. Amongst others, Lois McNay, in turn, raises doubt about Zerilli's capacity to evade the problem of the 'subject question', which is considered to be pivotal to the issue of social conditioning. The 'emergence of the radically new is almost always mediated through and therefore constrained by, the confines of embodied existence and understanding'; a conception of politics that seeks to transcend these 'confines in order to intervene more creatively in the world' must account for 'their limiting effects' rather than dismissing the effects 'in favour of the postulation of an inchoate potentiality' (McNay, 2014: 16).¹⁴ The limitations are visible with regards to Zerilli's use of Douglass' speech as an illustrative example of political judgement: she seems to reduce reflective judgement to speech acts that target ways of thinking about the common world.

I share Zerilli's commitment to Arendt's thicker conception of plurality, which I take to be irreducible to the issue of subject formation, or social conditioning more generally. The challenge that arises out of my reconstruction of Zerilli's contribution, as I see it, is therefore how to uphold the human capacity for radical imagination and persuasion without falling back on an intellectualist account that obscures the embeddedness of imagination and persuasion in the interrelationship between structure and agency, which, following Archer, I call dualism. The dualism of political judgement, put simply, must work together with, rather than come at the cost of, the pluralism identified in chapter 1.

¹⁴ McNay largely formulates the contribution of social conditioning in negative terms, 'tempering' the potentiality identified in radical imagination. I characterise this kind of approach to the interplay between structure, agency, and plurality as reductive and pertaining to a problematic framework which Archer terms 'duality', to be discussed in chapter 3 and 4.

In summary, Zerilli follows Arendt in focusing on the practice of freedom in judgement, but she also extends her understanding of imagination and works with Wittgenstein to emphasise that persuasion, and not narrow conceptions of rationality, is central to its functioning. Radical imagination contributes to the pluralist project by helping a political community extend the shared meaning beyond what is known and knowable. Both persuasion and imagination, as I have shown, also open the space to discuss further the issue of social conditioning that inevitably confronts us following a departure from a search for transcendental validity. The issue gains in concreteness over the following sections.

2.3 The Affective and Unconscious Layers to Judgement

My discussion turns to a second project aimed at extending Arendt's conception of judgement. I engage with Arendt scholars who have contributed to a broad movement in academia that seeks to capture the role of the unconscious and the affective layers to how humans judge politically. This project, too, turns our attention further towards the second dimension to judgement, the processes of social conditioning from within which judgement emerges, by challenging our views on how humans respond to their environment. The movement is made further visible by my (Arendtian) responses to a problematic tendency in political theory to replace an emphasis on rationality with an embrace of the unconscious and affective. The turn away from deliberation ultimately retains the stark distinction between cognitive and non-cognitive processes that animates rationalism and fails to give full credence to the complexity of judging practices. I show throughout the coming chapters that such a strategy misconstrues judgement in both its dualism and pluralism.¹⁵

Judgement's affective and unconscious dimensions gain in importance following theorists' move away from determinate conceptions of political judgement, towards an emphasis on its creative world-building potential. The discussion of imagination and persuasion in the last section made it clear that a focus on rationality is simply not enough for the cultivation of good judgement. Indeed, to put it starkly, it is the aesthetic as well as the non-cognitive elements which help give rational standards their potential for agreement, by making them seem satisfactory and reasonable to us, without requiring much deliberation.

Zerilli has added insights into the non-conscious and affective layers to judgement, as have other political theorists (Bennett, 2009; Connolly, 2002; Gunnell, 2007, 2013; Zerilli, 2015). Since the 1950s, the conception of judgement has also increasingly been an object of interdisciplinary, psychological research (Hibbing et al., 2014; Thiele, 2006: 60).¹⁶ Thiele's *Heart of Judgement* (2006) provides one of

¹⁵ The strategy takes many different forms, but is held together by an inability or unwillingness to account for the interpenetration *and* distinct qualities of the social, the deliberative, and the unconscious. I will refine my critique of this problem in chapter 3 through the distinction between duality and dualism.

¹⁶ The classic treatment of political judgement and the emergent insights from psychology seldom build one comprehensive theory of judgement. The political philosophy engagement with psychological literature, e.g. Judith Shklar's (1990: 27) adoption of psychological insights into judgement in the context of injustice, as yet remain too sporadic. The psychological literature has retained a positivist focus, i.e. a concern with observable or

the first systematic accounts of the un-/sub-/non-/pre-conscious and affective contributions to human judgement that engages critically with both philosophical – including Arendt – and psychological literature on decision making. His book serves as one of the key starting points for introducing this difficult and underdeveloped side to the Arendt judgement scholarship.¹⁷ I turn first to the connection between judgement and the unconscious, before moving in the following section to the affective and emotional contributions to judging.

2.3.1 Judgment and the Unconscious

The role of the non-/sub-/unconscious in the process of judging politically remains heavily contested. One explanation for this is that judgement provides an unusual case of belief formation. It is unusual, because we can only speak of judgement if it is made intentionally, has arisen out of at least some degree of reflection, and builds on some form of evidence. At the same time, judgements have drag effects similar to perception, which elude awareness. As Victoria McGeer and Philip Pettit succinctly put it, judgements are ‘subject to silent forces that are as powerful and unrelenting as gravity and that curve the space of reason in ways that is difficult for us to detect’ (McGeer and Pettit, 2009: 64). Human beings are therefore not by nature ‘the enlightened masters of where our judgement goes; having been selected for survival, not for insight, our natural instinct is a wayward ally in the struggle for truth’ (2009: 65). The source of many of the disagreements about conceptualising judgement, as well as the motivation for the rationalist projects that turn to transcendental and logical reasoning to strengthen the ‘intentional side’ to judgement, can be traced back to this inherent tension between intentionality and ‘drag effects’ in judgement.

With this initial, important observation in place, my discussion turns to the psychological literature on judgement, zooming in on human decision-making. Psychology and neuroscience have provided various insights into the role of the non-conscious in judgement. Historically, psychology dealt with judgements through decision theory, which reduced judgements to models of efficient information

measurable behaviour, which cannot capture the complexity of judgement discussed in this thesis.

¹⁷ Thiele’s work moves further away from Arendt than does Zerilli, which is likely a consequence of Arendt’s difficult relation to the topics of the unconscious and emotional.

processing and probabilistic reasoning (cf. Thiele, 2006: 60). This mind-as-machine approach is problematic for it invites an infinite regress problem: the reasons for judging something in a certain way presuppose reasons for these being the right reasons, which in turn presuppose reasons and so on ad infinitum. Human beings are not able to continuously engage in this kind of exhaustive reasoning prior to choosing an appropriate action. Such 'hyper-rationality' (2006: 63) would undermine optimum performance.

Contemporary decision theory has instead shown that to judge successfully, human beings rely on many mechanisms that help avoid the infinite regress of exhaustive reasoning.¹⁸ These mechanisms describe mental short cuts known as heuristics.¹⁹ They provide quick 'dirty' judgement, but may also lead to systematic errors, in which case the mental short cuts are defined as biases (Thiele, 2006: 63). Biases are not inherently bad or wrong, keeping us from fulfilling an ideal of enlightened beings. Instead, while attempts to decrease common biases are important, mental shortcuts are indispensable to navigating efficiently and effectively our complex world (2006: 67f.).²⁰

These neuroscientific and psychological insights gain in importance for the present investigation into responses to Arendt's theory of judgement, with the emergence of a broad movement that seeks to introduce the evidence on the non-conscious into political theory. The various positions on 'neuropolitics' (Connolly, 2002) come with above all a '*shared anti-intentionalism*' (Leys, 2011: 443).²¹ As a consequence, in recent years, this extensive and insightful literature has provoked a number of

¹⁸ Research has explored how human beings in making judgements focus on, for example, verbatim instead of gist information, rely on hot cognition (sub-conscious emotional reaction to information), and respond to affective cues (Clore and Huntsinger, 2007; Corbin et al., 2015; Cornwell et al., 2015; Hibbing et al., 2014).

¹⁹ Modern decision science has identified many heuristics, including the sunk cost effect (past investments encourage non-beneficial future investments), the rationalization effect (only reasons supportive of pre-judgements considered), and the self-confirmation effect (focus on confirming opinions).

²⁰ To give an example, ethnic stereotyping increases with decrease of individual's attention. Knowledge of these effects cannot prevent misjudgements fully, as these effects are very robust, and often lead to overestimating one's decision ability.

²¹ Their aim was not only to deny the hold of logic and reason on political theory, but also to move beyond the focus on language and deconstruction of post-structuralism, particularly in cultural theory. In its place, they emphasise the layered character of political judgement and argue that deliberative democratic theories have not been able to account for the visceral dimensions to political action and decision making (Connolly, 2002).

cautious voices, including Zerilli, that challenge the underlying empirical evidence and ideological commitments.²² The criticisms highlight how judgement scholarship is entangled in a disagreement over what an appropriate conceptualisation of the relationship between the intentional and non-conscious contributions to judgement might look like that *enriches*, rather than come at the cost of, a commitment to pluralism.

First of all, it is worth emphasising that critics of the embrace of specific neuroscientific evidence in political theory do not deny 'that many bodily (and mental) processes take place subliminally, below the threshold of awareness. Who would dream of doubting that they do?' (Leys, 2011: 456). Instead, they challenge the impression that to accept the importance of habituation in the form of sub-threshold automatic processes, e.g. the movement of fingers to play a piano, must necessarily entail that we hold on to the idealisation of the mind as a disembodied consciousness. Such a move comes too easily with a rejection of the role of the mind altogether, which opens up the space for a 'victory' of the unconscious in politics and political theory. It raises serious concerns in relation to political judgement at a theoretical and practical level.

Theoretically, scholars including Zerilli (2013), challenge the fruitfulness of approaching political problems through a focus on different brain functions. Such a focus inevitably misconstrues socio-political phenomena in their complex inter-subjective character *and* the import of psychology/science. Nudging and other popular approaches to human behaviour seek to solve socio-political issues by bypassing cognitive processes. They may seem particularly powerful as they target the immediate reactions of humans and have a direct impact on mass behaviour, but they consistently ignore the multi-layered character of social processes. Practically, the all too enthusiastic turn to the visceral, embodied contributions to decision making comes with significant dangers for politics. The embrace of neuroscience in political theory is a reaction to right wing strategies of tapping into xeno- and homophobic, sexist and other problematic sentiments in Western democracies at the sub-threshold, i.e. visceral, level. In response, leftist politics is ultimately encouraged to open the doors to a race to the bottom of (unpredictable)

²² John Gunnell (2013), for example, challenges the insights provided by the influential neuroscientist Antonio Damasio on which much of the political theory use of psychological evidence is based.

manipulation schemes. This strategy turns critical judgement into an epiphenomenon, an irrelevant afterthought of non-conscious processes.²³ Both at a theoretical and practical level of politics, there is thus a problematic tendency to give up too easily on the potential of public spheres and on the difficult project of freeing politics from intellectualist approaches to deliberative democracy (cf. Livingston, 2012). The non-conscious contributions to judgements play an important role *as a part of* the processes of making sense of social reality; the relationship between deliberation and the visceral in judgement is not in a zero-sum game.

Alex Livingston (2012) powerfully illustrates this point, by using the example of the changing public attitude to smoking. The increasingly widespread visceral reaction of disgust in connection with smoking must be thought of in the context of a longstanding debate and enduring efforts to bring home the negative impact of smoking cigarettes on humans. The changing engagement with smoking can neither be reduced to the conclusions of abstract reasoning that smoking is morally wrong or unhealthy, nor is it the mere effect of visceral tools to 'train' humans to give up on their bad smoking habits. Instead, socio-political practices offer the basis for critical reflection as a separate source of transformation and meaning, irreducible to these forms of manipulation, and it is their complex interplay that has proven key in changing the public attitude towards smoking.

Without evaluating the extent to which the critique of the neuro-political approach is justified, what might we take from this investigation into the unconscious layers to judgement? With Thiele, we can state positively that poor judgements are poor because they fail to exploit the various human capacities usually involved in judgement at its best. Good judgements put a 'panoply of deliberative and intuitive faculties to work in the perception and appraisal of multi-faceted problems' (Thiele, 2006: 152). After all, moral judgements are for most people 'a product of intuitions that have been shaped through active participation in socio-cultural environments, and occasionally refined by propositional discussions' (2006: 136). Judgement is neither reducible to rationality, retrospectively fully reconstructed by it, nor is judgement reducible to a mere unconscious bias.²⁴ In terms of the approach I am

²³ An uncritical embrace of neuro-scientific research, Zerilli suggests, reveals a questionable belief in scientism as the arbiter of political decision making.

²⁴ Reason gains in importance for judgements when someone's intuitions clash, leaving the human to reflect on which intuition to follow. Furthermore, the articulation of judgements in

developing in this thesis, judgement theories must account for unconscious contributions to our 'making sense of reality' that are part of complex socio-political processes and practices and that cannot easily be disentangled from them.

2.3.2 Judgment and the Affective

Following on from the discussion of the non-conscious contributions to judging, I now turn to the interrelated and equally hotly debated issue of the affective dimension to judgement. Since the 1990s scholars across the humanities, psychology, and the social sciences, build on the work of Henri Bergson, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, William James, Brian Massumi, Baruch Spinoza, and Alfred North Whitehead to challenge the belief in rational progress, that is, in enlightened reason replacing 'irrational' emotions. They 'hesitate to conceptualize emotion and rationality as different beasts entirely, and they hesitate even more to map these faculties onto different categories of people (masses vs. elites, western vs. non-western publics, etc.)' (Heins, 2007: 715f.; see also Bickford, 2011; Clore and Huntsinger, 2007; Clough and Halley, 2007; Clough, 2009; Protevi, 2009). The scholars reject the privileged position that is given to cognitive knowledge, or *knowing that*, when describing the relationship between humans and their world. Indeed, emotions are often given the primary role as providing the necessary motivation for moral behaviour – the cognitive knowing is embedded in the embodied *knowing how*.

In contemporary political theory, the foundation of the current debate on emotions for judgement lies in Neo-Kantian reason, which displaces emotions, as expressed in the thought of Habermas and Rawls (cf. Bickford, 2011; Krause, 2008; Liljeström, 2016).²⁵ These problems have resulted in the postulation of a wide variety of alternatives to rationalism, from virtue theory and the communitarian critique of Rawls, care ethics and Martha Nussbaum's work on political emotions, to various

language leads to retrospective justification of one's motivation in rational terms (which therefore may differ significantly from the actual judgement process).

²⁵ Rationalists of this category tend to subordinate affect to a conception of reason as immune to the implications of actual sentiments prevalent in a society. While these accounts may accept the importance of emotions as motivating force, they wish to downplay affect's role in their thought to present people as autonomous, rational, and with a strong sense of justice. In doing so their approach fails to account for emotions' imbrication with reason.

Humean approaches.²⁶ The emergence of an affective turn has at times reproduced the traditional dichotomy between emotions and reason by overemphasising the embodied, non-cognitive nature of emotions (Zerilli, 2015, 2016a).²⁷

The tendency becomes visible when we turn to the definitions of the interrelated phenomena affect, emotions, sentiments, and feelings²⁸. Take the definition of affect, which is generally used as a concept to describe the ‘bodily capacities to affect and be affected’ (Clough and Halley, 2007: 2).²⁹ In affect theory, it is the name given to ‘those forces – visceral forces beneath, alongside, or generally *other than* conscious knowing, vital forces insisting beyond emotion’, and the ‘persistent proof of a body’s never less than ongoing immersion in and among the world’s obstinacies and rhythms, its refusals as much as its invitations’ (Gregg and Seigworth, 2009: 1). In contrast, the concept of emotion captures an at least ‘minimally interpretive experience whose physiological aspect is *affect*’ (Terada, 2003: 4).³⁰ The description of affect in these terms holds onto a problematic dichotomy between the conscious ‘signifying (“emotional” and intellectual) processes held to be captive to the fixity of received meanings and categories’ and, on the other hand, the ‘non-conscious affective processes of intensity held to be autonomous from signification’ (Leys, 2011: 450).

²⁶ Care ethics (Gilligan, 1982) provides a corrective to rationalism, adding to the dispassionate moral judgement of rationalist theories of justice, a feeling of care for others, emerging from the private sphere, which provides important additional knowledge for the right action. In philosophy, Martha Nussbaum continues to be central for highlighting the crucial role emotions may play in politics (Nussbaum, 2013). A fear of relativism means that she reintroduces rationalist tendencies into her affective theory (cf, Krause, 2008: 59ff.). Emotions ‘thus appear conveniently amenable to political reforms’ (Degerman, 2016: 17). Krause (2008) also explores in detail the Humean, sentimentalist contribution on emotions.

²⁷ Zerilli suggests that far ‘from the radical departure from modern philosophical accounts of human action and judgement that its advocates often claim it to be, affect theory can be read as another chapter in a familiar debate about the relationship between conceptual and nonconceptual modes of orientation to the world’ (2016a: 240).

²⁸ Feeling may provide a common term referring to affect and emotion, as the sensation that is personal and biographical, e.g. I feel pain, where emotions are social and affect is to some extent pre-personal (Shouse, 2005). An emphasis on affect’s pre-personal qualities does not mean that affects are not mediated through the various regimes ordering our body and everyday lives (Grossberg, 2009: 316).

²⁹ Affect is further defined as the ‘prepersonal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation or diminution in that body’s capacity to act’ (Massumi, 1987: xvi).

³⁰ Emotions can be read as presupposing ‘beliefs, judgments, and desires, which are partially the product of a social environment. The object of an emotion is made up of instigation, a target, and an objective’ (Mihai, 2016a: 63).

I have already addressed the problems with this strategy in relation to the unconscious and will not repeat them here. This section also does not seek the comprehensive evaluation of the various stands of the affective turn and its main concerns with the body and emotions. Instead, I take up the crucial cue that emerges from their embrace of a more sustained engagement with how humans really make judgements. I put forward assumptions that add to the insights by Thiele and Zerilli on the unconscious and maintain the balance between reason and affect.

Firstly, emotions are affective states and to some extent conscious feelings that motivate humans to judge their context. Emotions provide a commentary on circumstances that helps prioritise information and supports appropriate reaction. Without these affective contributions, rational judgement would have no direction, no interests to judge in the first place – it would become a world-less judgement. Affect ‘is what sticks, or what sustains or preserves the connection between ideas, values, and objects’: to be affected *is* ‘to evaluate that thing. Evaluations are expressed in how bodies turn toward things’ (Ahmed, 2009: 29, 31). At the same time, emotions can leave humans in a state that makes them vulnerable to prejudices and to jumping to conclusions. Indeed, as shown in countless studies, emotions are very easily manipulated (Thiele, 2006: 170). To strengthen good judgement therefore requires ‘acknowledging, exploring, cultivating, and integrating affect’ (Thiele, 2006: 199) without neglecting its imbrication with reason. It means to identify emotions not merely as a necessary, albeit unwanted part of human life, but as an important pre-condition for good judgement.

Secondly, emotions can distort judgements and the perspectives they provide on a shared world. They require awareness of their potentially negative effects, rather than a naïve support of affect against rationalism. Arendt is often noted for her emphasis on the negative effects that publicly expressed emotions can have on politics.³¹ One of the recent studies of Arendt on emotion concludes that Arendt

³¹ Particularly her book *On Revolution* provides a clear separation of a political sphere, with its abstract ideals of ‘greatness’, ‘honour’, and ‘dignity’, from sentiments, especially collective emotions. She rejected the corruption of solidarity by interpersonal, modern pity, with its incorporation of primarily social concerns, e.g. poverty (Arendt, 2006c: 88). Collective emotions are problematic insofar as they group together individual misfortunes and relate these to abstract ideal groups – ‘the poor’ – that political action by default fails to respond to because of their vague character (Arendt, 2006c: 90). Whereas compassion for Arendt provides the foundation for individual reaction to needs experienced in immediate encounters, pity offers a ‘falsely idealistic, deliberately engineered emotion that reproduces itself further through the medium of public imagination’ (Heins, 2007: 723).

identified in modernity a democracy threatened by 'all too inflated moral emotions, while the appropriate technical and organizational means required for practical assistance are lacking' (Heins, 2007: 724). To acknowledge this danger is not to revert back to rationalism as an attempt to repress and ignore emotions, which leaves democracy dangerously unprotected against their undemocratic expression (Mihai, 2014: 31). It is also not to argue that judgements of specific groups of people are more emotional – and therefore worse.

Thirdly, a concern with the affective and emotional elements to judgement must remain tied to the overarching project that arises from the pluralist dimension to judgement, in particular a concern with reality. I discussed in chapter 1 that Arendt's ethic of reality was often received critically; part of this reception goes back to claims of a lack of sensitivity to the emotional and affective dimensions to political action.³² Arendt scholars dispute this reading: they emphasise for example that if 'we take [...] heartlessness and coldness as mere quirks of personality, we deprive ourselves of alternatives to intimacy and empathy' (Degerman, 2016: 6f.). Judgements attentive to emotions need to be part of a form of empathetic, intersubjective impartiality instead of a 'passionless objectivity' (Thiele, 2006: 186). This impartiality is not a form of sympathy, a coming 'face-to-face with the Other', but the project of coming 'face-to-face with reality in the presence of others' (2006: 88).³³

In summary, my analysis of a second project that extends Arendt's theory of reflective judgement highlighted the need to account for the non-conscious and affective layers to judgement. The challenge, however, is how to find a position in-between the rationalist and the affective paradigm, both of which tend to uphold a problematic dichotomy between the affective, non-conscious processes and cognitive reasoning. Accounts of judgement, informed by insights into imagination and the unconscious and the affective, must become more attuned to the non-deliberative contributions to judgements; the affirmation of a non-intellectualist approach to judgement, in turn, requires awareness of how these unconscious and

³² As recent research on the role of emotions in Arendt's thought emphasises, this reading relies too much on a narrow, selective reading of her work (Degerman, 2016; Heins, 2007; Nelson, 2006).

³³ This alternative to sympathy is important in a 'world burdened by claims that subjective preferences are the final word'; relativism suggests 'epistemologically and ethically isolated subjects. In contrast, the practical judge lives in a multi-dimensional, shared world' (2006: 278).

affective contributions intertwine with the particular demands of the pluralist dimension to judgement. Arendt judgement scholars, in their endeavour to be attentive to both the potential of pluralism and the contribution of the affective and unconscious, thus open the space to develop a more suitable account of social conditioning that can illuminate pluralist practices.

2.4 The Situated Impartiality of Storytelling

The third direction in which Arendt's theorising on judgment has been fruitfully extended, is the relationship between judgement and storytelling. Chapter 1 discussed that the Arendtian practice of action and judgement together form an activity of world disclosure that constitutes telling a story and giving it meaning. In light of the importance of storytelling in Arendt's thought, the practice has attracted much attention in subsequent scholarship. Of particular interest has been the capacity of stories to give meaning to particular events and appearances without reducing the meaning to the details of that event and appearance. Stories can potentially convey a reflective judgement on behalf of the storyteller, and encourage those receiving the story to judge politically – that is, to enlarge their perspective on reality by engaging with different perspectives on a shared issue and, in so doing, to build new common meaning.

This section builds on scholars of Arendtian storytelling, Lisa Disch, Maria Pía Lara, and Jade Schiff, to argue that storytelling becomes an important means to capture human experiences of reality in new, meaningful ways. In particular, I highlight that these commentators extend Arendt's insight on the pluralist dimension to judgement by pointing out that storytelling can be critical and disclosive, but also potentially obscuring. The scholarship agrees that Arendt continues to be informative on the topic of storytelling, despite her unsystematic reflections on the practice. They also conclude that Arendt has insufficiently shed light on criteria for adjudicating between stories, as well as on the connection between stories and socio-political practices (Stone-Mediatore, 2000: 95).

Arendt scholars on storytelling have engaged with the practice in a variety of different contexts. Each setting comes with new insights, but also reproduces the central movement from pluralism towards the dualist dimension to judgement. To evaluate the potential that Arendt's thought offers for debates on narrativity, Disch (1994) situated Arendt's innovative approach to storytelling and judgement in the context of the postmodernism-modernism divide. She searches for an alternative to the two sides, which rejects the Archimedean impartiality without either falling for dogmatism, attributed to modernism, or scepticism, identified in postmodernism.

For Disch, Arendt's most provocative contribution is her notion of 'visiting', which proposes to combine impartiality and situated interestedness by looking at an issue from different perspectives. Visiting involves 'imagining the story of an event from a

plurality of contesting positions not to reconcile them in a general statement of principle but to arrive at a public interpretation of the event's meaning. Such a judgement is only provisional, and defending it does not involve proving it is right' (1994: 208). Storytelling departs from the 'premise that it is precisely because they [stories] call for interpretation – that they cannot be taken literally' (1994: 9). Pluralist stories help capture 'the ambiguities of a social reality that is never linear but many-sided and multidimensional' (1994: 9). Storytelling thus encapsulates a form of judgement that accepts that its content is not self-evident and conclusive, and refrains 'from the rhetorical moves that would give one's position the appearance of unquestionability' (1994: 4). Visiting, or representative thought, proposes to find a middle ground between an embrace of telling the stories of the marginalised, who are said to provide particularly 'objective' insights (fundamental to modernist literature) and the absolute rejection of any form of objectivity in storytelling (defended by postmodernists) by turning to public engagement with perspectives.³⁴

The extension of Arendt's thought on storytelling to the modernism-postmodernism debate also reveals the limitations of a focus on plurality for judgement and storytelling. Disch concludes that Arendt remained insufficiently clear on how storytelling can be both situated and maintain sufficient critical potential. Arendt cannot answer what for Disch are the fundamental questions surrounding the need for storytelling: how 'to find a way to speak critically from experience without the dogmatic parochialism that asserts *my* experience as an unquestionable ground of *my* authority'? And, how to 'hold various claims to experience open to question without the reluctant scepticism that postpones decision making to the point where it becomes politically paralysing' (1994: 209)? These are the kind of questions that cannot be answered through a focus on plurality alone, but require the theorisation of a second dimension that responds directly to the situated character of judgement.

The second Arendtian scholar working on storytelling, Maria Pia Lara (1998, 2007) explores the potential of narratives in the context of past injustice, evil, and the

³⁴ The modernist position is concerned with legitimacy gained through rational discourse. While its proponents acknowledge the failures of Enlightenment, they nonetheless continue to hold on to the central belief in the possibility of progress. They accommodate the limits of the main narratives in society that become too easily instruments of power and domination, and turn instead to the critical potential found in the stories told that capture marginalised voices. Postmodernism opposes this perspective through a radical scepticism towards collective agreement. Its exegetes emphasise storytelling's capacity to reveal the constructed character of any claims in society and finds emancipatory potential in fragmentation and discontinuity (Disch, 1994: 9).

marginalised role of women in society. The third context is of particular interest to the argument put forward in this chapter.³⁵ In connection with Arendt's discussion of Rahel Varnhagen, Lara considers the contribution of feminist narratives in revealing 'the concrete nature of personal struggles' (1998: 46) of women in modernity. Narratives play a constitutive role in relation to subjectivities and shape how we become moral agents. The telling of stories, notably by writers such as Jane Austen, can help women gain knowledge about their identities and position in society, which, in turn, enables them to rewrite the narratives of their own identity, and of justice and equality in society. Narrative 'identities are achievements, they are guided by a cognitive role – a "praxis-oriented" discernment and understanding of the agents of action in becoming selves through narrative clarification and grasping for consistence in one's own life' (1998: 71).³⁶ In short, Lara reflects on how women like Arendt, Simone de Beauvoir, or Jane Austen, used aesthetics to tell stories that help rewrite identity claims.

Lara draws on Habermas to identify in storytelling an illocutionary force, i.e. the capacity to enable mutual understanding. By "recovering" the role women played in the past, by taking seriously the way they conceived their lives as struggles for self-clarification, contemporary narratives gain the "illocutionary force" not only to increase women's self-esteem, but to alter the conception of who women are' (1998: 77).³⁷ Lara reads storytelling as 'the articulate social weaving of memories, the recovery of fragments of the past, the exercise of collective judgment, the duty to "go against the grain" and promote, with the retelling, a performative frame for a "new beginning"' (1998: 40). She offers an Arendtian reading of storytelling that sees

³⁵ Lara insists that through storytelling that constitutes reflective judgement, a community can reshape the standards with which to describe evil, and, together, can come to terms with what has happened. She argues that, in order for narratives to teach us something about evil, wrongdoing and cruelty, they must combine their aesthetic character with intersubjective standards of moral judgment (2007: 79). The function of narratives entails not only the reshaping of identity claims, but also a learning from catastrophes, for, 'those concerned with our past catastrophes [...] grasp that actions of human cruelty entail an open ended process' (2007: 87). Thinking and judgement thus become not only "prophylactic faculties" preventing the evil of thoughtlessness Arendt described in relation to Eichmann. They contribute to the continuous process of seeking to understand past evil and establish 'normative criteria for new courses of action' (2007: 50).

³⁶ Contemporary feminist narratives additionally rewrite the identities told through Austen's stories, to re-shape the past and project a different sense of equality and democracy into the future.

³⁷ Arendt thus provides an important starting point for feminist narratives, despite her difficult relationship with feminism. For an overview of feminist scholarship on storytelling see Shari Stone-Mediatore (2016).

the past not as a fixed background for political action but as central to it: the continuous re-figuration of the past through stories gives meaning to the present. Through 'memory and recollection, narratives reorder past injustices and envision the possibility of a new start through the powers of judgment' (Lara, 1998: 36).

Lastly, Schiff (2014) considers storytelling in relation to the failure of affluent societies to respond to global poverty and in relation to Arendt's insights into thoughtlessness, Sartre's bad faith, and Bourdieu's misrecognition (2014: 10). Her aim is to elaborate on the role that stories play in how the privileged cultivate responsiveness towards suffering.³⁸ She identifies an underestimation of the resilience of the dispositions of thoughtlessness, bad faith, and misrecognition, which curb our ability for responsiveness by engendering stories that obscure human's capacity to transform systemic injustice. Her work helps us question any uncritical enthusiasm in relation to situated impartiality and illocutionary force. Her work denies any desire for an easy solution achieved through the one-sided search for the critical potential of narratives. Instead, she highlights how stories can both obscure and illuminate suffering, depending on their production and reception. In light of this dual contribution of stories, Arendt failed to ask a crucial question, why we choose to tell stories that obscure our ability and responsibility for transforming injustice (Schiff, 2014: 23). Awareness of the dispositions that encourage us to tell obscuring stories – that facilitate our incapacity to think, our choice to lie to ourselves, and our forgetfulness of the contingency of social formations – is a pre-condition for an affirmative theory of human responsiveness. Only following such a step, i.e. the investigation into the issue of social conditioning, can we provide a rounded conception of reflective judgement in which storytelling can prove invaluable as creative, world-building capacity, as opposed to the facilitating role in relation to practices of complicity with systemic injustice.

I conclude that scholars who extend Arendt's writing on storytelling hold on to her commitment to the pluralist dimension to politics and judgement. They also challenge Arendt with regards to her lack of clarity on the issue of how judgements can be impartial and critical, illuminating or potentially obscuring. The hope that Schiff, Lara, and Disch seem to share is that, through the turn to 'situatedness', we can begin to understand why certain narratives can gain situated impartiality, transform identity claims and inequality, and cultivate responsiveness. The third

³⁸ I discuss her account in more detail in chapter 4 on an ethics of responsiveness.

project thus aligns with the first and second in combining the pluralism to judgement with questions of social conditioning that are not merely understood as obstacles and constraints on a pluralist politics, but give it further substance.

2.5 The Pre-Discursive Structuring of Judgement

The three projects analysed thus far, offer different, invaluable responses to the question of how to overcome the coercive force attributed to rational validity claims in politics. Together, they shed light on an affective and viscerally informed judgement that tells stories and imaginatively creates new meaning, affirms freedom, and continuously rebuilds our common world. This section concludes my reconstruction of responses to Arendt's thought by tracing two influential attempts to refine the conception of common and community sense. Alessandro Ferrara's extensive work on exemplary judgement contributes to a turn towards reflective judgement in contemporary political theory, by focusing on standards of human flourishing in the hope of saving a Rawlsian political liberalism. Albenaz Azmanova builds on Arendt's reflective judgement and seeks to establish a critical theoretical position freed from Habermas' transcendental turn towards Kantian moral universalism. Again, these thinkers acknowledge that a concern with the pluralist dimension to judgement must be supplemented with an adequate engagement with the difficult issue of social conditioning.

Ferrara (1999, 2012, 2014) seeks to expand Rawls' political liberalism through the reflective judgement turn in political theory. He supports a form of 'oriented reflective judgement' (Ferrara, 2012: 40) guided by the 'force of *what is as it should be* or the force of the *example*' (2012: 2f.). The cogency of exemplars is unlike the cogency of laws or principles in that it is 'entirely self-referential, immanent to the subject matter' (2012: 21). This kind of exemplarity is familiar from great works of art whose quality is irreducible to universal standards of beauty.

The challenge that Ferrara identifies is how this exemplarity can move beyond its cultural origins, without falling back on traditional forms of foundationalism. In response, Ferrara combines a focus on exemplary validity with a thick conception of common sense which grounds authenticity. He describes authenticity as the enduring fusion of norms and facts that is directed towards the 'concrete universal' (Ferrara, 2012: 40) of human flourishing; judgements are exemplary insofar as they expand and realise 'our' sense of what constitutes a flourishing life. Ferrara's work also proposes criteria by which to judge whether a person's life is flourishing:

coherence, vitality, depth, and maturity (Ferrara, 2012: 3, 32).³⁹ These standards are situated and can change over time. They find their expression in a shared and universally held sense of whether one's own life is stagnating or flourishing.

The concern that Ferrara's important contribution to debates on common sense and exemplarity raises is that he remains too closely connected to the project of seeking standards of validity outside the public sphere. A commitment to a 'pre-social realm of shared intuitions' means that his pre-discursive structuring of judgement understates 'the problem of entrenched social division and deep difference' and thus under-theorises 'the antagonism and conflict that these may produce in political interaction' (McNay, 2018: 12). Azmanova's work can be seen as responding to this challenge. She focuses our attention on 'the encoding of structurally produced injustice into the phronetic – experience-based – structure of public reason and the way these codes are activated in the course of argumentation and judgement' (2012: 179). Azmanova agrees that these sources of injustice, 'structural dynamics of social (re)production' and the 'social origins of identity stratification' (2012: 179), have been neglected by public reason theorists due to their particular concern with idealising assumptions that make attentiveness to social context unnecessary.

Azmanova takes Arendt's conception of judgement and of common sense as a starting point for articulating the structural encoding of judgement. She gains from Arendt that political judgement is intersubjectively and pre-discursively patterned: the spectator's judgement is made in reference to a plurality of spectators who give meaning to events. Judgement is shaped by this plurality of perspectives independently of the spectators' actual communication of their judgements. The middle ground that Arendt provides between particular and universal, in the form of the intersubjective general, is thus inherently structured by social practices. However, Arendt's account is ill-equipped for fully laying bare this social coding of judgement, because she is primarily concerned with giving the appearance of particulars meaning. As a consequence, her conception of reflective judgement neglects the structures of privilege and disadvantage that influence, without determining, the appearance of any particular (Azmanova, 2012: 147). Azmanova concludes that political judgement should instead be concerned with exactly those

³⁹ The abolition of slavery constitutes such an exemplary judgment. Further examples are the institutionalisation of human rights, and more recently, the election of Barack Obama in 2008, which gave expression to a sense of equality otherwise insufficiently realised in the American political system.

phenomena that capture these patterns, e.g. of power or systematic injustice, rather than what Arendt focuses on – the unprecedented.

Azmanova calls the distinctions that form a community sense and frame judgement the ‘paradigms of articulation and signification’ (2012: 161), or ‘matrix of relevance’ (2012: 157). The matrix of relevance has a horizontal and vertical dimension. By ‘horizontal signification’, Azmanova means the way judgement is made in reference to a plurality of spectators and their separate perspectives, which give *meaning* to appearances. Vertically, reference points for judgement are ordered in hierarchies of *significance*, e.g. what is to be seen as an important issue according to the community’s worldview. Azmanova draws attention to the social code that is embedded in both dimensions, in the meaning and significance given to points of reference prior to judgement. Judgement becomes a ‘process of simultaneous cognitive and evaluative signification’ (2012: 161) which enables norms contestation and consensus building through the pre-discursive structuring of judgement in its horizontal and vertical dimensions.⁴⁰

Azmanova provides a more expansive conception of the pre-discursive matrix of relevance that underpins the practices of the plurality of judging spectators, by emphasising the social coding of the matrix. Whereas for Arendt, common sense is primarily agential, the result of judging spectators enlarging their perspectives through engagement with others, Azmanova conceives of structuring as primarily social. In order to uphold Arendt’s project, judgement scholars must therefore find ways of attending to the social without denying human plurality and without falling prey to a heroic view of agency. A focus on social structuring, in turn, bears within it a problematic tendency visible in Azmanova’s writing: her response to the primarily social structuring of judgement is overly agential. As Mihaela Mihai elaborates, Azmanova ‘maintains a firm belief that the solution lies with the flexibility and

⁴⁰ A focus on the social patterns that shape judgement changes also our view on exemplarity and the example as a central tool that links judgement and common sense. Azmanova suggests that we concentrate on the distinctions that make an example comprehensible to members of a certain society. Examples embody and disclose a ‘selective societal code of valorisation’ (2012: 176). This code of exemplarity cannot be reduced to the factual knowledge of the context and origin of an example, nor is it the mere product of moral assessments. To give an example, we may have judged an issue by referring to the exemplary courage of Achilles. The success of turning the position we take up into a political judgement that is communicable to others and transcends our partial perspective on the world, does not depend on excellent knowledge of the Trojan War, nor the approval of Achille’s behaviour through moral deliberation. Instead, it is dependent on the meaningful and significant shared distinctions that are imbued with structural injustice.

instability of the matrix, which she sees as forever vulnerable to the power of discursive confrontations' (Mihai, 2016b: 35). The question that neither Azmanova nor Arendt can therefore fully answer, which lies at the centre of this thesis, is this: how can we uphold a focus on an *ethic of reality* through critical judgement and simultaneously account for the way power shapes its very categories? I propose that a dual approach to judgment is needed, one that considers political judgement from two perspectives, by i) analysing the pre-discursive structuring of judgements, and ii) by considering how humans face and come to terms with reality through the capacity for reflective judgement. To achieve this, we need to delve even further into the second dimension to judgement – the interplay between structure and agency – than has been proposed by the various Arendt scholars discussed in this second chapter.

In conclusion, the purpose of this chapter was to introduce the debate that followed on from Arendt's writing about reflective judgement. My analysis traced two phases to the debate and aligned this thesis with the second. The chapter discussed four attempts at extending Arendt's theory, with a view to preparing the ground for an engagement with the topic of social conditioning. Zerilli's work revealed that, once we depart from a concern with the epistemological problem of judgement, persuasion and radical imagination offer vital mechanisms that ensure judgement's world-building and freedom-affirming potential. Through the ability to persuade and to re-imagine what is shared in a community the issue of social conditioning takes centre stage for theories on judgement, but remains insufficiently addressed by Zerilli. Secondly, I considered the enthusiasm for studying the affective and non-conscious layers to judging. Drawing on Zerilli and Thiele, amongst others, I affirmed that a suitable account of the pluralism of judgement must take note of these elements of political judgement, which, in turn, require us to address how they are connected to the intersubjective practices of a pluralist politics. Thirdly, the chapter discussed different accounts of storytelling, a practice deeply interrelated with action and judgement. The work of Disch, Lara, and Schiff highlighted how Arendt scholarship holds on to Arendt's pluralism, but also conceptualises situated human agency as key to a critical form of storytelling, and by extension judgement. Finally, Azmanova and Ferrara provide important insights into common sense, one of the key concepts in Arendt's thought. Azmanova, in particular, highlights the need to address the social patterning of judgement, which we need to account for if we wish to put forward a non-rationalist framework of political judgement.

In short, beyond the invaluable insights into judgement that the debate provides, it also clearly states that any adequate account of political judgement must tell us more about the interrelationship between judge and context that constitutes political judgement. How are persuasion, imagination, the unconscious, the affective, stories, and common sense patterned to enable and constrain the pluralist potential in political judgement? The debate on political judgement therefore makes it evident that I will only be able to address the problem of 'responsibility-for-complicity' that animates this thesis, once I have delved more deeply into the issue of social conditioning, the core of debates on 'structure-agency'. It is to this matter that Chapter 3 turns to.

Chapter 3 – Margaret Archer’s Dualism of Structure & Agency

‘Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please’

(Marx, 2008: 15)

Central to research in social science is the debate on the relationship between structure and agency. The questions founding this debate are: how can we define structures and to what extent do they influence, constrain, enable, or even determine agency?, and, what is agency and what are its distinctive properties and powers? Structure is an ambiguous concept. It can refer to anything from stable patterns of aggregate behaviour to systems of human relations amongst social positions (cf. Elder-Vass, 2010; Porpora, 1989). Typical examples include class, gender, race, or more generally the capitalist system. Agency is a similarly opaque term. At the most general level, agency refers to a person’s ability to act and respond to their social context – which includes a capacity for non-action and passivity.

In political theory, different interpretations of the relationship between structure and agency inform accounts of power, complicity, responsibility, freedom, and democracy. Their puzzling interrelationship is also central to any attempt to conceptualise political judgement. Indeed, judgement always involves an individual’s positioning in relation to a political context. The interplay between structure and agency shapes the very nature of the judgement process. It is the purpose of this chapter to shed further light on how structure and agency impact on political judgement.

In the previous two chapters, I turned to Arendt’s theory of political judgement, driven by an interest in how humans can judge their complicity in injustice and oppression. My discussion highlighted her commitment to a thicker notion of plurality that focuses on the well-being of the common world alongside the sameness and distinction of being human. Chapter 2 considered critical extensions of Arendt’s theory that reveal the limitations of a focus on plurality for conceptualising judgement. The challenge of theorising judgement has become one of how to provide an account of situated human agency underpinning an emphasis on human plurality that captures more fully what makes judgement both critical, capable of understanding (new) developments in society, and anchored in our partial

perspectives on the world. The present chapter meets this demand by turning to social theory and recent debates on structure and agency.

A discussion of Archer's realist social theory is particularly valuable for the current investigation into political judgement, as her elaboration of the distinct powers of human agency alongside social structures helps enrich Arendt's pluralism. In Archer's own words, her project seeks 'to put forward a model that is *recognisably human*; one that retains Arendt's notion of the "Human Condition" as entailing a reflexive "Life of the mind"' (Archer, 2016: 138). Her thought responds to what she identifies as de-humanising tendencies in social theory that arise out of the conflation of the distinct causal powers of structure and agency. For her, the relationship between structures and agency is not merely of a conceptual interest, but holds a place at the core of human existence, which is always experienced as both free and constrained.¹ Archer terms this 'authentic' feeling the 'vexatious fact of society and its human constitution' (Archer, 1995: 2). The purpose of an investigation into political judgement must therefore be to respond appropriately to this enduring feature of the human condition (1995: 1f., 29). Archer's commitment to an analytical dualism of structure and agency provides the second dimension to the account of political judgement that I wish to put forward in support of theories on judging responsibility-for-complicity.

Chapter 3 is dedicated to mapping out three central features of Archer's response to the vexatious fact of society. First, section 3.1 elaborates on the commitment of analytical dualism to a temporal and analytical distinction between structure, culture, and agency. Section 3.2 explains how dualism helps judgement theorists complement Arendt's thick conception of plurality with a sophisticated understanding of social conditioning. I highlight the possibility to uphold an object- and subject-focus that does not fall back on an unwarranted 'objectivism' – the desire for an Archimedean point from which to judge impartially – or a form of radical 'subjectivism' – the desire to reduce all criteria of judgement to the 'it-seems-to-me'. In section 3.3, I introduce Archer's work on reflexivity as internal conversation, which she identifies as the key mediation process between structures and agency. Judgement is the manifestation of thinking in the world and is inconceivable without

¹ Because of the link to the human condition, the engagement with this experience affects how we judge and how we theorise judgement equally. The insights in this chapter, while (meta-)theoretical in character, are therefore also of relevance in thinking about improving judgements of responsibility for complicity.

a suitable account of reflexivity. I reconstruct Archer's insights into how reflexivity is socially patterned and contributes to social transformation and how reflexivity is changing in late modernity in conjunction with broader structural and cultural transformations that impact the way judgement is exercised in society.

In sum, I turn to Archer to shed further light on the issue of social conditioning: how we may account for human agents who shape their own world – what Marx described as 'making their own history' – and the conditions that constrain and enable their capacity to do so – 'but not as they please' (Marx, 2008: 15). Her work helps map out the second dimension of political judgement – the implications that arise out of the vexatious fact of the human condition. The connection between Arendt's pluralism and Archer's dualism will be further teased out in relation to the particular problem that this thesis responds to, judging responsibility and complicity, which is the subject of chapter 4.

3.1 Archer's Contribution to the Structure-Agency Debate

Before I map out Archer's realist social theory, centred around her analytical distinction between structure and agency, a brief introduction of the structure-agency problematic that she engages in is helpful. The structure-agency debate consists of three fundamental problems for the social sciences: first, the generic problem of how a self can be both a subject and an object.² Second, the analytical problem of who the participants in a person's inner dialogues are. Third, the explanatory problem of describing what role society plays in this conversation. Together, they lead to the dichotomies of structure-agency, micro-macro, and collective-individual.³

The responses to the three questions are diverse and often incompatible, ranging between voluntarism and determinism, methodological individualism and structuralism (Archer, 2003; McAnulla, 2002, 2006). Individualism reduces structures to the actions of the collective of actors and everything social to the individual. Archer defines this as upward conflation. Structuralism, or downward conflation, reduces the individual to Durkheim's 'indeterminate matter' (Durkheim, 2014: 87) whose thoughts and emotions are collective. Put together, these positions reduce either agency or structures to an epiphenomenon, instead of focusing on their distinctiveness and interplay (Archer, 1995: 65).

In the last few decades, the debate moved beyond the extremes of structuralism and individualism towards an effort to bring structure and agency together. Notable representatives of this project include Anthony Giddens' structuration theory (1984) and Bourdieu's habitus (1990). Archer identifies in their accounts a central conflation, which approaches structure-agency through what she terms a 'duality'. Characteristic of this duality of structure and agency is an emphasis on the inseparability of structures and agency – two sides of a coin – and a focus on the structured character of action (Archer, 1995: 93). The duality is unable to capture the individual's experience of feeling *both* constrained and free, because it holds on to a focus on the interpenetration of structure and agency that obscures how

² In relation to Kant, this problem can be formulated as one of self-awareness. Archer has pointed out that the difficulties of dividing between a subject and an object is peculiar to his use of the terminology of perception – I cannot see myself – but not other senses (Archer, 2003: 53; Kant, 1983: 73).

³ Archer links these three problems of structure-agency with American Pragmatism, and William James, Charles Peirce, and George Mead, respectively (Archer, 2003: 94f.).

structure and agency are interconnected but nonetheless separable in important ways. As Archer puts it in relation to Graham, a person she interviewed for her research on reflexivity, for proponents of a duality

‘there never comes a point at which it is possible to disentangle Graham’s personal caution (a subjective property of a person) from the characteristics of his context (objective properties of society). [...] ‘Graham’ has now become so inextricably intertwined with his social background and foreground that it is no longer clear *who* is ‘standing back’. Therefore, it becomes impossible that Graham can deliberate upon his circumstances as subject to object, because these are now inseparable for ‘Graham’ (Archer, 2003: 12).

I show the problems with this approach in chapter 4 in relation to the challenge of how to judge responsibility-for-complicity. For now, the present chapter is dedicated to spelling out what Archer’s alternative, an analytical dualism of structure and agency, entails.

The framework of analytical dualism focuses on a *temporal* and *analytical* distinction between structure and agency. The aim is to move beyond simplistic empiricist notions of allocating causality to one or the other (1995: 69). The ethnic prejudices that continue to have a negative impact on the success of job applications in the UK, for example, are neither the sole consequences of racist HR divisions nor the mere product of a colonialist past. Structure and agency are for Archer also not different aspects of the same thing, i.e. the more agential or structural part of a singular phenomenon or mechanism, but should instead be conceived of as quite different, with distinct powers and characteristics. Structure and agency need to be separated in order

‘(a) to identify the emergent⁴ structure(s), (b) to differentiate between their causal powers and the intervening influences of people due to their quite different causal powers as human beings, and, (c) to explain any outcome at all, which in an open system⁵ always entails an interplay between the two. In short, separability is indispensable to realism’ (1995: 70).

The separation allows her to distinguish between subjective and objective contributions to social interaction. Structural and cultural properties, with their

⁴ Emergence entails that properties and powers of one stratum (structure and agency) are anterior to those of others (society), precisely because the latter emerge from the former over time. After the emergence, the powers and properties defining and distinguishing the strata have relative autonomy from one another and exert independent causal influences that are the subject of study of analytical dualism (1995: 14).

⁵ (Relatively) open systems are characterised by producing outcomes that are not fully determined by the aggregation of its components.

powers of constraint, enablement, and motivation, *objectively* shape the situations agents encounter involuntarily. Humans, in turn, *subjectively* define their concerns and through their reflexive deliberations produce courses of action, by *subjectively* determining their practical projects vis-à-vis their *objective* circumstances (2003: 135). The rest of the chapter is concerned with elaborating on the objective and subjective contributions, followed by a discussion of reflexive deliberation and its role in judgment. First, let me provide a brief introduction into how Archer imagines that structures and agency come together to transform society.

3.1.1 The Morphogenetic Approach

Archer's realist social theory entails an alternative model of social transformation, which she terms the morphogenetic approach.⁶ The approach relies on a layered ontology, where every social outcome is the consequence of an interplay between the irreducible properties and powers of structure, culture, and agency. Key to this model is that structures are assumed as necessarily pre-dating the action that reproduces and changes them (1995: 15). The assumption enables the analytical distinction – and only the *analytical* distinction – of the causal contributions and properties of structure and agency along a temporal horizon – before, during, and after a particular action. Of course, in reality, such a distinction is difficult to make.

The central question for a morphogenetic approach of society is this: when does transformation rather than reproduction happen following the interaction of structure and agency?, and vice versa. To answer it, Archer offers four propositions that help map out the key elements of structural-agential interplay. Firstly, she states that because dualism insists on a temporal distinction between structures and agency, there must be internal and necessary relations between and within social structures that exist prior to present action. They are the consequences of past processes of social conditioning. Take, for example, the pupil-teacher or the privileged-disadvantaged relation. The position of teacher (privileged) only makes sense in connection to the social position of pupil (disadvantaged) and the relationship

⁶ The morphogenetic approach both provides an explanatory model, seeking to explain social conditioning through the elaboration of the interplay between structure and agency at various stages, and an analytical tool, seeking to capture historical constellations and why they developed in particular ways. The final section 3.3 returns to the transformative model as an analytical tool, to consider the transformations that Archer identified in late modernity.

between these two positions as part of the educational (economic) system has relatively enduring characteristics that shape action and agency in the present. In order to address political judgement adequately, we need to consider the structures that exist prior to judgement. Similarly, when we judge politically, we need to consider how the pre-existing relations between social positions shape our judgements.

Secondly, Archer proposes that structures exert causal influences on social interaction, what social theorists term social conditioning: social practices are always processes of re-structuration (1995: 140).⁷ Re-structuration means that as humans attempt to shape their context, they, too, are shaped. The transformation of structures takes time and includes existing structures showing temporary resistance to transformative action. Structures encourage action that contributes to their continued existence; change is constrained by *vested* interests, which refer to the costs and benefits of action produced by structures. Vested interests are attached to the social positions available in a society and the vested interests of different positions interact: the vested interests of one position are in relation to, and cause frustration or reward in, a different position (1995: 206). Privileged members of Western society, for example, have a vested interest in ignoring the plight of others which comes with their privileged life-styles.⁸ The dualism of structure and agency is therefore complemented by various other analytical dualisms, including the dualism between actor and social position.⁹

Thirdly, Archer claims that causal relationships between groups and individuals exist at the level of social interaction. Fourthly, social interaction elaborates social

⁷ Re-structuration means in turn that, while a continuous flow of action exists, each social activity is different from the previous, because of the unprecedented constellation of structure and agency that resulted from previous activities, which provides new constraints and opportunities for activities. Social groups, for example the social group of teachers, similarly remain continuous, whereas the components of social groups, i.e. specific teachers, change over time (1995: 73).

⁸ Vested interests are not causal social forces in the empiricist sense of causality, they can be reflected on and, to be effective, they require a certain level of social acceptance (1995: 205). However, a person's neglect of the constraints and conditions that come with social positions and the structural context may lead to further limitations on future actions (1995: 208), as Archer clearly opposes any flirtations with voluntarism. Successful transformation of structures is likely to result not only in a change of structures, but also in a change in these vested interests and the opening up of new social possibilities and constraints.

⁹ Social positions necessarily pre-exist their adoption. Even if an actor seeks a new position, this position needs to first be conceived of and defined in some form in society, before the actor can fill it (1995: 168).

structures by modifying the internal and necessary structural relationships and a) if morphogenesis occurs, developing new ones b) if morphostasis continues, reproducing these existing relationships (1995: 168f.). The three phases of the morphogenetic approach are therefore conditioning, interaction, and elaboration or reproduction.¹⁰

The model can be reused in connection with culture. For Archer, structural emergent properties, social and physical, are to some extent distinct from cultural ones by virtue of their dependence on material resources (1995: 175). I follow Archer in largely concentrating on the structure-agency problematic, turning to the distinct role of culture where necessary.¹¹ In a cultural model of transformation, 'social structure' is replaced by 'cultural system' and 'social interaction' with 'socio-cultural interaction' (1995: 169). A society remains morphostatic at the macro-level if one of the two spheres, culture or structures, experiences large-scale changes, whereas the other sphere reproduces the pre-existing order. Under these circumstances, society remains continuous as the changes in culture or structures are simply absorbed: new structures retain the same meaning as the previous material formations, or new ideas and concepts build on the old structures. To give an example, the emergence of environmental concerns does not lead to society-wide changes unless the ideas about a healthy planet are linked with transformations to the capitalist framework of profit-maximisation underpinning modern societies.

Analytical dualism and the morphogenetic approach are at the heart of what I term the second dimension of political judgement: judgement's embeddedness in complex processes of social conditioning. Judgement scholarship seeks to understand social conditioning as the source of (and obstacle to) the critical potential of judgement. Archer tells us that this potential emerges from the subjective contributions of agency in interplay with the objective contributions of structures. Social conditioning always presupposes the existence of relatively enduring social structures and any social process entails three phases: conditioning, interaction, and elaboration or reproduction. With the analytical dualism and

¹⁰ In the case of an emerging structure or position, the three phases are emergence (instead of conditioning), interplay (interaction), and outcome (elaboration).

¹¹ Nick Hardy (2019) interprets this emphasis on structure over culture as one of Arendt's shortcomings and proposes a hybridisation with the thought of Michel Foucault as a plausible solution.

morphogenetic approach in place, the rest of chapter 3 focuses on the implications of the analytical dualism for judgement scholarship.

3.2 A Dualist Approach to Stratified Objectivity and Subjectivity

To fully understand the relevance of Archer's response to the vexatious fact of society through analytical dualism, I take one step back and return to Zerilli, whose theory of radical imagination I introduced in chapter 2. She offers the most recent contribution to the debates on political judgement following Arendt. Her (2016a) criticism of democratic theory and affect theorists establishes the following demand for further theorising on judgement that I seek to meet using Archer's analytical dualism: that we reorient ourselves away from an 'impossible' objectivism or subjectivism and towards a plurality of democratic actors, who generate a common world through the discussion of different perspectives on a shared issue. What does she mean by an impossible subjectivism and objectivism?

Zerilli (2016a) emphasises that resistance to cognitivism does not require an acceptance of realism with capital R and, with it, the desire for objective knowledge that arises out of the transcendence of our partial perspectives on the world, i.e. an impossible objectivism. This acceptance, however, as Zerilli shows, has been a common mistake, and it risks severely undermining the potential of non-cognitive alternatives. She therefore criticises both cognitivists – Neo-Kantian public reason theorists – and non-cognitivists – affect theorists reducing judgement to preconscious dispositions – for a shared sense 'that our ordinary criteria of judgment are not good enough and are in need of some sort of correcting supplement' (Zerilli, 2016a: 4). Their common mistake is that they see plurality not only as central to Western democracy, but also as its greatest threat. For, the 'idea that *something* must ground mutual intelligibility in the political realm risks entangling us in fantasies concerning the nature and power of rules that lead us to lose track of our own part or voice as democratic citizens in deciding what will and what will not belong to the common world' (2016a: 22). As we saw in chapter 2, judgement scholarship cannot rely on a commitment to a thicker notion of plurality orientated towards a common world alone. The question that Zerilli therefore raises is how we can complement pluralism with a focus on subjectivity and objectivity that 'situates subjective response at the heart of anything we consider objective' (2016a: 25) and transcends the 'impossible choice between objectivism and subjectivism' (Zerilli, 2016a: 19).

To respond to this question I take two insights from Zerilli's argument that serve as a useful starting point for conceptualising a suitable object- and subject-focus. Firstly, I take from Zerilli that a realist contribution to theorising political judgement must

avoid unqualified references to an external world that displaces the role of judgement and action in politics – what Zerilli terms the voice of democratic citizens. I agree in the following that *however* promising references to a mind-independent reality may seem, it is difficult to justify these references. We should be cautious about the capacity of scientific or political judgements to correctly interpret that reality. At the same time, a theory of judgement must account for how the potential of reflective judgement is not limited to the inclusion of different perspectives. Zerilli (2016a: 36) notes that to judge politically is to engage with perspectives *on* a shared object that gives judgement its meaning. What is needed then is a concern with an object irreducible to our subjective engagements with it, but not sufficiently external (and independently accessible) that it could become the (sole) arbiter of good judgement.

Secondly, I take from Zerilli an Arendtian concern with the worldless and radically subjectivist character of modern mass society, in which the political space available for exploring our perspectives on the world has dramatically shrunk and each individual becomes isolated. A suitable response must formulate political judgement as an activity that can once more enliven that common world through a threefold focus: on the thick conception of plurality, put forward by Arendt, alongside a concern with objects external to our perspectives, and the 'it-seems-to-me'. All three are always open to improvement and contestation through political practices of strengthening our sense of reality. They are also deeply interrelated, as a thick notion of plurality includes both the sameness and distinction of the persons judging and acting, and a world that people can only make hospitable together, and that is independent from any perspective on it.

In short, I suggest that a turn to Archer's distinction between dualism and duality can help judgement scholars balance the need to account for an object-orientated form of judgement without introducing unwarranted references to a mind-independent reality. It also helps incorporate a concern with the subjective perspectives that animate judgements, without perpetuating a form of radical subjectivism that comes at the cost of a hospitable common world and the objects to be judged. In the following, I discuss first Archer's objectivism and then the complementary subjectivism.

3.2.1 Critical Realism

How can we think of structures as independent from human agency? What do we even mean by independent and does Archer not ultimately obscure the relational character of human agency? To put it more forcefully, is Archer moving us back to the position of the detached observer which I rejected in chapter 1 and 2? Archer's analytical dualism is deeply intertwined with the philosophy of social science critical realism and to understand what Archer is after I now turn to that philosophy. Critical realism (CR), short for transcendental realism and critical naturalism, is a variation of scientific realism, particularly concerned with social scientific practices.¹² Originally centred on the work of Roy Bhaskar, CR now encompasses a multitude of positions and claims.¹³ Archer extended critical realism through a series of books and projects dealing with social ontology, structures, agency, and culture and has become a key proponent of this philosophy.

The section provides a brief introduction of key concepts of critical realism: emergence, stratification, open system, generative mechanisms, causal demi-regularities (tendencies), and the intransitive and transitive objects of knowledge. Some of these concepts have already come up in previous sections. I want to use them in the following to argue that critical realism provides, above all, a rich language to describe a multi-layered reality accessed through our social practices but irreducible to these practices. Critical realism is a meta-theory that enables judgement scholarship to focus equally on the plurality of perspectives and the object to be judged.

Critical realists argue that any social sciences' approach requires an explicit position on key dimensions including ontology, epistemology, the relationship between the material and the ideational, and on the structure-agency question (cf. Rivas, 2010: 204). At the level of ontology and epistemology, CR opposes philosophies that adhere to empirical realism, which limits knowledge to what can be experienced. As an alternative, Bhaskar offers transcendental realism, which he defined as follows:

¹² Its proponents share a concern with the consequences of the realist turn for social research and Porpora (2013: 25) argues that critical realism is best thought of as a non-reductive Marxian approach.

¹³ On parallel developments of CR, see Douglas Porpora (2015). Bhaskar's thought has gone through a basic, dialectic and meta-phase. This thesis follows many critical realists in focusing particularly on the basic form of critical realism (cf. Creaven, 2014: 2, 6; Elder-Vass, 2010).

'For transcendental realism, the objects of knowledge [...] are neither phenomena (empiricism) nor human constructs imposed upon the phenomena (idealism), but real structures which endure and operate independently of our knowledge, our experience and the conditions which allow us access to them' (Bhaskar, 2013: 25).

Transcendental realism, or *ontological realism*, entails a belief in a mind-independent world, which consists of intransitive objects whose continued existence remains independent from human activity, e.g. sound. These objects act on the transitive world, including 'the antecedently established facts and theories, paradigms and models, methods and techniques of inquiry available to a particular scientific school or worker' (Bhaskar, 2013: 21), through generative mechanisms. The formulation of mechanisms serves to explain how the world is and why certain things function in specific ways. Generative mechanisms can be thought of as the 'way of acting of a thing' (Bhaskar, 2013: 51) (*its force*), rather than the necessary, general or universal causal connection between specific events (*if-then*) (Porpora, 2015: 46, 49f.).¹⁴ Through the CR lens, the purpose of social research is 'the quest for non-observable generative mechanisms whose powers may exist unexercised or be exercised unrealized, that is with variable outcomes due to the variety of intervening contingencies which cannot be subject to laboratory closure' (Archer, 1998: 190).

Key to CR's ontological realism is that reality is stratified into the empirical, the actual, and the real (Bhaskar, 2013: 56). Generative mechanisms are part of the intransitive realm of the *real*, which means that we cannot measure or experience them directly. These mechanisms are constantly active with their own independent powers. As they interact and influence each other, their powers may or may not be *actualised* and lead to specific effects. The intake of alcohol, for example, is likely to impede the capacity of humans to think rationally (whatever we mean by that). The likelihood of a generative mechanism causing a particular effect can be referred to as tendency: drinking alcoholic beverages tends to cause 'irrational' behaviour. The *empirical* layer to reality offers what can be experienced and measured as observables, i.e. a person being drunk. Research into social phenomena must consider all three realms, the real, the actual, and the empirical.

¹⁴ What critical realists mean by mechanisms is best understood by giving some examples: gravity, the structure of an atom, the mechanics of a clock, or human rationality. Each captures a causal structure that we attribute to an object or phenomenon to explain how it works.

To maintain the multi-layered character of reality, CR turns to theories of emergence: characteristic of emergent properties for critical realists is that they are unilaterally dependent, taxonomically irreducible, and causally irreducible and efficacious (Bhaskar, 2012: 12). This means in simple terms that society as emergent strata is dependent on the existence of both structures and human agents, but it also has properties and powers irreducible to the specific properties and powers of structures and human agency.

Of course, the current investigation does not seek to map out what social research ought to be like, nor is it concerned with philosophy of (social) science. Nonetheless, the turn to ontological realism gives us a sense of how to maintain a focus on an independent object irreducible to our knowledge of it, and helps take the common world seriously as a causally efficacious object that contributes to our well-being. In what follows, I will routinely refer to the importance of accounting for a multi-layered reality, and one key thing I have in mind is the role played by emergence and by the separability of the empirical, the actual and real, for how we approach a social context not of our choosing. Accepting that objects are not simply what we make of them, that they do not bend to our judgements upon them does however not mean that they can be the source of unmediated 'objectivity'.

Alongside an insistence on ontological realism, critical realists like Archer embrace *epistemological relativism*. This form of realism accepts that any conceptualisation of the world is relative to our regional practices at a specific time. Epistemological relativism includes the language we use to describe phenomena, the debates we are participating in and therefore the knowledge we can use to make our claims and observations.¹⁵ Through its commitment to epistemological relativism, CR guards against over-stretching predictive claims, as it emphasises the limits of scientific social study and its political character.¹⁶

Critical realism combines its views on ontology and epistemology with an account of social transformation that seeks to provide a careful attribution of power to agents and avoid individualism/voluntarism or holism/structuralism (Joseph and Wight,

¹⁵ Epistemological relativism also includes the instruments we use to access this mind-independent world. For example, without the microscope or telescope we would be unable to see certain objects of study.

¹⁶ Critical realists furthermore support methodological pluralism, because they accept that objects of study are multifaceted, dynamic, socially constructed, and often unobservable, and must be identified in their complexity (Kurki, 2010: 139).

2010: 51).¹⁷ In particular, CR points to the fact that human's emergent power of mind, as irreducible to matter, creates a society that in comparison to the natural world is to a much larger extent an open system.¹⁸ Key to this openness is that people have a capacity for intentionality and they can reflect critically on their performance, with significant causal implications. Although social structures set limits to human action, they do not pre-determine them.¹⁹ In other words, socialisation describes an achievement rather than an unconscious mechanical process, in which skills, competencies, and habits reproduce or transform society (1998b: 216).²⁰

A commitment to epistemological relativism does not mean that CR reduces the search for knowledge to relativism. Archer and her colleagues commit to the possibility of *rational justification* (or judgemental rationality): despite epistemological relativism, according to CR, some theories are always rationally better than others. We can make judgements because the objects of our theories are not reducible to these theories and therefore resist (to some extent) the postulation of innumerable different theories about them. This resistance of reality to our theorisation about reality enables the differentiation between good and bad theories. In other words, the separation of ontology and epistemology is central to establishing whether one theory can be rationally perceived as more complete in its ontological description than another (Bhaskar, 1998a: xi). Truth is therefore to some extent tied to practical adequacy, as CR emphasises that knowledge must 'generate expectations about

¹⁷ These contributions have to be weighed against its short-comings. Critical realism does not provide a theory of politics, and relies on at times vague core concepts or research criteria and limited insights into how to address judgement rationality and methodological pluralism (cf. Kurki, 2010: 144).

¹⁸ Largely open systems cannot be made subject to laboratory closure. In terms of causality they exhibit what Tony Lawson termed demi-regularities, which, unlike causal laws, describe 'a partial event regularity which *prima facie* indicates the occasional, but less than universal actualisation of a mechanism or tendency, over a definite region of space-time' (Lawson, 1998: 149).

¹⁹ A society is never entirely open, otherwise prediction would not be possible, and it is difficult to see how social interaction under such unstable circumstance could occur (cf. Joseph and Wight, 2010: 149ff.).

²⁰ The interplay allows CR to avoid both reification in their conceptualisation of the relationship between structures and agency, which perceives human relations as independent facts of nature, *and* voluntarism, which ignores the conditions and unintended results of action in favour of the intentions of actors. Agency is always conditioned by structures and reproduces or transforms these more or less consciously, but structures, despite their relative stable nature and independence, are also inherently dependent on agency, as without their reproduction they would cease to exist.

the world' that 'are actually realized', and 'intersubjectively intelligible and acceptable' (Sayer, 1992: 69).²¹

To give an example, global warming is unobservable insofar as humans can only experience climate change through its effects. Global warming may be the result of one or more generative mechanisms interacting, and for CR exists independently of us acknowledging it happening. As other effects may interact, global warming could also not be actualised nor be experienced. However, as is widely accepted, the denial of global warming in leading industrialised countries, or the focus on only specific easily visible effects of global warming, has significant repercussions for any attempt to respond to global warming, showing the importance of accounting for the multiple layers of reality. CR therefore emphasises the need to consider whether an account of global warming describes reality more adequately than another – which remains independent from any scepticism towards human's capacity for knowledge and judgement.

In sum, a commitment to ontological realism for CR incorporates the belief that a theory portrays not only a transitive object of knowledge, embedded in specific historical and regional practices, but also makes reference to an intransitive object of knowledge. Any 'adequate philosophy of science must be capable of [...] sustaining both (1) the social character of science and (2) the independence from science of the objects of scientific thought' (Bhaskar, 2013: 24). The 'holy trinity' – ontological realism, epistemological relativism, judgmental rationality – provides the starting point for an appropriate engagement with social ontology, and by extension the issue of social conditioning.

What I hope to have made clear, and what I take from this brief discussion of the key commitments of CR, is that critical realists and judgement scholars share a concern about tendencies to reduce, conflate, or otherwise misconstrue the complexities of reality. Furthermore, both, in different ways, reject the 'epistemological question' (Zerilli, 2005b: 162). They differ in that judgement theorists have successfully highlighted the potential in human plurality, contra a problematic objectivism that desires a priori criteria for adjudicating value conflicts. CR, in contrast, emphasises the continued importance of asking ontological questions and insists on the independence of objects from scientific inquiry, contra

²¹ Critical realists reject empiricism and therefore highlight that the success of prediction is context-dependent.

social sciences' preoccupation with epistemology and the empirical (Norrie, 2016: 392). These differences are important; for, critical realists provide a framework that accounts for political judgements that are orientated towards a shared object independent from the individual perspectives on it, while maintaining the socially constructed nature of our knowledge of this object. As *Realism*, it demands attention to a stratified reality with unobservable entities, but this reference to reality does not come at the cost of democratic citizenship. Critical realists insist tirelessly on the contingency of judgements and their embeddedness in political practices of giving meaning to a world. Political judgements are about *something* and Archer and her colleagues help us realise the complexity of that something that a judging person inevitably has to negotiate.

3.2.2 Archer on Being Human

Archer complemented the focus on ontological realism with a humanising project. Contra upward, downward, and central conflation, the separation of structure and agency enabled her to ask what uniquely characterises 'being human' as irreducible to society.²² She insists that there can be no society without people and that social theorising therefore has to avoid 'evacuating agency' (Archer, 2000: 306) to strengthen the social. Her project is the 're-emergence of humanity, meaning that due acknowledgement is given to the properties and powers of real people forged in the real world, which overcomes the present poverty of social theory' (2000: 306). At the same time, her realism is explicitly non-anthropocentric, in part because of the critical realist insistence on the separation of what is from how humans perceive it.²³ Archer therefore adds to the object-focus in section 3.2.1 a subject-focus without falling for an 'impossible' subjectivism, i.e. the belief that all that matters, is what matters to a person (2000: 23; cf. Chernilo, 2017: 197). I will now introduce key concepts that frame Archer's argument on stratified agency in relation to two important conceptual distinctions: between the human being as *person*, as *social*

²² Structuralism conceives of agency as indeterminate material, as empty vessels moved by social forces. Other problematic conceptions include agency as idealised human beings capable of changing society at will, alone or collectively, and, thirdly, agency as describing social humans, which conflates the person and social agent (Archer, 1995: 251).

²³ Archer also emphasises how humans share with other animals their embodied engagement with the world and that discursive practices are only secondary to this shared sense of being in the world.

agent, and as *social actor*, and between human's engagement with the natural, practical and social (or specifically discursive) order of reality.

Archer offers a stratified view of being human, which argues that the 'mind is emergent from neurological matter, consciousness from mind, selfhood from consciousness, personal identity from selfhood, and social agency from personal identity' (2000: 87). She states that human beings are persons insofar as they have a self-perceived identity – a sense of self – based on a continuous consciousness (1995: 282).²⁴ The sense of self is best understood as self-awareness that 'it is the *same* self who has interests upon which constraints and enablements impinge *and* that how they react today will affect what interests they will have tomorrow' (1995: 282). Prior to, and 'primitive to, our sociality' (1995: 284), the sense of self is experienced through the use of bodily powers from an early age, which leads the person to the differentiation between one's self and the environment (2000: 125f.). Human beings keep this emergent sense of self throughout their lives. The self-aware and embodied person holds a capacity for social innovation, labelled by Arendtians as *natality*: 'human beings have the unique potential to conceive of new social forms. Because of this, society can never be held to shape them entirely' (1995: 289).

A person's sense of self emerges out of embodied practices and is necessarily pre-linguistic (2000: 124). This stratification of personhood draws on an analytical distinction between three orders of reality: the natural, practical, and social.²⁵ The orders of reality are interrelated, but they also pose different, and often conflicting, challenges and potentials for human agency.²⁶ Each comes with distinct forms of

²⁴ Archer relies on the Lockean formula of selfhood as body plus continuity in consciousness, but merely insists on a sufficient rather than a perfect continuity (Archer, 2000: 137). The 'eidetic and the procedural [memories], supply a continual resort for defining our selfhood, above and beyond our bodily identity. They are thus the modern ways of specifying what a neo-Lockean means by the "continuity of consciousness", which is something distinct from perfect recall' (2000: 152).

²⁵ The similarities to Arendt's thought are clearly visible, starting with their distinction between the biological/natural, practical/fabricating, and social/political spheres and activities. Of course Arendt's emphasis on the role of speech and appearance goes beyond Archer's concerns, nonetheless both share the concern with the failure in modern philosophy to give primacy to practice (Archer, 2000: 145; Arendt, 1998; Sindic, 2013).

²⁶ In everyday life these orders are often difficult to separate, but this observation should in turn not lead to, for example, the conclusion that other orders can be reduced to the social. An account of social conditioning attentive to human agency has to accommodate these different influences that come together to shape a more or less unified response of humans to their context.

knowledge, concerns, and emotions. Humans engage with the natural order of reality to ensure their physical well-being. The embeddedness in the natural sphere of experience leads to embodied knowledge (2000: 9). We seek performative achievements in relation to the practical order by mastering objects – what Arendt called fabrication and the demands of worldliness – and gain practical knowledge. Interactions in the social order provide a sense of self-worth and come with discursive knowledge.²⁷ Each order of reality brings with it distinct concerns and affective cues that lead to different clusters of emotions which provide commentaries upon our concerns (2000: 195, 203).²⁸ Concerns together with emotions enable a prioritisation of what we care about and thus the prism through which individuals interpret their life (Chalari, 2009: 151).²⁹

Through the distinctions, Archer challenges the dominance of an approach in sociology that defends the primacy of language and the social order for the development of human agency (2000: 121). Practical action and the differentiation of the person according to Archer are fundamental to humans' way of being in the world before the acquisition of language.³⁰ At the same time, Archer also embraces

²⁷ Embodied knowledge has three distinguishing characteristics, its '*object*, its *unawareness* and its *embeddedness*', as 'it is based on sensory-motor interactions with nature' (2000: 162). The human possesses it without awareness of its cognitive content and it is limited to being exercised through direct contact with nature. Practical knowledge is characterised by being procedural, implicit, expressed in skills of the body, and tacit; it allows understanding reality through practice instead of discursive deliberation and abstract theorising (Archer, 2000: 166). Discursive knowledge entails scholarship and results out of the abstract attempt to understand causal powers, i.e. how things really work.

²⁸ In the natural order, the first-order emotions – emerging from the body-environment relation – are experienced viscerally, e.g. physical pleasure and pain (2000: 199). In the practical order, emotions are experienced as competences that arise from the relationship between the subject towards objects in the world. Emotions provide information on the successful performance of practical tasks, e.g. the euphoria or frustration we feel in whether we successfully managed to put up a painting. In the discursive order, emotions are concerned with self-worth, their imports are normative and they emerge out of a subject/subject relationship. Humans transform first-order emotions into second-order emotional commentary through the process of reflexivity. Reflexivity helps humans review, articulate and monitor or transmute the emotional commentary.

²⁹ Ian Burkitt challenges that Archer limits emotions to individualised commentaries, which is said to miss the role of relational emotions, i.e. the way humans emotionally identify with others and how this affects their internal conversation (Burkitt, 2012: 463). Reflexive dialogues entail feelings and emotions not just as '*attendants* to reflexivity; they are the *basis* and *motive* of reflexive thought, [...] our thoughts are always coloured by emotion so that we never see the world in a neutral way' (2012: 469).

³⁰ Archer puts forward three arguments to justify a primacy of practice. Firstly, that bodily self-consciousness is shared by all higher animal species rather than being 'social gifts' (2000: 122). Secondly, humans interact with an undifferentiated reality from an early age,

an emphasis on human relationality and sociability, as visible in her next distinction, between actors and agents. Human beings are also agents, i.e. part of a collective with certain aims and privileges, prior to becoming actors. We are agents by virtue of our position in society, for example our 'working class' background amongst other social distinctions. Agents, as groups or collectives, have properties irreducible to individual people, agency is a relational property of people (1995: 274).³¹ This means that although humans have a relatively independent sense of self, personhood is always already embedded in a context that shapes the logic of future action. The social actor, in contrast, emerges out of a person's active pursuit of goals in society; an actor – always singular – is irreducible to agency – always collectively held – and irreducible to the person (Archer, 1995: 280). Socialisation entails that humans become aware of the distinction between self and others, and between the social and the non-social, and that they use performative and memory capacities in order to learn how to take part in social practices (2000: 126).

In summary, we cannot start theorising a phenomenon such as judging responsibility-for-complicity, without an adequate account of the people who engage in social transformation and reproduction. According to Archer, such an account necessarily has to tell us something about their distinct personhood, which is the crucial source of innovation and of the 'it-seems-to-me' on which Arendt's pluralism, rests. It also has to consider human's engagement with different orders of reality, the prevalent forms of agency in society, and the particular social actors that emerge from the interplay between person and social agency. A focus on the distinct properties and mechanisms of structure and agency thus amounts to a commitment to a mind-independent, stratified reality alongside a concern with subjectivity that is embodied, self-aware, and emerges out of a varied engagement with the world. In the following, I turn to one of the key mechanisms that mediates between objectivity and subjectivity, or structure and agency, reflexivity.

developing their self through practice as they learn to distinguish between our self and the world outside of it, e.g. a hot instrument, which we learn to avoid. Finally, Archer argues that humans are pre-disposed to judge if social conditions are de-humanising or not (2000: 124).

³¹ Agency adds a second morphogenesis/-stasis cycle, or double morphogenesis/ -stasis: the agents are themselves transformed in the process of changing the social system they engage in. Humans can be corporate agents who are organised and share a motivation to change society in certain ways. They can also be primary agents, grouped together by virtue of their similar life chances and position in relation to society's institutions. Primary agents are seemingly passive but they contribute to social transformation by providing a response to the corporate agents' interaction.

3.3 The Mediation between Structure and Agency through Reflexivity

As the final piece of the puzzle, I explore reflexivity as a neglected focus alongside the emphasis on *reflective*³² judgement, which I developed in chapter 1 and 2.³³ Without reflexive agency there can be no judgement; the internal conversation is one of the key features that mediates between structures and agency, between the internal and external world, and between the subjective and objective. Any account of political judgement must therefore tell us something about this mechanism that inevitably and fundamentally shapes how humans judge and create a common world. In section 3.3.1, I address Archer's empirical research that captures the stratified character of reflexivity from within which judgement and action develops. Humans think differently and these differences are not random, plus, they have important socio-political implications. In section 3.3.2, I turn to her work on late modernity to shed light on how the mediation process of reflexivity is changing amidst broader structural and cultural transformations. If we wish to think through the problem of how to judge responsibility-for-complicity, we need to take stock of the changes to reflexive agency in late modernity.

In her book *Structure, Agency and the Internal Conversation* (2003), Archer points to a negative consensus on the relationship between structure and agency in social theory that rejects the position of social determinism, i.e. the denial that agency has a causally efficacious role to play for social transformation. Beyond this, agreement is rare. Debates cover the ontological status of agency and structure, the relation between the objective and the subjective, or even, the possibility of transcending these distinctions through central conflation. The only constant seems to be the

³² Archer distinguishes reflection as the '*action of a subject towards an object*', for example reflecting on the merits of 'Brexit' or whether it is safe to cross a road, from the self-referential character of reflexivity in the form '*subject-object-subject*' (Archer, 2009: 2), i.e.: what are the effects of 'Brexit' for me, or is this road safe for me to cross. Clearly, the boundary between these two categories is hazy. I refer to reflective judgement primarily to indicate a focus on representative thinking and the engagement with a plurality of perspectives.

³³ Arendt pointed to the mental activities of thinking and willing as central places of contestation in post-foundational modernity, but her philosophical treatment of reflexivity remained underdeveloped. Archer shares this view on Arendt's account of thinking and challenges Arendt's suggestion that the inner dialogue resembles talking to a friend (Archer, 2007: 67). Archer's research in turn can be criticised for linking reflexivity too closely to its implication for action, neglecting the distinct role of thinking captured by Arendt and discussed in chapter 1 (cf. Walsh, 2015).

often-unquestioned acceptance of a notion of human beings as *reflexive* beings that are embodied, intelligent and open to social influences.

At the same time, reflexivity remains under-conceptualised and under-researched. The concept has instead become popular in recent years as *external* phenomenon attributed to social systems rather than individuals (Archer, 2008: 2).³⁴ In contrast, Archer turns to reflexivity as an *internal* phenomenon, constituted by an internal conversation, that mediates between structure and agency.³⁵ She claims that reflexivity possesses genuine interiority, is ontologically subjective and causally efficacious. It is exactly these irreducible, distinctive *personal* properties of reflexivity that makes reflexivity the missing mechanism of mediation required for an 'adequate account of social conditioning' (Archer, 2003: 16).

Archer defines reflexivity as '*the regular exercise of the mental ability, shared by all normal people, to consider themselves in relation to their (social) contexts and vice versa*' (Archer, 2007: 4). Reflexivity is a personal emergent property, which gives people authorship over their own social projects and makes them active agents (Archer, 2003: 34, 94). Internal conversation is the talk all people 'have with themselves, within their own heads, usually silently and usually from an early age' (2007: 2). It provides a prism through which to negotiate between the internal and

³⁴ The popularity of terminology such as reflexive sociology or reflexive modernity culminated in the extended reflexivity thesis in social theory, which identifies an increase in reflexivity – *referring to a need and ability to shape one's own identity* – in Western society over the last few decades (cf. Adams, 2006: 512). What this thesis entails may vary extensively. Giddens and Ulrich Beck, for example, identify the lack of social structure as a basic feature of late modernity, leading to heightened reflexivity (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Giddens, 1991). Archer and other critical realists in turn take issue with their claims of institutionalised individualism. They reject the portrayal of the relationship between traditionalism and reflexivity as zero-sum, where extended reflexivity becomes the response to a decline in structures and the emergence of self-culture (Archer, 2012: 3).

³⁵ A point of debate has been the relationship between habitus as Bourdieu conceived it and Archer's reflexivity. The link between habitus and reflexivity led to extended discussion between Archer and other researchers, through numerous channels and platforms. Many suggest the two projects complement each other in specific ways (Adams, 2003, 2006, 2007; Caetano, 2015; Chandler, 2013; Elder-Vass, 2007; Elder-Vass, 2010; Farrugia, 2013; Fleetwood, 2008; Mouzelis, 2008; Mutch, 2004; Sayer, 2009; Sweetman, 2003; Vogler, 2016). Archer however rejects the hybridisation of the two key mechanisms for social conditioning at ontological, theoretical, and empirical level. She seems to reduce habitus to routine, and her critics therefore argue that she obscures the creative potential of the non-cognitive and more generally provides a problematic preference for activity over passivity (Burkitt, 2016). Due to these clear lines drawn on both sides, it seems most useful to think of habitus and reflexivity, as Archer and Bourdieu conceive of them, as different tools that help capture distinct elements of the social conditioning process.

the external context, and between the personal and the social.³⁶ Over time, the reflexive practice produces a *modus vivendi* that responds to the varied concerns that arise from the three orders of reality. This *modus vivendi* frames how a person perceives a context. Archer terms the failure to formulate such a prism, through which to evaluate the various demands that our context puts on us, ‘fractured reflexivity’ (Archer, 2003: 164). The notion of fractured reflexivity overlaps with what Arendt refers to as the incapacity to think, or thoughtlessness, in that both lead to an inability to act and judge by engaging with one’s context appropriately. In Archer’s terms, for fractured reflexives the sequence – concerns, projects, practices – becomes distorted and leaves the person in a state of passivity and emotional distress.³⁷ I now turn to Archer’s empirical research to elaborate further how reflexivity links structure and agency and the macro- and micro-levels of society, followed by a discussion of its changing role in late modernity.

3.3.1 Research into Modes of Reflexivity

Archer provides the first comprehensive empirical research into reflexivity through internal conversation.³⁸ Her analysis builds on two series of explorative interviews,

³⁶ Central for the mediation process is the negotiation between the social expectations and personal concerns, personal identity and social identity. Personal hierarchies of concerns shape the internalisation of the external context through interpretation and elucidation. The mediation through the social hierarchies of expectations follows the internalisation of the external context. Social hierarchies are interrelated with personal hierarchies of concerns and are themselves filtered through the *modus vivendi*.

³⁷ Fractured reflexivity may cause drifting without developing an active agency, which can be resolved through changes in the context of reflexivity (2012: 290). For example, impeded reflexives, a subgroup of fractured reflexives, can sometimes substitute their rejected natal background with new friend relations in order to exercise their preferred mode of reflexivity. Expressive subjects, another such subgroup, lack a personal identity formation process, which would help mediate external information and shapes internal concerns and emotions; they do not, however, see this as a lack (Archer, 2012: 281).

³⁸ The path-breaking research has been criticised, with critics for example arguing that the causal powers of structures and their temporal pre-existence to action often seem to play a secondary role (Caetano, 2015: 4). Although her work on the internal conversation is set in the framework of her realist social theory, with each book focusing on a different element, the question remains if Archer succeeds in describing the interplay between structure and agency at the level of reflexivity in her empirical work. Archer also stands accused of undermining the role of structures by describing them as only affecting the projects human beings reflect upon, but not the reflection itself – how socialization can also happen internally (2015: 8). Ian Burkitt (2012: 464) also criticises Archer’s positioning of reflexivity as private and sees in her statement that reflexivity provides a *relatively* autonomous personal property a big step down from the original realist position claiming structure and agency to be ontologically distinct with different properties and powers.

conducted in Coventry and at her department at the University of Warwick respectively, as foundation for a trilogy of books on the subject (Archer, 2003, 2007, 2012). This research enabled her to identify three main modes of reflexivity, alongside what she categorises as underdeveloped and fractured reflexivity (2012: 250).³⁹ The three modes of reflexivity are communicative (CoR), autonomous (AuR) and meta-reflexivity (MeR) (Archer, 2003: 165).⁴⁰ The research indicated that these modes of reflexivity are distributed unevenly across society and that almost all participants had one distinctive dominant mode, either communicative, autonomous, or meta-, with a small group possessing two dominant modes of reflexivity (2007: 94). I introduce their key characteristics briefly, before elaborating further on the relevance of these insights for the argument put forward in this thesis.

Communicative reflexives (CoRs) externalize elements of their internal conversation through discussion and the solving of problems intra-personally, as they mistrust their private deliberation (2003: 167). They adopt a 'thought and talk' reflexive approach that relies on contextual continuity, surrounding themselves with an extended circle of trusted friends and often a large family that defy modern atomising tendencies.⁴¹ CoRs consequently show 'smooth dovetailing of concerns' (2003: 169) by prioritizing family and friends over other concerns and other potential sources of happiness. Communicative reflexives seek to maintain their social horizon, once identified. They therefore tend to be apolitical as they believe that they have already established their desired micro-cosmos (2003: 184). In her sample from Coventry, the CoRs constituted 21% of the sample of interviewees (2007: 27). In her sample of students from the sociology department at Warwick University, Archer identified CoRs to be the smallest dominant group of reflexivity with 13%, shrinking in their final year to 9% (2012: 128). This can be explained by the group's

³⁹ The group of students showing underdeveloped reflexivity was small in number, 12, and showed no correlation to gender or mode of reflexivity (Archer, 2012: 129).

⁴⁰ Recent research in the post-colonial context of Sri Lanka has also indicated the wider applicability of these modes beyond the Western context (Wimalasena, 2017).

⁴¹ Communicative reflexivity, in other words, requires numerous reciprocal relations between the self and social institutions, such as the family, church, school/university, partners, and friends (2012: 135).

tendency not to recruit and the development of students' reflexivity into other modes throughout their studies.⁴²

Autonomous reflexives (AuR), in contrast, are decisive and self-assured and see their deliberative process as self-sufficient. Their attitude arises not out of arrogance but rather out of suspicion of alternative positions. AuRs are willing to include others' expertise on their own terms (2003: 210). Similar to CoRs they are good at dovetailing their concerns (2003: 213), but are individualists and search for contextual discontinuity and 'supra-contextual knowledge' (2003: 251). The AuRs are shown to have articulate social concerns and to lack relational goods – they were 'parented by *two individuals rather than by a couple*' (2012: 168).⁴³ Their reflexive approach is task-orientated.⁴⁴ In contrast to the other groups, AuRs are uncritical of employment in corporate enterprises or governmental bureaucracy, but see it as a means to an end; they incorporate ethical concerns into their personal agendas (2012: 188). They therefore represent for Archer the Third Way/ lib/lab position in politics (2012: 205).

Meta-reflexives – who constituted 20% of the Coventry sample and 39% of the sociology student sample – use their reflexive deliberation to interrogate their sense of self (Archer, 2003: 255). They are critical of the possibility of effective action in society and problematize the social order instead of normalizing or internalizing it.⁴⁵ Their reflexive approach is therefore value-orientated. As 'loners', they neither replicate the natal background nor accept normative conventionalism (2012: 208).⁴⁶

⁴² Those that turned CoRs during their studies, six of the twelve students that had initially possessed underdeveloped forms of reflexivity, showed some patterns: they often are the first in their family to go to university and are motivated by a wish to make their parents proud or by personal uncertainty instead of enthusiasm. Furthermore, the CoRs did not take gap years, relied on help to make a decision on whether to go to university and had extended families. They showed a lack of confidence, undecidedness and generally a lack of a plan or project (2012: 129ff.).

⁴³ This led to a contextual incongruity within their family and they tend to be encouraged to take gap years and shed local roots. They attach low value to the social order, instead heavily investing in the practical order, e.g. learning instruments, sports or languages.

⁴⁴ Friendships are, as a consequence, not a high priority and of low interpersonal intensity. Relationships arise out of shared practical interests, for example out of playing instruments or sports together (2012: 179).

⁴⁵ Meta-reflexivity does not necessarily translate into particularly good or extensive reflective judgement, although some parallels apply as meta-reflexives problematise the world.

⁴⁶ Towards their family they tend to be argumentative but quick to forget or reconcile, move away during their study to enjoy freedom and space, and wish to do things differently when it

They receive relational goods, especially familial stability, support for university entry and financial help (2012: 245), but their MeR develops as they encounter mixed messages concerning normative claims about the social order, leaving them to find their own position from a young age. They had to disengage from their natal context first, to be able to re-engage with the social order in their own terms and concerns. The university degree is hoped to help in this direction and MeRs are particularly adamant about the importance of the degree (2012: 246). Disenchanted with politics because of the similarity between parties (and what they perceive as a general failure of governance), they emphasise voluntarism and charity, and at the global level, support social movements, such as Greenpeace.

Drawing on this brief overview, one might conclude that meta-reflexivity seems most suited to Arendt's pluralist politics, whereas autonomous reflexives' instrumentalism is detrimental to acting-in-concert and judgement. There is certainly something to this observation and Archer, like Arendt, recognises these tendencies. As I elaborate further in the following section, Archer seems to put much weight on the increase in reflexivity and meta-reflexives. Both theorists thus make connections between politics, morality and thinking that raise worries about 'intellectualism' (cf. Walsh, 2017).⁴⁷ However, Archer also adds significant caveats to her claims on reflexivity. Reflexivity is only one, important, property of human agency. The dominant mode of reflexivity that a person ultimately exhibits is not statically linked to socio-occupational backgrounds or stable from birth onwards.⁴⁸ In addition, none of the participants in the interviews scored 0 on any of the modes, which shows that they only varied in the *degrees* of possessing each mode of reflexivity. Indeed, Archer (2010) also highlights that the demands on reflexivity vary according to the order of reality, with the social sphere the least habituated, and that humans use different modes of reflexivity depending on the context. This complicates any conclusions that we might wish to draw from this explorative research.

Instead of hypothesising further about the 'suitability' of different modes of reflexivity for a pluralist politics, I conclude that Archer's research affirms key points of Arendt's

comes to having their own family, even though they appreciate what their parents have done for them (2012: 211).

⁴⁷ In brief terms, I reject a privileging of meta-reflexivity, because it tends towards what Fine (2008) called the philosopher stone of Arendt scholarship, which seeks to find a universal key to resolve all political problems.

⁴⁸ Archer instead indicates a tenuous link between the dominant mode of reflexivity and one's socio-economic position (2007: 146).

underdeveloped account of thinking. She shares a concern with fractured reflexivity, or in Arendt's terms thoughtlessness, and its effects on humans and society. She affirms and adds concreteness to the heterogeneity of the person, which emerges out of the patterned, but distinct internal conversation, that underscores Arendt's commitment to a thick conception of plurality. Archer also moves beyond Arendt's insights in important ways. Arendt turns to Socrates for a sense of everyday thinking (Arendt, 2003: 167f.), and thus privileges an ideal form of thought. Archer's sociological approach, in contrast, upholds her dualism by tying thought to a 'functional general theory of society' (Walsh, 2017: 171), where each mode plays a different economic, social, and political role that shapes the trajectory of society. Archer argues not only that humans think differently, but also that these variations have larger, micro- and macro-scale, implications for society. The modes of reflexivity produce distinct stances towards opportunities for social mobility and these reflexive stances '*constitute* the macro-micro link' (2003: 343), because they provide one of the most basic means of orientation of subjects to society.

In the case of communicative reflexives, their *modus vivendi* is continuous with the subject's original context and tends towards social immobility. CoRs tend towards contextual continuity, which leads them to take up evasive stances towards social mobility and to react to tasks in a self-sacrificial manner; they are willing to sacrifice social opportunities to maintain their natal context. AuRs tend towards contextual discontinuity and react strategically towards social mobility.⁴⁹ They reveal a self-disciplinary stance towards social tasks, and this makes autonomous reflexivity a personal power for social mobility (2007: 190). Lastly, MeRs tend towards contextual incongruity and exhibit subversive stances towards social mobility. MeRs are characterised by volatility, both through recurrent contextual incongruity and a tendency to frequently re-qualify, leading to a voluntarily chosen sideways mobility and a gravitation towards work in the third sector (2007: 252). They react to tasks in a self-transcendent and questioning manner (2007: 316).

Archer shows us that human beings' engagement with their internal and external context comes with significant implications for society and she links reflexivity with

⁴⁹ The AuR disengages from the natal context and develops nascent practical concerns that are to be exercised independently and expressed and realized in appropriate social contexts (2007: 151). This leads to reinforcement, revision, or redefinition of the AuR's concerns in relation to their contextual reception until a *modus vivendi* is established, one that accommodates the properties and powers of this new social context.

social mobility. I conclude that an analysis of reflexivity matters not only because how people think and act is socially conditioned – the social gets into our heads in some important way – and because reflexivity is deeply shaped by human interdependence and by our emotions. Attentiveness to reflexivity matters because the internal conversation provides a genuine personal contribution to social transformation without which social formations could not be explained, judgement could not be understood, and responsibility would not get off the ground.

3.3.2 The Late Modern Context

Following on from the insights into the patterns of reflexivity, this section situates reflexivity in relation to the transformations of late modernity. Archer provides ample evidence of the changing *context* of political judgement and suggests that active, reflexive agents become increasingly important in shaping the move towards late modernity.⁵⁰ Late modernity refers to the period from the 1980s onwards that began with the launch of the World Wide Web and the ‘expansion of multi-national corporations and the deregulation of finance markets’ (Archer, 2012: 4). It is characterised by ‘giving way to a morphogenesis that is increasingly unbound from its morphostatic fetters’ (2012: 4). To reiterate, morphostasis occurs in a society when the interaction of agency, structure, and culture leads to an overall reproduction of the status quo. This state allows for morphogenesis in one sphere, for example the transformation and emergence of new cultural entities, whereas the overall formation is characterised by continuity.

At a high level of abstraction, developed countries can be identified as having started off from morphostatic social formations. Societies were governed by negative feedback loops and a lack of alternatives in both the cultural and structural orders that together discouraged innovation. Modern formations are characterised

⁵⁰ Archer’s theorisation on late modernity responds to the influential work on late modernity by Giddens, Beck, Zygmunt Baumann, and Hartmut Rosa. The first three theorists have been highly influential by accounting for late modernity as liquid modernity (Bauman), risk society (Beck), and high or late modernity (Giddens) (Bauman, 2013; Beck et al., 1994; Giddens, 1991). They are often connected for their shared transcendence of modern class analysis as they concentrate on late modern individualism (cf. Atkinson, 2008; Dawson, 2010). Rosa (2013) provides a comprehensive critical theory analysis of the move towards late modernity that identifies a change in the temporal structures of society at the heart of this last stage of modernisation. For a critique of their approaches from a critical realist perspective, see (Archer, 2014a).

by simultaneous morphostasis in one sphere and morphogenesis in another. The contextual discontinuity caused by urbanisation or industrialisation continued to enable habituation, due to the relative slowness of the overall changes in modern society. The crucial question for critical realists is what the concrete generative mechanisms are that helped morphogenesis take off and become increasingly unbound in late modernity – but never fully – from the maintenance of the overall morphostatic framework of pre-modern and modern society.

The synergetic cooperation between science and capitalist enterprises from the 1980s onwards provides a suitable example of a generative mechanism that helped transcend the cyclical motion of morphostatic society (2014a: 12f.). This generative mechanism also emblematically captures critical realist efforts to show the potential for positive social transformation, contra the often negative portrayal of the move towards late modernity. Technology linked capitalist innovation and university research in a hitherto unknown manner. While this interplay between science and capitalism is open to exploitation by capitalist enterprises, it also provides the starting point for new alternative strategies, as deployed by techno-scientific ‘diffusionists’, e.g. the founders of Wikipedia. The conception of a future ‘morphogenic society’ thus becomes also a normative project in which, so the claim goes, morphogenesis itself produces stability, as a continuous drive for more positive, post-capitalist transformation in a non-determinate manner.⁵¹

Particularly valuable in Archer’s conception of late modernity is her insight into how different modes of reflexivity respond to the late modern context – with significant implications for their social mobility and distribution in society. Archer identifies a new imperative of reflexivity, as ‘increasingly all have to draw upon their socially dependent but nonetheless personal powers of reflexivity in order to define their course(s) of action in relation to the novelty of their circumstances’ (2012: 1). Instead of a form of institutionalised individualism, the reflexive imperative is based on an increasing and accelerated double morphogenesis of both structure and culture leading to almost constant social transformation (2012: 41f.).

⁵¹ Archer puts a particular emphasis on the new forms of stabilisation provided by a particular mode of reflexivity she identified in her empirical research, meta-reflexivity. In addition, she notes that although the intensification of morphogenesis leads to new forms of stabilisation, some mechanisms of morphostasis still prove exceptionally resilient (2014a: 7).

The far reaching implications of the reflexive imperative are particularly visible in attempts to protect oneself from change, which, in late modernity, becomes itself part of the process of reflexive deliberation, in full awareness of the increasing costs of such a choice (Archer, 2012: 305). To keep the current socio-economic and cultural context, a person can no longer rely on old shortcuts and instead has to constantly reflect upon the changes in society and attempt to stop or follow them. The continuation of the status quo is therefore no longer reproduced unquestioningly over generations. Instead, it has to be constantly and consciously maintained, which leads to higher risks and costs.

These new circumstances are more beneficial for certain dominant modes of reflexivity, and, as a result, a decline or increase of different modes of reflexivity is to be expected. CoRs are particularly unprepared for these developments, with their aim for contextual continuity and dovetailing of opportunities, which leads to a decline in their numbers in society (2012: 165).⁵² Change has simply become too widespread to be responded to by intergenerational socialisation. As this process is seen as unstoppable in advanced societies (2012: 305), communicative reflexives will decline and leave space for an increase in autonomous reflexives, who benefit from their strategic attitude to the new options of social mobility available to them (Archer, 2012: 205).

The contextual incongruity and extensive requirement to reflect deliberately could eventually lead to the morphogenetic social order being dominated by meta-reflexivity, alongside an increase in fractured reflexives. Archer argues that fractured reflexivity is not a transitional phenomenon and should therefore engender an acceptance and accommodation at the level of civil society (Archer, 2012: 291). This is especially prescient, as their increase coincides with the decrease of communicative reflexives, leaving fractured reflexives with a double negative burden: internal anxiety and disorientation without external, collective support, traditionally provided through communicative reflexives' social solidarity (Archer, 2012: 190).

⁵² In relation to the students considered in her research, Archer argues that the combination of decreasing relationships between parents and children and the British emphasis on studying away from home may cause contextual incongruity and result in immobility and 'impeded reflexivity'. The thus impeded reflexives are no longer able to connect the familiar context with the context of opportunities.

In summary, I discussed how Archer identifies a morphogenesis of both structure and culture, which results in widespread social transformation (2012: 4f.). Change has become too far-reaching to be responded to by intergenerational socialisation and, in consequence, a new imperative of reflexivity emerges and transforms the distribution of modes of reflexivity in society. These initial thoughts on late modernity suggest that the structural context has indeed changed significantly compared to the context of Arendt's work on judgement. Critical realist analysis of late modernity goes far beyond the transplantation of Arendt's theory of political judgement into the context of value pluralism, put forward by the second phase of judgement scholarship.⁵³ In addition to the break in tradition, which Arendt identified, late modernity offers expansive socio-cultural transformation and changes to the distribution of reflexivity in society. An adequate account of the dualism of judgement must therefore also take these late modern changes to both the judge and context of judgement into account.

In conclusion, chapter 3 looked at the issue of social conditioning. I turned to a recent proponent of the structure-agency debate, Archer, who responds to the *vexatious* fact of society that humans feel both constrained and free. Archer offers an analytical dualism that helps separate out the emergent properties of structure, culture, and agency at an analytical level, which together constitute social transformation. Structures pre-date action, but they also depend on agency for their continued existence. A critical realist, Archer defends both objectivism and subjectivism: the practice of attending to mind-independent objects that are stratified into observable and non-observable layers and the practice of attending to what it means to be human – a stratified agent with a sense of self, that is embodied, relational, emotional, and capable of social innovation. Section 3.3 turned to the key mediation process between agency and structure, reflexivity, as a subjective, causally efficacious, and internal phenomenon that shapes the kind of political judgements humans are likely to make. While Arendt points to reflexivity as central place of contestation in post-foundational modernity, notably in the form of thoughtlessness, her philosophical treatment of reflexivity remained underdeveloped. Through Archer, we gain a paradigmatic empirical research that

⁵³ The latter's re-contextualisation of judgement has continued Arendt's work by showing its enduring relevance vis-à-vis a particular puzzle (value pluralism), which risks obscuring the demands on politics and political judgement that come with late modernity. Instead, this chapter opens the space for a re-evaluation of Arendt's thought in relation to theorisations of late modernity.

brings to light the stratified character of reflexivity from within which judgement develops. Without reflexive agency there can be no judgement. Political judgement and the common world it constitutes are thus inevitably shaped by patterns of reflexivity. Archer's research into late modernity also reveals how varied human responses to different transformations in late modernity are. It shows how the increased cultural and structural transformation leads to a change in distribution in reflexivity, putting new weight on human's capacity to think – and by extension to judge and act upon the world.

The purpose of this chapter has been to shed further light on how structure and agency impact on political judgement. I take from Archer that this second dimension to political judgement requires attentiveness to the dualism of structure-agency or, in short, objectivism, subjectivism, and their mediation through reflexivity. A focus on the distinct properties and mechanisms of structure and agency amounts to a commitment to a mind-independent, stratified reality alongside a concern with subjectivity that is embodied, emotional, relational, capable of social innovation, and with a sense of self, emerging out of a varied engagement with a stratified world. The dualist approach enables judgement scholars to attend to the object and subject of judgement, without denying their interrelation or the crucial role that a public sphere plays for judgements.

Chapter 4 – Judging Responsibility-for-Complicity

'It rests on the old fallacy that good people make for a good society, which denies emergent structures any role in shaping societal outcomes'

(Archer, 2014b: 34)

How should we judge our complicity in complex patterns of injustice to enable positive social transformation? How can we address mechanisms of disavowal that inevitably frame how humans respond to this problematic feature of our common life? It is with these kinds of questions in mind that this chapter elaborates the practical implications of bringing Arendt's and Archer's projects together. In other words, I focus on the entrenched problem of how to judge our complicity in and responsibility for systemic injustice and violence. The aim is to refine the theoretical toolkit undergirding public discussions on complicity.

The conceptualisation of complicity and responsibility is faced with a threefold problem in relation to judgement: in judging responsibility-for-complicity we encounter difficult questions concerning how we *identify* systemic injustice and our complicity in and responsibility for unjust outcomes. We also need to think about the costs and benefits of *attributing* complicity and responsibility to specific groups or individuals. And lastly, we need to judge carefully what it means to *acknowledge* our entanglement with exploitative and dominating practices. Engagement with the problem of judging 'responsibility-for-complicity' thus inevitably entails discussions about the limits and potential of humans' judging capabilities, especially in relation to the extent to which a person could have gained sufficient knowledge of the broad and seldom obvious wrongdoing they contributed to. There is a wide literature dedicated to this complex challenge and it is in dialogue with it that I try to highlight the merits of my thesis.

My analysis begins by offering a brief discussion of the dominant legal and moral philosophical conception of complicity and responsibility. This conception emerges as inadequate in its focus on de-contextualised individuals and their intentional contributions to wrongdoing. My analysis then considers two critical alternatives, a post-structuralist responsibility-in-complicity account and Iris Young's social connection model, both of which I introduce in 4.1. Their approach is more accommodating to the kind of sophisticated understanding of the relationship between structure and agency that I articulated in chapter 3. On the one hand,

responsibility-in-complicity broadens out complicity and equates it with the inescapable fact of human interdependence. An acknowledgement of this foldedness of being human, its proponents argue, could potentially lead an individual to accept their embeddedness in unjust forms of sociability, which, in turn, should motivate their efforts to tackle individual contributions to injustice. The social connection model, on the other hand, argues for a collective responsibility that should arise whenever an unjust system prevents us from identifying culpable, powerful agents. A suitable response to the background conditions of systemic injustice, its proponents argue, can only take the form of collective action.

These theories serve as the foundation for more recent, ongoing debates on an ‘ethics of responsiveness’, spanning across a wide variety of positions in contemporary political thought. In section 4.2, I focus on four representatives whose work helps reveal the shortcomings of the responsibility-in-complicity and social connection model: that the ability to cultivate responsiveness to suffering is presupposed rather than theorised. Concerned with how humans disavow their responsibility-for-complicity, each scholar defends a different means of cultivating responsiveness. To improve the receptivity of the privileged, Applebaum encourages continuous heightened vigilance. Schiff relies on pluralist narratives of crisis that show the contingency of social formations. Critical of the reliance on sensitizing the privileged to suffering, Hayward argues for the disruption of habitual action through interventions by the powerless. Last but not least, Myers proposes an Arendtian re-orientation of responsibility towards caring for the world.

The ethics of responsiveness provides an important advancement from the legal and moral philosophical understanding of social conditioning and its role for judging responsibility-for-complicity. Its proponents attend to how oppressive structures constrain our ability to experience and grapple with the suffering of others. The ethics acknowledges the situated character of human agency and accepts that structural constraints are an important part of being in the world. However, despite their sophisticated approaches to judging complicity, each of the above mentioned scholars holds on to what Archer has criticised as a *duality*. While I use the term here with some abstraction from its original context,¹ I seek to capture the following core elements, which – I argue – are present in the ethics of responsiveness to

¹ Archer uses the concept ‘duality’ to describe a conflationary practice primarily associated with Anthony Giddens and other researchers who she terms Elisionists.

varying degrees: an emphasis on inseparability between structure and agency, which are described as two complementary sides of a coin and require a focus on the structured character of action (cf. Archer, 1995: 93). The emphasis on inseparability leads to an oscillation between '(a) the hyperactivity of agency, whose corollary is the innate volatility of society, and (b) the rigid coherence of structural properties associated [...] with the essential recursiveness of social life' (1982: 459).

Informed by the duality, the ethics of responsiveness is – on my reading – caught between the identification of overpowering structures that leave little room for receptivity, on the one hand, and a hopeful vision of (limited) responsible agency that arises from the normative project of a dispositional ethics of responsiveness, i.e. a desire to identify ways of cultivating responsiveness towards suffering, on the other. The ethics tends to describe structures primarily as a negative context – the unjust system – which undertheorizes how different structures may open up the possibility of resistance. Agency is identified as unreflectively reproducing deeply entrenched social injustices. Exponents obscure the ever-present potential of agency as a source of innovation and responsiveness, and instead overemphasise receptive agency that is produced in moments of structural disruption or through the telling of appropriately critical stories. As a consequence, the ethics of responsiveness bears within it an impulse to seek refuge in a break-through crisis or other ways of circumventing, rather than accounting for, the interplay of structure and agency, and its complex framing of responsibility. In other words, I argue that even these more critical and structurally attentive theories that emerged in response to the individualist account of responsibility fail to capture the *dualism* of structure and agency and, with it, the potential in reflective judgements on responsibility-for-complicity.

The chapter thus maintains a focus on the issue of social conditioning, which is key to my contribution to both the debates on responsibility-for-complicity and judgement. Section 4.3 delineates my proposal for conceptualising judging responsibility-for-complicity, the hybridisation of Arendt's and Archer's thought. Drawing on my discussions in the previous chapters, I conclude that political judgement has two interrelated dimensions: political judgement, firstly, describes a practice of seeking to gain critical purchase on what we share in common. It relies on the creation of a hospitable common world that enables us to refine and enlarge our perspectives intersubjectively through the exchange of opinions and through

acting together. This common world is constituted out of both the things a community has in common, and the views that are developed through the imaginative and actual exchange of perspectives on these objects. Political judgement, secondly, entails grappling with the mystifying interrelationship between structure and agency in order to recognise both the objective and subjective layers to reality. For judgement to respond to these two dimensions – to pluralism and dualism – it must be embedded in a less reductive ‘ethos of reality’: the cultivation of a stance towards reality that affirms a multi-layered, shared reality and cares for how this reality can be transformed into a suitable world-in-common. Judgement contributes to this project through its orientation towards how structure, agency, and plurality *simultaneously* and *continuously* shape the common world, as the prism through which to judge political problems. The hybrid emerging out of my discussion of Arendt’s and Archer’s work, I argue, can help overcome the problems I discuss in relation to the existing literature on responsibility and complicity, and shed new light on debates surrounding responsibility-for-complicity in injustice.

4.1 The Problem of Judging Complicity and Responsibility

The visions of society on which the various positions on responsibility and complicity build are radically different, despite a shared normative aim of positive social transformation. These images are best assessed by looking at how they deal with the interplay of structure and agency. The legal and moral theoretical debates are built on the classic scenario of the heist (Lepora and Goodin, 2013: 55). They ascribe clearly defined/definable roles to agents and focus on discrete acts, which can then be evaluated through the application of universal legal/moral rules. I will argue that this image is highly reductionist and inadequate for conceiving complicity.

The alternative accounts of responsibility – including the ‘social connection model’ and the ‘responsibility-in-complicity’-approach – move away from an understanding of ethics as the following of pre-given rules. They object to theorising complicity as amounting to intentional discrete failures to comply with legal and moral principles. Its representatives, including Iris Young and Mark Sanders, are orientated by an image of structural injustice and oppression where responsibility cannot be easily reduced to identifiable agents without misconstruing the *systemic* character of injustice altogether. A more appropriate response, they argue, requires reflective judgement, which entails a particular sensitivity and attentiveness to the way the world is structured. In the following, I will provide a brief introduction of both positions – the dominant, moral-legal philosophical perspective, and the critical alternatives – and their key arguments, in order to gain a better sense of the complex challenges to conceptualising responsibility and complicity.

4.1.1 The Moral and Legal Philosophical Paradigm

Moral and legal analytical philosophy has traditionally used the concept of complicity as an analytical tool to identify marginal contributions to wrongdoing. Philosophers belonging to this tradition seek to enable positive social transformation by attributing moral blameworthiness and/or legal culpability to indirect participations in wrongdoing (Ciurria, 2011; Gardner, 2007; Jackson, 2015; Kadish, 1985; Kutz, 2000, 2007, 2011; Lepora and Goodin, 2013). For this dominant account on complicity, someone is judged to be complicit if they do or omit to do something, thereby wrongfully contributing to the primary wrongdoing without being the primary perpetrator (Mellema, 2016).

Conceptions of complicity are embedded in a broader discussion about questions of responsibility and guilt. Debates on responsibility have similarly developed a dominant moral and legal framework which, following Iris Young (2011), can be termed the standard or liability model of responsibility.² For those defending the standard model, allocating responsibility to concrete acts of easily identifiable moral wrongdoing is said to help prevent abuses by powerful people, to encourage the powerless to seek justice, and to morally challenge those who can influence outcomes that harm others. The liability model 'enables us to keep in focus the very question of the difference that agents can make to outcomes and to cast a critical eye on attempts by powerful agents to escape their own responsibilities' (Hayward and Lukes, 2008: 12). In the following, I engage the main tenets of this perspective to illustrate that, far from helping to judge complicity, its concern with ensuring appropriate identification of blameworthiness and culpability obscures the complex context from within which complicity arises.

In the legal context, the aim is to develop frameworks that identify complicity in such a way as to enable successful prosecution in criminal courts. The legal perspective is thus 'unabashedly "reductionist"' (Osiel, 2009). Its doctrine of complicity, known also as the law of aiding and abetting or accessorial liability, commonly describes an accomplices' intentional help with or influence on principal wrongdoing (Kadish, 1985). Initially an analytical tool in domestic law, accessorial liability moved to international law to respond to the kinds of challenges Eichmann and other perpetrators posed to justice, starting with the Nuremberg Trials and expanded in *ad hoc* tribunals in Yugoslavia and Rwanda (Aksenova, 2016; Schabas, 2000, 2001). An appropriate conceptualisation for the purposes of international criminal law required a significant departure from the conventional domestic cases of complicity, e.g. a heist or murder (Clapham, 2003; Osiel, 2005). Nonetheless, international criminal law holds on to complicity as analytical tool to attribute individual criminal responsibility in the context of collective wrongdoing.³

² Clarissa Hayward (2017: 397) calls this the 'cause + control' view, where responsibility for harm applies only if the agent was the cause of the harm and that action was under their control. For an extensive critique of the reward-punishment-blame-praise view of moral responsibility, see Bruce Waller (2011). For a discussion of the history of the concept responsibility, see Frieder Vogelmann (2017).

³ To this day, the physical or bureaucratic distance between accomplices and the atrocity, the fact that wrongdoing was often the result of obedience to orders, and the particular

Complicity in moral terms provides a broader conceptual tool than the one found in legal philosophy.⁴ Put simply, it is possible that someone is held morally responsible for complicitous behaviour without committing a crime. This allows moral philosophy to address a wider array of questionable acts, but the broader reach in turn complicates significantly the attribution and identification of complicity. Moral philosophical takes on complicity have responded to this challenge through a distinct emphasis on causation, intention, and knowledge as standards for identifying someone as complicit.⁵ Particularly influential have been Chiara Lepora and Robert Goodin's emphasis on knowledge and Christopher Kutz's on participatory intention as central to identifying complicity. Lepora and Goodin understand complicity as an actor's implication in another's wrongdoing, who should or could have known the primary agent's intentions (2013: 42). Kutz (2011) suggests that a focus on shared intention offers a helpful way to move beyond a narrow focus on causation and to explore the broader context of moral responsibility. Attributing complicity accordingly requires not only finding out the extent to which the accomplice was essential to the wrongdoing, including the causal connection and proximity to the wrongful action; it also requires a consideration of the accomplice's intentions: did they approve of and support the burglary?⁶

The common feature in the moral and legal perspective on complicity is their focus on individual, identifiable actors. Additionally, this framework traditionally embraces a backward-looking approach to complicity – seeking to identify whether a person's discrete action contributed to wrongdoing. Theorists are increasingly introducing forward-looking criteria, moving from a strategy of retribution to risk-reduction, and incorporate collective dimensions to agency (Kutz, 2011: 149). Nonetheless,

pressures on the mind-sets of accomplices during oppressive regimes, continue to prove uniquely difficult for legal philosophy and international law to deal with (Aksenova, 2016).

⁴ According to Gregory Mellema (2011) the legal and moral debates of complicity remain largely separate. They reveal a different focus, legal theorists being mainly concerned with how to successfully prosecute perpetrators and accomplices.

⁵ As explored by Chiara Lepora and Robert Goodin (2013), these standards of complicity help separate different activities, too easily summarised under the term complicity. Related concepts include connivance, contiguity, collusion, collaboration, condoning, conspiring, and full joint wrongdoing.

⁶ These are commonly termed the *actus rea* (guilty act) and *mens rea* (guilty mind set) requirement in legal theory. John Gardner (2007) for example insists that complicity necessarily requires a causal contribution by the accomplice to the principal wrongdoing. In contrast, Kutz (2007) suggests that such causal necessity applies only to accomplice liability in general but not in any particular instance.

academics favouring a more structuralist lens on complicity find this analytical approach inherently flawed (Afxentiou et al., 2016). Their criticisms invoke typical problems associated with methodological individualism, notably the isolation of activities from their specific social context and history. When focusing on collective action problems, e.g. global poverty or climate change, analysis remains wedded to aggregating individuals' acts.⁷ This 'atomistic' or individualist⁸ account of complicity thus presupposes identifiable wrongdoing and wrongdoers and a deliberate act of complicity.

Not being complicit is presented as the norm of human existence, which means complicity is confined to the explicit breaking of laws or to openly immoral behaviour. The framework operates under the tacit assumption that 'the accomplice could *avoid* being complicit and walk through life never *failing* to avoid it' (Afxentiou et al., 2016: 2). This makes the dominant framework unable to capture the numerous ways in which temporally dynamic structures shape the context of complicity and thus affect the many dimensions of socially embedded human agency (cf. Mihai, 2019). It risks underestimating structures of complicity that, in their pervasiveness, make complicity seem necessary or inevitable, often as a choice between two forms of complicitous action.

A preference for explicit acts of contributing to wrongdoing, and for connecting complicity to blame and culpability, leads the legal and moral philosophical approach to assume that a trade-off is inevitable between ensuring that complicity is easily identifiable and the larger normative goal of identifying and judging marginal, but significant, contributions to wrongdoing. As Osiel (2009) acknowledges, this approach is unabashedly reductionist. It risks becoming self-defeating, foreclosing any serious attempt to provide a fuller description of social injustice. In response, this dissertation's goal is to provide insights on how to overcome these blind-spots through my 'hybrid' account. First, however, I examine the existing alternative perspectives to the legal-moral philosophical ones. They show how we can theorise

⁷ Going back to the approach presented in chapter 3, critical realism, especially Porpora (2014), opposes this reductionism through an emergentist view that considers how action can contribute to social harm at different levels of social reality.

⁸ Kutz (2000) describes it as individualist in three ways: its subject is an individual, its object the individual's actions, and the basis for attributing complicity, characteristics of that individual.

complicity without leading to a trade-off between improving the attribution of guilt and capturing a complex social reality.

4.1.2 Two Critical Alternatives

In this section, I will provide a brief outline of the two main alternatives, a post-structuralist responsibility-in-complicity account and Young's social connection model. They show that complicity can be conceived in ways that avoid the shortcomings associated with a focus on identifying marginal contributions to wrongdoing and culpable, responsible agency. The two alternative accounts attribute complicity to a wide variety of people for their indirect everyday contributions to systemic injustice, in relation to which they have a collective, forward-looking responsibility and a duty to change structural oppression. There are also notable differences between the two critical alternatives: while both retain the focus on the actions and situation of the privileged and the marginalised, Young's social connection model is coloured by Arendt's insights on political responsibility and orientated towards transforming the common world. In contrast, post-structuralists emphasise personal responsibility orientated by a self-other binary.⁹ Both theories provide equally useful ways of conceiving complicity. I evaluate their contribution in section 4.2.

Iris Young's posthumously published *Responsibility for Justice* (2011) builds on Arendt's insights into responsibility and complicity. Young takes up Arendt's distinction between guilt and political responsibility to argue that we have a *political* responsibility for changing injustice, even if we cannot be identified as blameworthy or culpable.¹⁰ Arendt (2003) had argued that under the Nazi regime the possibility of claiming neutrality towards the injustices committed decreased significantly. She nonetheless insisted that only a small group of people could be claimed to be guilty and legally culpable. Arendt instead turned to political responsibility and suggested

⁹ Young and her followers do not accept the totalising, general meaning of complicity-as-being, central to the post-structuralist perspective. Jade Schiff, for example, rejects the overwhelming character of foldedness as a pre-condition for taking up responsibility. She emphasises that encounters of the other and the responsibility that arises out of them, are always situated, dependent on the context and stories we tell ourselves (2014: 26).

¹⁰ For critical engagement with the book, see for example Christian Barry and Luara Ferracioli (2013) and Christian Neuhäuser (2014).

that humans can have political responsibility in relation to crimes against humanity, because of their *membership* in a political community.

Young both challenges Arendt's understanding of responsibility and sets out to show that Arendt has a complex conception of political responsibility that accommodates her own, different interpretation of responsibility. It is, Young argues, 'a mystification to say that people bear responsibility simply because they are members of a political community, and not because of anything at all that they have done or not done' (Young, 2011: 79). Her challenge of Arendt leads us back to the concern with complicity as wrongdoing, so central to moral and legal conceptions of complicity. Young remains closer to the dominant framework and its focus on complicity as attributable to specific contributions, but she explicitly moves beyond a concern with culpability and blameworthiness.

Young's proposed social connection model of responsibility takes up Arendt's analysis of responsibility in the context of structural social injustice. By this she means the systematic 'domination or deprivation of the means to develop and exercise' the capacities of a large group of people, which enables 'others to dominate or to have a wide range of opportunities' (Young, 2011: 52). As an example, Young relies especially on the systematic exclusion from the housing market of the economically vulnerable. This structural injustice is irreducible to individuals' choices or the actions of powerful institutions, for example landlords' associations. Young's model therefore seeks to understand how humans interact in complex ways to produce outcomes they would themselves consider to be unjust (2011: 108).

Young concludes that a suitable response requires collective action to resolve the background conditions of injustice. She articulates a shared responsibility by those who contribute to structural processes with unjust outcomes. Her notion of responsibility falls on anyone, by virtue of the

'fact that they are aware moral agents who ought not to be indifferent to the fate of others and the danger that states and other organised institutions often pose to some people. This responsibility is largely unavoidable in the modern world, because we participate in and usually benefit from the operation of these institutions' (2011: 92).

Thus, while not distributing blame, Young insists that 'we can and should be *criticised* for not taking action, not taking enough action, taking ineffective action, or taking action that is counterproductive. We also have a right and an obligation to

criticise the others with whom we share responsibility' (2011: 144). We have an imperative to take up political responsibility, which also entails an imperative to engage in politics in the first place.¹¹

Young's collective responsibility has proven an important starting point for current debates about cultivating responsibility for systemic injustice. She elaborates further the problems of responsible agency, once separated from questions of guilt, while upholding Arendt's high demands for such responsibility. The scholarship on complicity remains largely sympathetic to her approach. A particular concern has been the rather abstract and idealised conception of responsible agency. The theorists to be discussed in section 4.2 seek to address this point and offer a situated conception of agency. In addition, the focus on collective responses to structural injustice risks over-emphasising the potential in intersubjectivity at the cost of the contribution of structure and agency to social transformation. It reduces responsibility to coordinated efforts to change an unjust world. Commentators tend to combine Young's model with a discussion of the responsibility-in-complicity approach, to which I turn next.

Responsibility-in-complicity is the main post-structuralist alternative to the dominant moral and legal framework on complicity. Founded on the work of philosophers such as Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Emmanuel Levinas, and Gayatri Spivak, the post-structuralist alternative conceives of complicity as the practice and theory of cultural engagement with others against the background of an unjust past (Applebaum, 2010; Farrell, 2014; Sanders, 2002; Sanyal, 2015; Spivak, 1999). The model builds on a general idea of affirming complicity as the basic togetherness, foldedness, and solidarity of human beings. Challenging the necessary link to legal culpability and its retrospective function, complicity 'is viewed as a way of living and working in relations with others that could have positive as well as negative effects' (Laidman, 2016: 69). Thus understood, the term complicity describes above all a practice of critical ethical engagement with the other (Morton, 2003: 41; Probyn-Rapsey, 2007). This conceptual shift has significant implications for identifying

¹¹ Philosophy, Young tells us, could potentially provide helpful guidance on what to tackle first, in the hope that these insights might ensure the effective implementation of collective responsibility and prevent the kind of paralysis that inevitable arises out of the sheer omnipresence of injustice (2011: 124). Philosophers can point actors' attention to how power, privilege, interest, and collective ability – the fact that some 'agents are in positions where they can draw on the resources of already organised entities and use them in new ways for trying to promote change' (Young, 2011: 147) – play out in complex injustice.

responsibility. In conceiving complicity primarily in these general terms rather than individual acts of aiding wrongdoing, theorists must think about responsibility-for-complicity as part of our understanding of how humans live together. In contrast to Young's collective approach, this responsibility is largely construed in terms of a self-other binary.

Where the image of contributing to a heist is central to conventional conceptions of complicity, the poststructuralist approach works with the image of complicity in systemic injustice and violence such as genocide or colonialism. In these contexts, complicity can hardly be avoided, and even resistance is framed by the system of oppression (Sanyal, 2015: 10f.). Therefore, complicity is ill-defined in terms of singular acts of complicity in wrongdoing that could be prevented. It requires instead an acknowledgement of the many different, often unintentional ways in which human beings contribute to a system of injustice. This is apparent in the context Mark Sanders devotes himself to, South Africa's apartheid regime. Drawing heavily on Derrida's and Levinas' ethics of deconstruction, he shows how the apartheid regime relied on a strategy of denying the togetherness or foldedness of the various South African ethnic groups. In response, Sanders (2002: 10) argues that anti-Apartheid intellectuals, in their resistance to the state, necessarily became contaminated by its workings and, indeed, that their resistance depended on acknowledging that complicity.

This is not to deny that the term 'complicity' can serve an important function in society by condemning reproachable behaviour, but to turn attention to a *general* meaning of complicity, fruitfully deployable in response to systemic injustices (Sanders, 2002: x). Responsibility remains linked with a desire not to be complicit in socio-political evil, which is, crucially, embedded in an acceptance of a larger complicity, 'etymologically, a folded-together-ness (*com-plic-ity*) – in human-being (or the being of being human)' (2002: 5). Mark Sanders (2002: 11) calls this 'responsibility-in-complicity'.¹² Responsibility-in-complicity has two dimensions. At a general level, acknowledging one's connection to all human affairs becomes the pre-condition of taking up responsibility. Through this generalisation, Sanders seeks to foreclose any attempt to dis-embed oneself from the unjust system that left unchallenged apartheid's segregation policies. Instead, he identifies the imperative

¹² He opposes the concept 'responsibility-in-complicity' to Kutz's participatory complicity, which he calls 'acting-in-complicity' (Sanders, 2002: 11).

of recognising one's complicity in and proximity to wrongdoing, including to victims and perpetrators. Responsibility-in-complicity also entails an acceptance that acting in complicity, in the narrow sense of contributing to an unjust system, cannot be eliminated. Resisting systemic injustice often merely amounts to avoiding the worst excesses of complicity. The purpose of the responsibility-in-complicity approach is therefore to separate out complicity in the general sense, which arises from the inevitable interrelationship with the other, from complicities in the narrow sense of contributing to wrongdoing. In affirming human foldedness, so the hope, one's relation to wrongdoing are made visible to us and enable a person to acknowledge and problematise the ways in which they have helped sustain unjust practices. This is the pre-condition for the very possibility of responsibility:

'When opposition does not free one from complicity, but depends on it as its condition of possibility, responsibility is sharpened. No longer can the intellectual [...] simply proclaim his or her opposition. Complicity is to be acknowledged, and, when a strategy of demarcation is adopted, responsibility assumed for choosing "between ... terrifying contaminations"' (Sanders, 2002: 10).

This brief outline of the post-structuralist position illustrates well that the main aim of this conception is not to provide a simple solution to systemic injustice. At best, as condition of the possibility of responsibility, it is hoped that a recognition of human foldedness is the first step towards taking appropriate action, by making visible the many ways in which the seemingly morally good are entangled in concrete instances of moral wrongdoing. The main concern is that this framework over-emphasises the self-other binary and thus privileges an affirmation of the other over the multi-dimensional responses needed for positive social transformation. In addition, similar to Young's model it presupposes responsiveness rather than conceptualising it. Scholars who take up this framework thus seek greater clarity on the potential for human receptivity to suffering.

In this section, I have discussed two alternative accounts of responsibility that move beyond the dominant legal and moral philosophical liability model. The post-structuralist responsibility-in-complicity approach turns to the sense of complicity inherent in sociability. Mark Sanders in particular examines how people can acknowledge the larger foldedness with the other, whether privileged or marginalised. Complicity becomes a pre-condition of ethics itself; assuming responsibility presupposes the recognition of humans' proximity to injustices and violence. From a different perspective, Young's social connection model builds on Arendt's distinction between guilt and responsibility to suggest that humans have a

responsibility to transform injustice where there is no easily identifiable responsible agent. According to her, individuals can be criticised for failing to respond to injustice and that responsibility-for-complicity therefore entails acting together politically to combat structural injustice. Both avoid the shortcomings of conventional, moral-legal philosophical ways of judging complicity and explore different accounts of how relationally situated humans encounter and participate in pervasive injustice and violence. I therefore take their frameworks as the starting point for thinking through the problem of judging responsibility-for-complicity. However, both approaches do not fully unpack the difficulties of judging responsibility-for-complicity and do not elaborate sufficiently on the challenges of dualism and pluralism that I turn to in the last section of the chapter. This becomes clear in relation to an ethics of responsiveness that engages critically with both approaches.

4.2 Duality and the Dispositional Ethics of Responsiveness

I engage critically with the poststructuralist responsibility-in-complicity account and Young's social connection model through a diverse range of exponents of an ethics of responsiveness¹³, who build on and extend these two theories. The insights will serve as a starting point in 4.3, for discussing the potential of a less reductive *ethos of reality* – my proposed solution – for judging complicity in injustice and violence. The ethics of responsiveness, framed also as a dispositional ethics of encounter and response-ability¹⁴, focuses on the challenges of *cultivating* responsiveness and receptivity, when faced with complicity in systemic injustice. Responsiveness is seen as a distinct and logically *prior* problem to taking responsibility that can be addressed by taking the concept of 'responsibility' back to its etymological Latin roots in the verb to 'respond', and by shifting our focus on responsibility towards a practice of relational, dynamic subjectivity in late modernity (Beausoleil, 2017: 293). Proponents of this ethics argue that this lens reveals how Young's collective responsibility and the post-structuralist affirmation of human foldedness raise difficult questions about situated human agency and the limits and power of judging and acting, which these critical alternatives have not sufficiently addressed.

More specifically, Schiff (2014) argues that conventional theories of responsibility are insufficiently attentive to the dispositional, structural constraints that bad faith (as defined by Jean-Paul Sartre), misrecognition (as theorised by Pierre Bourdieu), and thoughtlessness (as conceptualised by Hannah Arendt) pose for responses to social injustice.¹⁵ For, 'no matter how well-intentioned we are, how conscious of our privilege, how attentive to our implication in suffering, we are all still subject to powerful temptations to disavow those things' (2014: 3). Two other scholars,

¹³ In defining these extensions as ethics of responsiveness, I draw loosely on Emily Beausoleil's (2014, 2017) recent work that emphasises how they can be seen as a dispositional ethics of encounter and responsiveness.

¹⁴ Kelly Oliver describes response-ability alongside address-ability as the 'ability to respond to others and oneself' (2004: 83).

¹⁵ Being thoughtless means to 'inhabit a different kind of world and live out a different kind of story – one in which we either cut ourselves off from others by refusing to acknowledge our implication in their suffering, or else submit to ideological tropes that conceal our implication in it' (Schiff, 2014: 54). Bad faith describes why we may choose to be thoughtless, as responsiveness 'involves confronting aspects of our conditions that we desperately want to avoid, and whose burdens we deeply resent: namely our freedom and responsibility' (2014: 85). And whereas 'thoughtlessness entails an *incapacity* to think and bad faith entails *choosing* to lie to oneself, misrecognition denotes a *forgetting* of history through which the social and political worlds appear natural and given' (Schiff, 2014: 117f.).

Barbara Applebaum and Clarissa Hayward, additionally foreground Charles Mills' (2007) concept of 'white ignorance' as central to understanding the obstacles to responsiveness. White ignorance is unlike conventional ignorance, i.e. the absence of knowledge: it is 'a non-knowing, that is not contingent, but in which race – white racism and/or white racial domination and their ramifications – plays a crucial causal role' (Mills, 2007: 20).¹⁶ Thoughtlessness, bad faith, misrecognition, and ignorance are important dispositions that help humans navigate the complex world. They are highly problematic in that they engender a flight from reality – understood as hiding facts of reality that differ from our vision of the world – and thus from responsibility. These dispositions help naturalise structural oppression so that we forget its contingency and transformability.

The ethics of responsiveness recognises that the problem of judging responsibility-for-complicity is not a matter of insincerity or unwillingness on the part of some people. Complicity is not, as I discussed in relation to the dominant framework, an intentional, but marginal, contribution to wrongdoing that could be avoided. Instead, the ethics of responsiveness captures the complexity of complicity that becomes visible when we move away from the image of Enlightenment's Modern Man, who is able to master the external world through rationality, towards a socially embedded, late modern person that continues to remain entangled in deeply entrenched forms of injustice following a sincere acknowledgement of one's implication. This human confronts the fact that they may not be able to fully grasp their complicity and that their unavoidable participation in unjust practices inevitably engenders continued disavowal. To accept the situated, relational character of human agency is to accommodate that, in Schiff's terms, it 'is simply not *enough* to acknowledge our implication in others' suffering [...] For such acknowledgement can be followed, if it is not immediately accompanied by, deflections, avoidances, denials, and disavowals' (2014: 39). This may even lead to the following troubling hypothesis: what if *behaving* as a morally good person could actually contribute to the oppressive system?¹⁷

¹⁶ Similarly to other forms of ignorance by a dominant group, it is 'best thought of as a cognitive tendency – an inclination, a doxastic disposition – which is not insuperable' (2007: 23).

¹⁷ Applebaum poses this question. A similar challenge has been put forward by Lilie Chouliaraki's (2013) discussion of the media-environment of solidarity for vulnerable others. Her work suggests that neo-liberal development projects, concerned with how to

The central questions posed by the ethics of responsiveness are: how does the situatedness of the privileged constrain and enable their experience of and response to the effects of oppression on the disadvantaged, and their implication in that domination? How might we affirm situatedness as a starting point for thinking about how humans can nonetheless respond more appropriately to their complicity in systemic injustice? In response to this problem of responsiveness, Jade Schiff directs our attention to how narratives can help humans by revealing the contingency of the unjust social arrangements that they are embedded in. Faced by the superficiality of supposedly moral behaviour, Barbara Applebaum holds on to the critical potential of cultivating responsibility and points to the critical vigilance we must incorporate into white pedagogy on racism that might help avoid simplistic responses to deeply entrenched racialized structures. Clarissa Hayward, in contrast, indicates that the cultivation of responsiveness is more likely to arise out of the power of the dominated and seemingly powerless to disrupt habitual action and change the incentive structures that facilitate widespread ignorance. Finally, Ella Myers advocates a form of collective action as democratic caring for a world in common that moves further away from the concern with the self-other relationship. Each scholar is thus in different ways attentive to the distinct problem of facing one's implication in the suffering of others.

Sympathetic to their perspectives, I will go through their arguments separately, as each offers a different take on complicity and each comes with new insights. Ultimately, in my reading, they all suffer from the same problem: the critical alternatives seem to feature an irresolvable tension between the demands of transforming injustice and the constraints on human agency. The problem is heightened as this ethics paints an image of largely recursive unjust social processes, which are unconsciously reproduced by human agents, and the hopeful image of receptive agency as the improved engagement with suffering. This tension and accompanying image, I conclude, mean that these critical conceptions of responsibility-for-complicity bear within them an impulse to seek refuge in a breakthrough crisis or other ways of circumventing, rather than accounting for, the imbrication of structure and agency and its complex influence on responsibility.

communicate suffering, has led to the ironic spectatorship of suffering dedicated to increasing narcissistic self-expression. This warrants scepticism about the transformative potential of acknowledging responsibility by assuming one's implication.

4.2.1 Pluralist Narratives and Heightened Vigilance

As indicated above, Schiff focuses on how bad faith, thoughtlessness and misrecognition undermine the link between the everyday life of the privileged and the suffering of the exploited. These structural dispositions raise the problem of how to affirm human situatedness as a starting point for responsiveness. In response, Schiff turns to disruptive moments, cataclysmic events that could potentially expose 'conditions of everyday life in which structural injustice *and* crises take root' (Schiff, 2014: 22). Such moments help by showing the contingency of socio-political practices, disturbing our sense of ourselves and revealing the often hidden ordinary, everyday injustices. Hurricane Katrina or the 2008 financial crisis do not simply make us aware of the systemic injustice – racism, poverty etc. – that we fail to respond to. They also ideally expose us fully to the circumstances of those disadvantaged and our burdens of responsibility for them (2014: 139). Ruptures of everyday certainties could help shatter the barriers to responsibility that arise out of the naturalisation of injustice and violence, which makes them seem objective facts of life, for which no one bears responsibility. The experience of the contingency of everyday exploitation, could serve as a stepping stone towards the transformation of injustice.

How aware people are of their implication in suffering, depends, for Schiff, on the type of stories we tell about the disruption.¹⁸ Her work builds on Arendt scholarship on storytelling, and draws attention to the fact that narratives can both facilitate and hinder responsiveness: crisis can lead once more to a flight from reality. In order for cataclysmic events to facilitate responsiveness, they require first a suitable disposition towards recognising the potential of crisis for positive social transformation. Schiff directs attention to ironic improvisation in the hope that it might prove a suitable source for nurturing a responsive disposition towards acknowledging and experiencing our implication in other's suffering. Improvisation links the past to an unfamiliar present and creates something new to face the future. It is ironic because it relies on the past in order to achieve novelty. Irony is 'a critical feature of public life because it offers a tentative, improvisatory path forward in and after crises, one that entangles the old with the new – our shared histories with our collective and uncertain futures' (2014: 188). A politics of responsiveness accordingly entails reflective judgement as improvised telling of stories that reveal

¹⁸ Narratives here gain a wider sense, including, for example, untold narratives of our lives.

the contingency of current public culture (2014: 190). Stories provide a source for cultivating responsiveness insofar as they help critically rethink and tell the past, and present it in ways that acknowledge the burdens of living a life.¹⁹

Schiff provides a nuanced account of how the privileged could potentially take up responsibility following critical moments, such as the 2008 financial crisis, through narratives that engage with the contingency of unjust processes and the burdens of being human. Yet, her account leaves us with a problematic emphasis on situated humans relying primarily on an unconsciously held late modern, capitalist habitus, only to be dis-embedded by crisis and an appropriate story, which will hopefully stimulate responsibility (cf. Schiff, 2014: 15). Critical realists (cf. Archer, 2010; Porpora, 2015) have continuously challenged this reliance on extraordinary crisis for reflective and reflexive responsibility to emerge. They suggest that it risks neglecting the potential of the continuous re-positioning that constitutes everyday life in a complex, partially open social system. Theorists like Schiff fruitfully explore the improvisatory capacities of habitus to bridge the gap between expected and actual effects of action. Their commitment to a largely unreflective engagement with a late modern, capitalist context leaves unanswered the question of where the responsive agency originates from. The lack of conscious agency in everyday life means that responsiveness scholars seem to presuppose a (fully formed) responsive agency that springs into action at the moment of structural incoherency.²⁰

This is not to reject the importance of crisis and our structurally constrained dispositions. It is also not simply a repositioning of the focus back to everyday life away from cataclysm. The criticism runs deeper as it challenges the conceptualisation of agency that comes with it: for it is by conceptualising responsive agency primarily in the vacuum created by structural crisis that Schiff's

¹⁹ As a suitable example of this retelling, Schiff turns to Judith Butler and her emphasis on the experience of a shared vulnerability in the context of 9/11 that could serve as a starting point for opening ourselves up to the suffering of others.

²⁰ In identifying this problematic duality between non-reflective everyday agency and critical responsiveness in moments of crisis, I do not wish to take sides on the debate over the interpretation of Bourdieu's habitus. Whether habitus is ultimately a much more creative and dynamic mechanism, as Loïc Wacquant (2016) highlights, or not, is not crucial for my investigation. Instead, I point out that responsiveness scholars provide a problematic framework, in part by drawing on Bourdieu's habitus, which oscillates between a rigid society largely unconsciously reproduced and a hyper-active agent that is able to – albeit always at risk of failure – experience suffering and act upon it. To avoid this oscillation, they first need to provide an account of the *emergence* of responsive agency, which also includes a clarification on the social conditioning of that agency.

theory obscures the contribution that both structure and agency always (have to) make to social transformation and reproduction. This is the point I seek to advance in this chapter. The consequence of Schiff's argument is a responsive agent who relies heavily on autonomous agential capacities, e.g. for receptivity and ironic storytelling. Such an account risks ignoring the potential of structures to both resist and produce structural injustice. It further risks over-estimating the potential of transformation agency provides in times of crisis and following the engagement with appropriate stories. Even in these critical moments that counter the reproduction of *some* aspects of society and reveal the contingency of their morphostasis, human agency does not act unencumbered. In short, my point is less to discredit the power of extraordinary acts and moments of resistance to systemic injustice, but to frame them in an appropriate description that accommodates the various dimensions to reality, of which humans are one, important, multi-layered source of social transformation. What is needed for responsiveness to become a suitable response to the problem of how to judge responsibility-for-complicity is a prior engagement with the dualism and pluralism of being human. As will become clear in what follows, this limitation is not peculiar to Schiff alone, but characteristic of other attempts to articulate an ethics of responsiveness.

Moving on to another strand of this ethics, Applebaum (2010) explores the challenges of judging complicity and responsibility as part of white pedagogy. She highlights how education traditionally played a crucial role in reproducing white ignorance and considers her own experience of students struggling with moving beyond the individualist conception of responsibility-for-complicity, familiar from the dominant legal and moral framework. Applebaum, like Schiff, turns to Butler's account of vulnerability; however, instead of a focus on ironic narratives about crisis, she encourages heightened vigilance.

Applebaum suggests that, more often than not, being a good, moral agent actually prevents a white person from taking up responsibility. A focus on acknowledging one's privilege proves counterproductive, insofar as an emphasis on cultivating personal awareness can risk displacing a need to understand and challenge systemic injustice. As a matter of fact, taking up responsibility-in-complicity in a confessional mode and declaring one's complicity in general terms, actually helps avoid realising the deep, complex ways in which systemic injustice is embedded in being white and continuously reproduced through unintentional participation

(Applebaum, 2010: 31).²¹ In short, Applebaum argues that complicity in the context of systemic injustices and oppression, for example racism, is often characterised by an inability (and unwillingness) to identify any actual complicity, combined with supposedly moral behaviour that helps disavow the need to seriously engage with the question of complicity in the first place.

How, then, can responsibility and complicity come together when faced with a morally good white person confessing (publicly) complicity and yet being incapable of acknowledging the constitution of whiteness through racism? The question seems to raise serious doubts about the responsibility-in-complicity approach, the normative potential identified in embracing complicity as human foldedness, on which Applebaum's investigation rests.²² In response, she maintains that responsibility-in-complicity can move beyond a concern with a morally flawed self by improving our conception of receptivity towards others. Applebaum (2010: 196) expands Young's social connection model through Judith Butler's work to argue that, in the context of white complicity, we should be attentive to how normative violence becomes invisible and, in response, cultivate an ethics of non-violence through vigilance, critique, humility, and uncertainty. Contra the violence inherent in subject-formation, Butler emphasises that we have a responsibility to disrupt the closure of how norms are reproduced. Ethics becomes a risk we take upon ourselves at the edges of normative frameworks, in challenging even seemingly good action by, for example, becoming more willing to listen to the marginalised.²³

In Applebaum's account, responsibility-in-complicity remains focused on targeting individuals and relies on their improvement as the source for broader transformation. While a practice of vigilance, critique, humility, and uncertainty could prove important in tackling system injustice, they seem to provide a very limited response to the depth to ignorance and denial. A focus on responsiveness, particularly along

²¹ The scepticism towards a confession of complicity reminds us of Arendt's rejection of declarations of guilt by the German public following WWII. Where everyone proclaims a diffuse notion of guilt, e.g. guilt for the terrible crimes committed during the Holocaust, concrete blameworthy acts, specific failures and instances of structural injustices are obscured (Arendt, 2003: 28; cf. Schaap, 2001).

²² While not directly engaging with Sander's work, Applebaum uses Fiona Probyn-Rapsey's (2007) provocative adoption of Sanders – complicity as pre-condition of ethics itself – as leitmotif of her own argument.

²³ Focus in democratic theory has traditionally been on diverse perspectives appearing or being heard, while there has been a recent turn towards also the importance of receptivity through forms of listening (cf. Beausoleil, 2014).

a cultural dimension, as visible in Sanders' focus on the anti-Apartheid intellectual and in Applebaum's on pedagogy, appears to be too one-dimensional a response. My criticism is here not directed against the refined conception of human capacities for critique, or the argument in favour of an openness to listen to the voices of the marginalised; nor do I suggest that post-structuralism ignores the need for structural transformation altogether. It remains nonetheless unclear how this approach can respond to the duality between the inherent incapacity to grasp complicity and the need to acknowledge this complicity. Even in its more reflective, continuous engagement, it remains unclear how the agent can resolve these omnipresent limitations to human agency themselves. Of course, theorists adhering to the responsibility-in-complicity account have acknowledged that it does not provide a sufficient condition for resolving injustice, only a pre-condition.²⁴ Responsiveness may therefore indeed play an important role, but responsibility-in-complicity must also think about other sources of tackling structural transformation. I turn to two such sources in the following: disruptive politics and collective care for a world.

4.2.2 Disruptive Politics and Democratic Caring

The third representative of an ethics of responsiveness I focus on, Hayward, seems to share my reservations about the capacity of the privileged to experience suffering. Her recent article (Hayward, 2017) offers an important alternative: disruptive politics. She argues that epistemologies of racial ignorance are not simply a matter of a lack of knowledge. Instead, the ignorance of the privileged presents itself as knowledge and thus forecloses the possibility of seeing white ignorance for what it is. A wide variety of mechanisms and practices secure this false self-perception, including the information gate-keeping by powerful members of the dominant groups, internalised beliefs and assumptions, and the desire to seem ethical even when we benefit from asymmetric advantages (2017: 404). Hayward concludes that alongside a 'desire to see the self as ethical', on which Young's model builds, the privileged hold 'an equally powerful desire to avoid relinquishing systematic advantage' (2017: 407). In response, she directs attention not to vulnerability or to improvisatory narratives about crisis, but to the potential of the powerless to cause political disruption. The

²⁴ Furthermore, this is not to suggest that there is a one-size-fits all, and final, 'solution' to situated agency's complicity in systemic injustice.

action of, for example, the Black Lives Matter movement provide an important means to challenge self-interested ignorance and bring forth positive transformation.

Hayward's account seems particularly attuned to the *political* dimension of injustice. She turns to subversive political acts of protest and moves beyond a narrow focus on cultivating responsive agency. She clarifies that the purpose cannot be to convince the systematically advantaged but to 'make it all but impossible for the privileged to not hear the voices of, to not know the political claims of the oppressed' (Hayward, 2017: 406). Hayward also stresses the partial and temporary effect on white ignorance that disruptive politics is likely to have by undermining racial gate-keeping and disrupting the internalisation of racialized standards and beliefs. Ignorance remains an enduring feature of being human. Disruption must therefore, Hayward informs us, target directly the incentive structures for racialized ignorance, rather than rely on an appeal to judgements on responsibility-for-complicity. Disruptive politics must furthermore connect with various other sources of transformation that ensure more widespread changes to unjust processes. These potentials for change include for Hayward the influence that already motivated sympathetic people in positions of power can take, as well as the constraints that broader socio-political changes – for example in public opinion – might place on actors.

Hayward's rejection of privileged cultivation of responsiveness unfortunately leaves the commitment to a duality untouched. Disruptive politics remains the source of a 'tipping point' (2017: 406) that helps move people from a disposition of ignorance and passive acceptance of the unjust *status quo* to motivated resistance. Hayward holds onto a zero-sum approach to responsive agency and the unjust system in which the privileged are either fully incapable or unwilling to respond to injustice or fully motivated to do so. Yet, Hayward's approach does not only encounter the problems I identified with Schiff's argument on pluralist narratives about crisis. The scepticism about human's capacity to judge their responsibility-for-complicity leads Hayward to favour strategies that change the privileged masses' unconscious dispositions that kept them passive supporters of the status quo. Hayward suggests a change 'at the level of habit' which 'does not require regular conscious thought and decision on the part of the relevant agent', but can be 'formed and maintained by a favourable incentive structure' (Hayward, 2017: 407). Her argument is therefore open to the challenges that I put forward against Connolly and affect theorists in

chapter 2 – who seek to exploit the visceral to manoeuvre politics in the appropriate direction. I followed commentators on the turn to ‘neuropolitics’, who embraced the importance of the affective and non-conscious dimensions to human agency, but who insisted that this move is hostile to the political practices that are irreducible to visceral reactions to a social context. Worldly judgement and action may not enable a person to realise their white ignorance, a point Hayward astutely makes. Yet, politics turns our focus on the well-being of the world that humans together make their home and thus avoids a narrow focus on the binary ‘privileged-exploited’ that engenders our disavowal and heightens ignorance. This conclusion arises out of the work of Ella Myers, the fourth and final contributor to the ethics I wish to evaluate.

Myers’ turn to Arendt seems to avoid the pitfalls of the ethics of responsiveness that I have identified thus far. Myers rejects the narrow focus on a ‘privileged self – marginalised other’ and adds a different, Arendtian element to the relationship, a care for the worldly things between us. In what follows, however, I will argue that she too, fails to fully capture what this self/world/other conception entails – in terms of the interplay between structure and agency.

Myers’ *Worldly Ethics* (2013, cf. 2008) does not engage directly with the theories on complicity central to this chapter, but she offers a sympathetic, critical evaluation of a poststructuralist ‘turn to ethics’ from which responsibility-in-complicity emerges. Myers juxtaposes her own Arendt-inspired democratic ethos to an ethics of self-care (which also relies on the late writings of Foucault) and charitable care as the infinite responsibility for an Other (associated with Levinas). She argues that the two prioritise the ‘subject question’²⁵. This focus, while undoubtedly of merit, makes their frameworks ‘ill-equipped to nourish associative democratic politics. The dyadic relations [...] narrow attention to the figures of self and Other and obscure the worldly contexts that are the actual sites and objects of democratic action’ (Myers, 2013: 2).²⁶ A focus on the self or Other cannot address the political implications of

²⁵ Zerilli (2005a: 10) describes the subject question as a concern with the formation of a subject and the internal and external forces hindering freedom.

²⁶ The poststructuralist scholars share with Arendt a rejection of modern strategies of power that separate humans from each other, as visible for example in Foucault’s disciplinary and biopower. They also share an emphasis on the relational character of human existence, even if they ultimately construe it differently. Arendt focuses on the common world between humans as, for her, politics is concerned with the shared objects and ideas and not the individual qua individual. In contrast, the poststructuralist conception of complicity through foldedness with the other is intersubjective in that it is primarily concerned with the people that constitute the relationship – as their focus is on subject-formation, not on the in-between

oppression, because there 'is little room in these accounts for anything other than human selves and others' (Myers, 2013: 86). In short, they stand accused of failing to address the *political* dimension to being human and its ethical implications.

The disadvantage of this thinner conception of plurality is that it under-theorises how systemic oppression does not simply isolate people, but undermines the possibility of collective action to create a meaningful, hospitable world. The problem with domination, in other words, is not only the denial of humans' relational character, but the destruction of the possibility of their acting in concert. According to Myers, then, in its Foucauldian and Levinasian conception, foldedness cannot capture the 'dissociative' strategies of systemic injustice. They fail to address the 'associative' response needed to make affirming foldedness a viable option. It is 'not an adequate basis' as injustices and domination have an affect 'primarily upon *collectivities*' (Myers, 2008: 140).²⁷

Myers' own solution to this problem is the cultivation of a democratic ethos as a care for the world inspired by Arendt's underdeveloped concept of 'amor mundi' and care ethics. Democratic care for the world is a collaborative effort directed at the things of shared interest and concerns. It describes the cultivation of a mutual care for human's worldly conditions (Myers, 2013: 87). Democratic care does not amount to care for the self and other. Indeed, it might even prove antithetical, requiring immediate neglect of a person and their interests. Priority must instead be given to creating and protecting a common world that enables people to address their perspective on the world together.

Myers thus adds to the debates on judging responsibility-for-complicity the Arendtian emphasis on world-building. She also astutely identifies that care for the world entails a recognition that the world is 'a conditioned and conditioning habitat' and that humans are 'of the world and not just in it' (2013: 91). Drawing on Bruno Latour's and Jane Bennett's assemblages, Myers emphasises that a worldly thing is always shorthand for the larger interplay of things and humans at various levels. Care for the world entails an interplay between human agency and other sources of power. This re-balancing of worldliness directs attention to the *dualism* of political

the subjects. The focus falls back on an individual, either as the self or an Other, rather than on the space of action.

²⁷ Myers also points out that such an associative notion of freedom countering disciplinary and biopower can be found in Foucault but not, as theorists especially Connolly have sought, in self-care.

judgement and action: both structure and agency play, in principle, equal roles in social transformation and reproduction. Myers' account thus fits well with the critical realist tenets this thesis endorses, not least as her expansion of the term worldliness refrains from attributing agency to structures and networks, contra Latour and Bennett (Myers, 2013: 101f.). The expansion of a notion of agency, as I discussed in chapter 3, misconstrues the distinct properties and powers of both structures and agency. In shifting the weight away from receptivity and responsiveness, her work offers a way forward.

Myers' contribution is marred by a relatively short discussion of the interplay of structure and agency that frames the cultivation practices of responsibility over time. As a consequence, her account largely falls back on the image of a person, or a group of people, encountering an unjust world that should be responded to through collective action. 'Care for the world' remains too unidirectional a concept, reducible to 'collaborative world-centred projects' (Myers, 2013: 143) and the task of specifying 'features of worldly conditions as the appropriate object' (2013: 144) of our care. I conclude that Myers, too, falls back on the image of a duality and puts unwarranted weight on the potential in collective responsibility to tend to the world.

In sum, section 4.2 highlights the extension of the two main critical alternatives through a broad ethics of responsiveness, which provides above all a sustained engagement with the structural dispositions that frame the way humans judge responsibility-for-complicity. Bad faith, misrecognition, ignorance, and thoughtlessness are inevitably part of being human and pose difficult questions about humans' capacity to respond to and experience the suffering of those negatively affected by exploitation and domination. In focusing on four representatives of the ethics of responsiveness, I showed the multi-faceted character of the insights that have thus far come with a turn to responsiveness. These scholars turned to the potential of narratives about crisis, vigilant receptivity, disruptive politics and a care for the world between us, in order to tackle the structural constraints on and dispositional disavowal of responsiveness. Together they bring into dialogue key approaches in contemporary political theory to political problems that together provide a useful arsenal to tackle responsibility-for-complicity.

I argue that, notwithstanding these merits, the problem with the ethics of responsiveness is that each scholar remains wedded in different ways to the duality

of structurally constrained, oppressive dispositions and responsive agency. Schiff relies on crisis to break up dispositional constraints and enable instructive, moral narratives including public storytelling. Applebaum puts her hope on a cultural transformation via vigilant receptivity. Hayward advocates the breakup of dispositions through disruption, and encourages to use the potential of resistance by the powerless to affect the non-reflective morally inappropriate habitual behaviour. Lastly, Myers focuses on a collective care for the world independently from a self-other binary, which tends towards acting together upon an unjust world. The problem, then, is not that these theorists fail to account for the centrality of structure-agency to conceptualising responsibility and complicity, but that, in conceiving of their relationship as a duality – as opposed to a dualism – they obscure their continuous interplay and separation. In order to achieve its potential, an ethics of responsiveness needs to move beyond the different ways in which each scholar remains wedded to the duality of structurally constrained, oppressive dispositions and moral agency.

4.3 Judging Responsibility-for-Complicity through an Ethos of Reality

It is time to go back to the questions I started this chapter with: How should we judge our complicity in complex patterns of injustice to enable positive social transformation? How can we address mechanisms of disavowal such as thoughtlessness, misrecognition, bad faith, and the ignorance that inevitably frame how humans respond to enduring injustice? The three positions I identified above as most suitably addressing these questions, Young's social connection model, a post-structuralist responsibility-in-complicity account, and an ethics of responsiveness, all warrant extension in relation to structure and agency. In different ways, they fail to address the continuous interplay between structure and agency, that enables responsibility to transform society to the better.

In the following, I explore how the most recent contribution to debates on complicity and responsibility, an ethics of responsiveness, can leave behind the duality between structure and agency. My aim is to re-orientate the critical alternatives to the dominant framework without giving up on their claims of human foldedness and collective responsibility, or on the insights into the varied ways in which responsiveness could be cultivated. This, I argue, can be achieved by framing the ethics of responsiveness through the hybridisation of Arendt's theorising on reflective judgement and Archer's theoretical insights on the relationship between structure and agency. I will briefly outline their hybridisation as the foundation for what I term an ethos of reality, before showing the ethos' potential contribution to debates on responsibility and complicity.

4.3.1 Key Features of a less reductive Ethos of Reality

My formulation of an ethos of reality draws on Arendt's fragmentary 'ethic of reality', which I introduced in chapter 1. To reiterate, Patricia Owens has argued that we find in Arendt's work 'a form of "realism" in which attentiveness to reality itself and the cultivation of a character trait in which to face and enlarge one's sense of reality are ends in themselves with serious ethical implications' (Owens, 2008: 105). Another scholar of Arendt's realism, Rei Terada (2008), challenges suggestions that Arendt lacked an ethics to frame her response to Eichmann's trial, and totalitarianism more generally. Rather, Arendt suggests that, when they were most needed, morality and ethics proved to be nothing more than complex systems of customs and habits

(Arendt, 2003: 50). They are therefore better captured using the Greek and Latin terms *mores* and *ethos*. From this I conclude that an ethos of reality is not a stable universal framework of principles but a moving, complex stance towards the world that is always prone to failure.

The concept 'ethos of reality' is fundamentally normative, both in the sense that our capacity to face up to and come to terms with reality offers the foundation of ethical and political considerations and that our stance towards reality is unique to us *and* open to improvement. The thesis focuses on this normative potential, rather than seeking to provide a systematic approach to how each of us develops an ethos of reality from childhood onwards. Nonetheless, before I explore this normative dimension, here are some important markers that delineate my interpretation of what an ethos of reality necessarily entails.

Each of us has a particular ethos of reality, a multi-faceted stance towards the world that is the by-product of our everyday engagement with reality. This prism on reality patterns the way we respond to demands put on us by our context, whether we react positively, negatively, hopefully, out of fear, pro-actively, cautiously, or even do not recognise the demand in the first place. We might best think of an ethos of reality as combining elements of Archer's *modus vivendi*, which arises out of a person's attempts to respond appropriately to all three orders of reality (the natural, practical, and social order), and Arendt's community sense, which is connected to the shared meanings in a society. The ethos emerges out of the way we approach humans and their individual contributions to our society, the relationships between people and the need to act together, the social and cultural structures, and material objects that shape the way we make our way through the world and that remain outside of our full control. Judgements both provide a source of critical engagement with that ethos of reality and are fundamentally shaped by the ethos.

All stances towards reality are to some extent reflexive, since past deliberations affect our position towards the future and humans always converse internally even if that conversation bears little on the acts pursued. Our ethos is therefore positional, an expression of our position in relation to the world; it is also relational, embodied, and emotional. The ethos is structured by a person's context, but it is also distinctly individual, subjective and causally efficacious. It crystallises as we seek to complete the mundane tasks of our life, including eating or working, just as much as when we participate in political activities, including voting or the discussions we have about

how society should tackle issues of common interest, e.g. social injustice. Some activities may, of course, be particularly relevant for the development of an ethos in that they directly concern someone's engagement with a shared reality and what a political community has in common. Yet, it will ultimately depend on the particular person, their background, and the people around them, as to what has (had) the most influence on their individual way of engaging with the world.

My conception of an ethos thus shares affinities with the dispositional ethics of responsiveness in that I reject conceptualising responsibility in terms of universal moral standards and focus our attention on the practice of situated human agency. *Unlike* the ethics' orientation towards the suffering of others, however, the ethos concerns our ability to come to terms with reality – as an ethically distinct, prior problem. Returning to Owens' quote, in what follows I seek to substantiate what 'attentiveness to reality itself' and 'the cultivation of a character trait in which to face and enlarge one's sense of reality' as ends in themselves mean.

Throughout the previous chapters, I highlighted two facts of the human condition that are central to our establishment of a sense of reality: the vexatious fact of social conditioning and the fact of human plurality. My hybrid account follows Arendt and Archer in their concern with widespread modern and late-modern strategies, e.g. positivism and scientism, orientated towards the denial of these facts in society and social science. The first fact describes humans' experience of reality through the interplay of structures with human agency, the coming together of objective and subjective dimensions to reality. Archer terms the first fact the 'vexatious' fact of social reality, as 'it is part and parcel of daily experience to feel both free and enchained, capable of shaping our own future and yet confronted by towering, seemingly impersonal constraints' (1995: 65). This fact is easily undermined by modern conflationist²⁸ strategies to overemphasise either structure or agency, which we encountered in this chapter in the form of a *duality* and in methodological individualism. The challenge is therefore to accommodate and explain both: genuine

²⁸ Archer (2000: 5) prefers the term conflationism to reductionism, because it helps capture the central conflation of structure-agency, which strictly speaking does not reduce structure to agency or vice versa but denies either distinct causal powers, I will rely on the more common term reductionism to capture the general impulse of reducing the main elements, structure, agency, and worldliness. The terminology may require further differentiation to clarify the distinct quality of the kind of theoretical conflation Archer attributes to Bourdieu and Giddens and the pervasive, violent reductionisms emanating from the Romanian dictatorship, to be discussed in chapter 5.

experiences of agential *and* structural possibilities and constraints to making our way through the world. A suitable response to the vexatious fact of social reality must promote a possible objectivism and subjectivism, literally a subject- and object-focus. By this I mean, that theorists and judge alike must account for a multi-layered, mind-independent reality that is shaped by unobservable mechanisms and a stratified agent that is embodied, relational, emotional, with a sense of self and the capacity to mediate the internal and external world through an internal conversation.

The second fact of the human condition is that humans – in plural – share a world which, as world in common, can give their lives meaning. Arendtian scholars term the normative implications that arise out of the second fact ‘worldliness’. Worldliness is at risk if we reduce human plurality to a focus on individual or aggregate concerns. Attentiveness to the plural fact of human existence, as I argued in chapter 1, entails an awareness of both the distinctiveness and sameness of human agency, and the existence of a common world that needs to be continuously rebuilt and protected. The three features of Arendt’s thicker notion of plurality – sameness, distinction, and common world – are best thought in relation to her metaphor of the common world as a table (Arendt, 1998: 108). A table both provides a physical connection between people who are sat around it and keeps them at a distance by providing a separation between them. Without that table, or generally any object or material that divides and connects, people sitting at a distance from each other would seem to some extent disconnected. In choosing to sit closer together to bridge the empty space between them, they would lose their ability to both share views and remain at a sufficiently critical distance from each other. The common world as a table both holds humans together, ensuring that they remain connected through shared concerns and interests, and separates them sufficiently, to protect their distinct standpoints from forced convergence, as visible, for Arendt, in mass society.

The metaphor of the table reveals the intimate relationship between the reduction of plurality and the conflation of the emergent properties and powers of structure and agency that I seek to highlight. To uphold plurality and the importance of a shared, common world requires that other elements of society, structures and other humans, are given equal weight in explanations alongside any one, judging individual. This is, of course, what individualism traditionally failed to do, due to its reduction of social explanation to the capacities of singular powerful agents. More precisely, to uphold

plurality and the importance of a shared, common world requires a serious engagement with the simultaneous separation and interplay of structure and agency. Put provocatively, on the one hand to embrace Arendtian pluralism without a focus on the interplay of the distinct causal contributions of structure and agency risks conflationism. Conflationism obscures what pluralism entails, i.e. not just a plurality of perspectives but a common world that arises out of confronting similar objects and events that shape interrelated interests and concerns. On the other hand, a focus on the dualism of structure and agency, without analysis of what it means to have a world in common, risks reductionism. Reductionism obscures social conditioning, thus it fails to capture an important part of social reality. It is by pointing to the necessity of avoiding both these pitfalls for an ethos of reality that this dissertation contributes a fresh perspective to the literature.

So how might one respond to these pitfalls through a less reductive ethos of reality? Central to both Arendt's and Archer's work is the recuperation of being human through anti-foundational approaches that propose analytical dualism and worldliness as key concepts. The two thinkers' answer can however surely not lie in a maxim of incorporating as much complexity as possible along the two dimensions – dualism and pluralism – to human experience. An ethos of reality is not a requirement to incorporate as many different perspectives as possible, which so often comes with claims to increased objectivity and validity. Nor does it require a hunt for ever increasing knowledge of the numerous dimensions to being human – although complexity and such knowledge can be beneficial. Such a maxim could prove counterproductive, by paralysing judgement.²⁹

Judging politically, humans should instead ask themselves what the costs of reducing reality in its dualism and pluralism are and, indeed, whether we can even make claims about the costs in light of the unexpected consequences judgement and action inevitably hold. A less reductive ethos of reality does not propose 'attentiveness to a multi-layered reality' as a general standard of judgement, but first and foremost as an awareness of the heavy price we incur as human beings when we fail to account for the vexatious – that society shapes us and we shape society –

²⁹ This captures the problem of judgement of balancing a need for decisions and results with the need for incorporating the wider views in a divided society. Mathias Thaler (2011) describes this problem as the desires inherent to political judgement for enlargement and closure.

and worldly – that humans come to terms with the world together – character of being human.

To ask these questions is not to deny that humans continuously emphasise some aspects of reality over others in their everyday practices of judging. Indeed, the need to judge and reflect on the world arises in the first place, to articulate what is important and of interest to us, in the hope that this reduction of a reality that we can never fully understand, may make our lives sufficiently meaningful and enable us to make our way through the world. The cultivation of a (routinized) ethos of reality similarly helps us to simplify the world we encounter, in an effort to grasp complex developments without dedicating all of our time to them. To avoid judging altogether, and acting on these judgements, would therefore be dangerous. Yet, telling a lie, printing a polemic review, or ignoring the suffering of another, may not only (or primarily) be problematic because they disadvantage some and privilege others. Instead, in seeking to mould, and thus reduce, the world to our preferred vision of it, reductionism of reality has proven exceptionally dangerous to the possibility of meaningful human existence. Key to responding to ethico-political problems is therefore an effort to disentangle the necessary and inevitable ways in which we simplify our understanding (and the actual character) of reality, and the pernicious reductions of the interplay between structure, agency, and plurality, or dualism and pluralism, that endanger the common world.

4.3.2 Implications for Responsibility-for-Complicity

Up to this point I have sought to delineate in broad strokes what an ethos of reality ought to (or ought not to) entail. I am now in a position to sketch the role that a less reductive ethos of reality could play in judging responsibility-for-complicity. To get a sense of the shift in judgement on complicity this thesis is proposing, let me begin with an illustrative example – complicity in the use of plastic in the food and drink industry. At the most basic level, the problem is as follows: every year, large amounts of plastic, for example in the form of plastic bottles, are not recycled and end up in the ocean, causing the death of animals, which either get entangled in the plastic or digest it. In light of this problem, how should we, e.g. consumers, judge our responsibility-for-complicity? Here is a brief summary of the different possible responses discussed thus far. If we subscribe to the legal-moral philosophical way of pinning down what we mean by complicity and responsibility, we are likely to

focus on those that are clearly identifiable as contributing to wrongdoing. We identify a clear-cut wrong – the long-lasting effects of plastic on the environment – and specific, powerful actors that sustain it, e.g. the wilful action of consumers who should know better than to buy products that require plastic packaging. If instead we turn to the social connection model, our focus lies less on identifying culpability and instead on how we can act collectively to reduce the use of plastic. As supporters of the responsibility-in-complicity approach, we focus on our embeddedness in a plastic-dependent economic system and affirm our connectedness with those directly affected by the plastic pollution, in order to find ways of reducing the use of plastic. Finally, if we have been influenced by the ethics of responsiveness, we are concerned with finding ways of cultivating human receptivity to the damage caused by plastic that are sensitive to the dispositions preventing us from identifying alternatives to heavy plastic use.

These different responses will likely be familiar to readers of this thesis, based on their own discussions about the use of plastic bottles and other forms of injustice. Indeed, the critical approaches I examined in this chapter have an important role to play in addressing injustice and complicity – once they are freed from the reductive strategies identified throughout this chapter. The purpose of this thesis is not to deny the value of approaches that tackle complicity directly, for example by highlighting ways in which we can reuse plastic bags. I also accept that in judging responsibility-for-complicity we are often confronted with information – the shocking images of animals dying because of plastic pollution brought to a global audience by the BBC documentary *Blue Planet 2* – that makes us spring into action. In judging responsibility-for-complicity, we nonetheless have to be aware of the limitations to responses that are directed to whatever we feel passionate about or the specific injustices that catch our attention.

Immediate responses to suffering can be counterproductive to assuming responsibility, because there is no necessary causal link between receptivity and positive social transformation. On the contrary, humans have finite resources, e.g. time and money, and the time we spent in trying to find products without plastic packaging is likely to affect our ability to care for other issues. Attentiveness to one problem is therefore likely to come at the detriment of tackling the numerous other injustices that we are implicated in. A concern with finding temporary solutions may come at the cost of formulating enduring, far-reaching solutions to systemic

injustice. Furthermore, the reactions are often a means by which the privileged maintain their ethical appearance of being good people, without showing any real willingness to make necessary changes to their life-style. These and many other concerns animate the ethics of responsiveness. However, in order to avoid its turn to a duality of structure-agency, we need to move away from an immediate concern with suffering and injustice towards a care for the common world on which our capacity to identify adequate responses to injustice rests. In doing so, I do not claim that we can fully overcome these tensions and problems, quite the opposite. However, we can hopefully contribute to creating a framework through which a community is better able to recognise the potentials and limitations available in a society for positive transformation.

The thesis proposes that judgements on complicity in the food and drink industry's plastic waste should be dedicated to establishing an improved ethos of reality. Any effort to take up responsibility is preceded by the questions 'how do we engage with this and other problems?' and 'what exactly does this problem entail?'.³⁰ These questions should not be confused with or reduced to the questions about how to formulate a positive relationship between receptivity and human situatedness, highlighted in relation to the ethics of responsiveness above. Instead, they direct our attention to the state of the common world through which we experience and come to judge reality. Common world is not the same as 'reality'; it refers to the objects, structures, culture and interactions that become common by viewing and judging them in relation to the plurality of distinct perspectives in a community. Two points are important here that I have discussed throughout this thesis: firstly, that commonness is both an ontological fact and an achievement, arising out of realising the potential in human plurality; secondly, that the common world is multi-layered, constituted equally by objective, subjective, and intersubjective causal powers and mechanisms.

The concept 'ethos of reality' captures the challenge of developing a sense of reality attentive to the dualism and pluralism that arises out of the vexatious and worldly character of human existence. In other words, it directs our attention to the need to

³⁰ The focus here is both on improving how a person approaches the world and on changing the reality they have in common. The ethos is therefore equally concerned with an ontological and epistemological problem, which helps avoid that judging responsibility-for-complicity falls back on an impossible subjectivism. The double focus is a consequence of the interrelationship between our sense of reality and the common world – one cannot be improved without the other, they are mutually reinforcing.

cultivate a stance that affirms a multi-layered, shared reality and cares for how this reality becomes a hospitable world-in-common. Judgement contributes to this project through its orientation towards how structure, agency, and plurality *simultaneously* and *continuously* shape the common world, as the prism through which to judge political problems. I therefore suggest that judgements should take complicity in injustice as a starting point to think about how structure, agency, and plurality together *diminish* and *impoverish*, and lead to a more *hospitable, flourishing*, common world.³¹ The following discussion goes through this theoretical framework in more detail.

First, we need to understand what a care for the world orientated towards the potential in plurality, structure, and agency, could look like. My summary of Myers' work has already given us a sense of how caring for the common world differs from other approaches to injustice and receptivity. However, Myers' care for the world tends towards an emphasis on *collective* action *upon* the world. She therefore does not yet help us capture concretely how a person should respond to plastic waste as her account falls back on how we can act together to improve the world. To solve this problem, I turn to Archer's (2014b) brief discussion of responses to complicity in market harms to distant others, which offers an important theoretical extension of the ethics of responsiveness approach by focusing on how structural and agential powers *together* could potentially contribute to taking responsibility. While she, too, embraces the potential of late modern receptivity and of collective responsibility, her analysis of responsibility-for-complicity addresses systematically the 'who', 'what', 'how', 'when', and 'where' of social transformation.

Archer asks that we consider how structures like the capitalist market condition action through restriction, enablement, and incentives, producing benefits, harms, and practices that frame – without determining – human's care for distant others. Vested interests, opportunity costs, and the situational logic of action go far to explain the lack of help for the marginalised and oppressed, including distant others. Proximate privileging over the distant other may here beset those seeking to change systemic injustice, as well as those ignoring complicity. As a consequence, Archer initially attributes responsibility to those with the greatest freedom and potential for influencing a positive transformation, but also warns against reliance on powerful

³¹ The separation serves analytical purposes to make clear the dimensions to an ethos of reality and should not serve as a rule book to appropriate judgement.

good people. Such an approach ignores the multiple layers of social reality. It endorses the 'very individualism that is at the heart of the crisis' and rests 'on the old fallacy that good people make for a good society, which denies emergent structures any role in shaping societal outcomes' (Archer, 2014b: 34). An approach to responsibility and complicity must instead focus on both the context and actors, in short on dualism.

To capture alternative ways of dealing with responsibility, Archer focuses on the late modern dynamic of different modes of reflexivity addressed in chapter 3. A person's way of thinking is the outcome of the continuous interplay between personal concerns and social contexts. While we use different modes of reflexivity depending on the circumstances, humans for Archer hold a dominant mode – communicative, autonomous, meta-, and fractured reflexivity – which comes to bear on our ethical stances and moral outlook on society. In current Western late modern democracies, communicative reflexives' moral communitarianism and autonomous reflexives' libertarian stances provide opposing influences. The former hold on to collectivist values and seek to strengthen social integration, while the latter embrace economic productivity and adhere to individualism. Those judging responsibility-for-complicity might therefore focus on the decline in communicative reflexives, which comes with the erosion of traditional forms of solidarity in society. What a person draws from these shifts in late modernity is dependent on their own reflexivity, but the decline also highlights that we can no longer rely on traditional responses to suffering. Alternatively, we might turn in hope to the changes in the way young autonomous reflexives think about capitalism, e.g. 'responsible enterprise'. The question remains to what extent 'sandpapering away the rougher edges of the profit motive' (Archer, 2014b: 46) provides a key source of responding to complicity. Of particular interest for responses to complicity is instead the likely future dominance of meta-reflexives in society.

Meta-reflexives reject the ethical stances of autonomous and communicative reflexives, but their contribution to social transformation has not yet reached its full potential (2014b: 38). Their reflexive stance towards society combines with the transformative potential that arises from an increased synergy between generative mechanisms in the cultural and structural sphere characterising the move towards morphogenic society. Heightened transformations of both structures and the corresponding culture in late modernity increase the variety of social formations and

opportunities available in a society. This variety means that the function of the internal conversation has to change, too. In the past, with adulthood, humans tended to develop a *modus vivendi* as a relatively stable formulation of one's stance towards a social context. Current conditions demand a *modus vivendi* that is unstable, re-positioning and changing according to the developments in culture and of structures.³²

Late modernity's globalisation and the increase in meta-reflexivity could thus be looked at as the hoped-for potential for social transformation. Young meta-reflexives have the potential to embrace new variations of social formations and break with the logic of competition and zero-sum market dynamics. They reveal that there are alternatives to the paradigm of profit-maximisation, even if this impetus expresses itself, as yet, primarily in the third sector and is easily co-opted by market and state. Archer also cautions that responsiveness to harm caused against distant others remain of little concern to the privileged. Moral responsibility for the poorest in the market seems 'to be confined to the most proximate and most visible poor where offering a "better deal" can, with suitable media exposure, even become a new form of market competition' (Archer, 2014b: 49f.).³³

Archer's theoretical discussion of responses to complicity in market harms gives us a sense of how humans could respond to complicity to create a more suitable common world. She emphasises collective responsibility contra legal and moral philosophical accounts of culpability and highlights the need to take the contribution of both structure and agency into account when we judge responsibility-for-complicity. Otherwise, Archer warns us, we risk falling for the individualism that is at the root of capitalism. Her account fruitfully substantiates and balances Myers' worldly care ethics. We might turn to the combined potential in meta-reflexivity, late

³² The move from large-scale ethical and moral frameworks to an ethics of responsiveness illustrates the changing circumstances; this *modus* most closely resembles the one developed by meta-reflexivity.

³³ Critics might suggest that this account relies similarly on an account of structural crisis that overemphasises, at times, the potential of reflexive agency. One might wonder: is it not the case that Archer is inattentive to the structural consistency with which capitalism maintains itself and the deep socio-political crises that continue to endanger meaningful human existence? Hartmut Rosa in particular argues that Archer's emphasis on the morphogenesis of late modernity obscures the underlying morphostasis of capitalist societies, where the need for transformation becomes the precondition of modern morphostasis (Rosa, 2017). However, even if the potential may be more limited than Archer imagines, the crucial point is that she identifies a way of turning to break-through moments without relying on their ability to change the relationship between structure and agency.

modern morphogenesis and the potential in social movements to provide a different vision of what the common world could and should look like. I now turn back to the plastic example, mapping out how we judge the impoverishment and flourishing of a common world by identifying the simultaneous and continuous contributions of structure, agency, and plurality.

As we seek to judge responsibility-for-complicity, we need to consider the aspects of our social context that *impoverish* the common world. A world in common is diminished when it no longer supports its members in addressing the vexatious and worldly character of reality through the combined contribution of structure, agency, and plurality. Recent political events prove illuminating, whether it is the Charlottesville riots in 2017, surrounding the planned removal of a statue commemorating the Confederates, the xenophobic attacks on migrants in Germany, or the Yellow Vests protests in France. They highlight the troubling consequences of living in a society in which sections of the population no longer seem able to rely on a common world through which to express their disagreements. The problem is not the lack of a shared framework of rational standards that could help adjudicate between different claims on reality, or an unwillingness of the 'left' and the 'right' to compromise. Instead, the sections of the population in conflict no longer seem to be able to think representatively from different viewpoints – a precondition of a shared world – which leads to an 'us-versus-them' mentality that facilitates injustice and oppression on a mass scale. This situation is reminiscent of what Arendt identified as the 'irritating incompatibility between the actual power of modern man [...] and the impotence of modern men to live in, and understand the sense of, a world which their strength has established' (Arendt, 1973: viii).

One of the ways through which this impoverishment occurs is through the reduction and distortion of one (or more) of the three components, structure, agency, and plurality. Arendt and Archer add invaluable insights on forms of reductionism, as they challenge modern phenomena including mass society, totalitarianism, scientism, positivism, capitalism and conflationism in social theory. The proponents of an ethics of responsiveness similarly make an important contribution to this project, by identifying ways in which humans disavow complicity through bad faith, misrecognition, thoughtlessness, and ignorance as part of capitalist and racist systems of domination and exploitation. In response, we need to cultivate an ethos of reality that is sensitive to how the powers and mechanisms of structure, agency,

and plurality negatively impact on a multi-layered reality and affect the capacity to share a world. We need to ask a number of questions as we confront plastic waste: how are we, as agents capable of emotionality, reflexivity and social innovation, contributing to and denying our complicity in this specific unjust practice? What are the distinctly agential contributions I make to the endurance of plastic waste production, e.g. how does my way of thinking affect my complicity and responsibility? What are the reductive stories that I tell to justify my complicity? What are the structures that we identify as forcing us to become complicit? To what extent are they beyond our reach for the purpose of transformation? How do we respond to them? And, what are the contributions of others – my friends and family, my employers, co-workers and various socio-economic and political organisations – and how have we together failed to create a world in which ‘the burdens of living together’ are ‘distributed more evenly’ (Schiff, 2014: 9)?

How we respond to these questions is ultimately a matter of receptivity. However, only in learning to ask these kinds of questions can we avoid the reductionism that facilitates oppression and injustice.³⁴ They help us attend to limited and distorted forms of interaction or collective action that engender our complicity in plastic waste. Thus, we might highlight how plastic pollution is accompanied by reductive strategies and narratives that undermine our capacity to act and judge politically. The use of plastic waste combines with various mechanisms that prevent discussion about how we as a (global) community can reduce plastic waste at a regional, national, or international level. Instead, the problem is largely left to political regulation at nation-state level, individual responses, or social movements – all of which have an important role to play but are only micro-cosmic expressions of the kind of potential a concerted effort could bring to tackling the multiple issues surrounding climate change (plurality). The questions also help us focus on the structures and culture that engender plastic waste, e.g. a consumerism that relies on one-time use of containers (structure). Finally, they make us sensitive to the ways our individual capacities as human beings facilitate this problem, e.g. the denial that our use of plastic bags can have a significant role to play in damaging the

³⁴ The emphasis on asking questions should not lead to the assumption that I am presupposing extensive moral deliberation. Instead, what I have in mind is a practice in which embodied and reflexive dimensions to human agency take part and through which we learn to position ourselves towards a stratified reality and attend to its vexatious and worldly character. This may at times require explicitly asking these kinds of questions, but often it is a matter of routinisation.

environment (agency). The point here is less to come up with a comprehensive analysis of the reductions and impoverishments of the common world along each dimension, but to learn to judge and experience the world along all three components.

We also need to gain a greater awareness of the way that the reductionism along these three components affects the world *in common*. In the case chosen this seems fairly straightforward: plastic in the ocean creates a deeply hostile environment, not least by damaging the global food chain, with as yet unforeseeable negative consequences for humans. Yet, further questions can be raised, including: is plastic waste a key way in which the common world is impoverished? Are there other mechanisms and powers that we obscure by focusing on plastic? These kinds of questions can ultimately only be answered as part of a political community that judges what makes their lives meaningful and what endangers their continued common existence. Judgements can help by framing action in ways that are attentive to the importance of the common world and its multi-layered character.

As the second objective of a less reductive ethos of reality, we need to learn to identify the specific aspects of our social context that (could) enable a *flourishing, hospitable* common world. What are the structures, the powers of agency, and the manifestations of human plurality that together shape a better world? How have we managed to keep in sight these three contributions, as a key way in which a common world can be improved? It entails a focus on plurality, visible in numerous collaborative efforts to counter injustice including attempts to build floating structures that remove plastic from the oceans (Ocean Clean Up). The objective is less to encourage people to invest more in these foundations, but to draw on and learn from positive examples of acting-in-concert. Each of us should ask ourselves, how do we interact with others, and what positive effect on the world as a common reality does this interaction have?

We also need to find a more responsive approach to the way that the world shapes us, or risk falling back on individuals acting *upon* the world. Tracking the negative effect of human activities on nature, e.g. by calculating the cost of one ton of carbon emissions on the environment, is an important step towards a more appropriate engagement with the world. However, the approach ultimately remains entangled in an attitude towards nature that sees it primarily as an instrument and resource – to be exploited in a more sustainable manner. In its place, we need to acknowledge

the role that materiality and social and cultural structures play in shaping our context. The various projects dedicated to identifying nature-based solutions to injustice, are an example of this: the fact that plastic floats on water is key to current efforts to clean up the ocean. An appropriate judgement accommodates this role of structures alongside the potential in human plurality and avoids reducing the positive examples of responding to climate change to solidarity and collective responses.

The second objective of a less reductive ethos of reality furthermore requires more than the embrace of the potential in natural and social structures. It is about recognising a world that is stratified, in which relatively enduring relations and ideas shape humans and the social positions they inhabit in society. We need to develop an awareness of the history of emergence of different material and ideational conditions of how we act. This is again less about learning the history of particular generative mechanisms, although this may prove helpful, e.g. 'where did the paradigm of profit-maximisation come from?', 'what kind of alternatives existed in the past?', 'why is it so pervasive and long-lasting?'. Instead, it is by learning how such mechanisms shape a world that we recognise as flourishing that we can respond to our complicity in injustice. There is undoubtedly an overlap between my approach and the concern with receptivity of the ethics of responsiveness, but to attend to structures means to clearly separate out our capacity for embodied receptivity towards the world and the potential for social transformation in the world.

Finally, we also need to attend to how humans make their way through the world by relying on reflexivity, embodiment, a sense of oneself, and creativity/natality.³⁵ My discussion of Archer's insights on complicity in market harms helped capture how we can recognise potential subjective contributions to social transformation without falling for individualism or reducing these agential powers and mechanisms to broader narratives of 'the social'. The reconstruction of a turn to the emotional and unconscious layers to judgement and to imagination in chapter 2 similarly added insights into how a different relationship with human agency can facilitate a more suitable way of living together. In relation to the clean-up project we might therefore ask what the researchers and supporters of the project bring in passion and

³⁵ To give an example, Archer insists that a focus on reflexive deliberation allows her an improved view on social transformation, where 'personal subjectivity filters how agents respond to the same objective circumstances'. This enables us 'to explain the *universal absence of similar responses in situations that are objectively similar*' (Archer, 2009: 10).

dedication to the realisation of the project, alongside the potential of structure and plurality.

A suitable account of responsibility and practice of judging responsibility situates our response to plastic waste in a multi-layered context. Social injustice is not transformed by one decision alone, and the cultivation of an ethos of reality is an open-ended process that continues throughout our lives and cannot be completed easily or quickly. In some ways, therefore, I am being much more demanding than the responsiveness approach, which seemingly offers us a (conditional) 'way out' through increased receptivity and moments of rupture. We might therefore be worried that my approach encourages denial of responsibility. Any response to complicity may seem daunting or unlikely, particularly in light of the various mechanisms of human disavowal. Humans largely grapple with injustice in relation to everyday activities that already make (some of) us feel conflicted and which catch us between a desire to flee our responsibility, a shameful recognition of our complicity, and the seemingly insurmountable demands of late modern economies.

But the broad scale of this project is also an opportunity: we are able to help create a better common world, because the vexatious and worldly character is something we grapple with every day, even when it seems so easy to ignore the suffering of others. Those seemingly most adept at circumventing any responsibility for suffering still pursue some form of reflection on their engagement with reality, which is therefore always open to improvement. The weight of responsibility is also divided more evenly. The advantage of the framework is that it allows for both the transformation and the reproduction of oppression to come from various sources, often in unexpected ways; it strengthens the role of agency – the potential of a love of the world that actively faces up to the multi-layered, shared character of reality – without thereby neglecting structures. Structures and plurality contribute to invoking positive social transformation. States and non-governmental organisations have a role to play in tackling complicity, alongside self-improvement. Finally, the continuous process of cultivating an ethos also means that it is less about getting each and every situation right and more about developing a long-term stance that is more adept to a care for a multi-layered reality and supports a public sphere that enables such worldly caring. This care will look differently for each person and must therefore always be thought of contextually.

In sum, central to our ability to judge responsibility-for-complicity is an ethos of reality. The ethos provides a prism on the world that ideally ensures that taking up collective responsibility, acknowledging human foldedness, and cultivating responsiveness towards suffering tackles the root causes of injustice and contributes to social transformation. To this end, judgements must be orientated towards the well-being of the common world, the space constituted by evaluating shared appearances, through which we can give life meaning. This thesis has highlighted that this necessarily entails an equal focus on the objective, subjective, and intersubjective mechanisms and powers that together constitute the common world. Of course, how concretely an ethos of reality actually looks like is fully dependent on the person, their *modus vivendi*, social position, context, and common sense. For this reason, I turn to two exemplary judgements that express this world-disclosing capacity of judgement in important ways and help breathe life into the theoretical observations.

4.3.3 Judging DAIA's Distorted Ethos of Reality

To illustrate the benefits of the theoretical considerations put forward in this chapter, I conclude by introducing the case of the main Jewish political organisation in Argentina, DAIA, juxtaposed to a Jewish resistance fighter, Marshall Meyer, during the Argentinean dictatorship (1976-1983). At first glance, this seems a very obvious and extreme case of responsibility and complicity. While not necessarily legally culpable, the DAIA could be considered morally responsible for actions that contributed to the violence committed by the dictatorship against parts of the Jewish community. Meyer, on the other hand, seems a good example of how to cultivate responsiveness in dire circumstances and at high personal cost. In my reading, the case offers a particularly difficult example of complicity that requires a careful consideration of individual, collective, and institutional forms of agency³⁶ as well as of numerous structural layers over a long period of time. An integrated analysis of these agentic and structural forces prevents any simple judgement of complicity and responsibility. In other words, a suitable ethos of reality is needed, if we wish to make concrete judgements on complicity and responsibility that do not systematically conflate the interplay of structure, agency, and plurality. Using the

³⁶ As visible also throughout this chapter, questions of responsibility and complicity tend to neglect the additional problem of institutional complicity and resistance.

toolkit of an ethos of reality, I identify an organisation that developed an impoverished ethos of reality over time, which ultimately made it unlikely that they judge complicity appropriately. It also helps me to show that the movement towards this ethos entailed a complex interplay of structure, agency, and plurality that may not have been problematic of themselves, but further determined the failure to judge complicity when it mattered.

The purpose of discussing the Argentinean case is not to provide clear-cut action-guiding principles that the reader might seek to implement in their everyday lives. Instead, what I have in mind in putting forward practical examples here and in chapter 5, is to facilitate stories of political actors that acknowledged (or failed to acknowledge) complicity and responsibility, which could serve as vehicles for our own judgements on complicity.³⁷ The choice of two extreme examples creates a sufficient gap between the reader of this thesis' (likely) experience of complicity and responsibility and the actions and judgements of the protagonists, enabling a creative and critical engagement with the problem of judging responsibility-for-complicit. In judging the DAIA, I rely on existing, sophisticated approaches to the case study, especially the in-depth analyses of archival material, interviews and documents collected in Paul Katz (2011), Marguerite Feitlowitz (2011), and Estelle Tarica (2012). Where not stated otherwise, my reconstruction follows their judgements closely, although I frame the discussion using the toolkit developed in this thesis, i.e. I identify an impoverished and distorted ethos of reality. The purpose of the reconstruction is thus less to shed new light on the DAIA's role during the dictatorship, contrasted with that of Meyer, but to think about how we, removed from the difficult political circumstances, should judge responsibility-for-complicity to cultivate a suitable engagement with our reality and the challenges of complicity expressed in this case. The emphasis is therefore on illustrating the way such a case should ideally be approached *in theory*.³⁸

First, a brief summary of the key features of the case of the DAIA: The Delegation of Argentine Jewish Associations, DAIA, was formed in 1935 to protect the Jewish community from Nazi-inspired violence in Argentina. Successfully opposing anti-

³⁷ I follow in my approach Arendt's consideration of concrete forms of judgement in her examination of Eichmann and the exceptional reflective judgements collected in *Men in Dark Times*.

³⁸ I leave the challenge of how to cultivate an ethos aside, as this is not where my disagreements with the ethics of responsiveness approach lies.

Semitism, the DAIA quickly became the proponent of a particular idea of the Jewish community, favouring Zionism and the exclusion of communists (Feitlowitz, 2011; Schenkolewski-Kroll, 1991). It enjoyed unique success as the largest Jewish community in Latin America, but remained endangered by deeply entrenched Argentine anti-Semitism, which saw Jews excluded from all major positions in society (Elkin, 1986; Feldstein and Acosta-Alzuru, 2003).

Between 1976 and 1983, Argentina was ruled by a military dictatorship that relied on a violent strategy of social exclusion. The military junta set in motion a National Reorganisation Process – today dubbed Argentina’s ‘dirty war’ – that involved the ‘disappearance’, torture and murder, of tens of thousands of so-called subversives (Humphrey and Valverde, 2007, 2008). This programme also sought extensive transformation of civic society and politics towards a preferred conservative, Catholic, and nationalist culture (Osiel, 2001). To achieve such changes in an increasingly liberal, atheist society required the cooperation of a wide variety of Argentinean organisations, including by the media, corporations, and religious institutions. The dictatorship also relied on the use of spectacular public violence³⁹. This proved a powerful means to co-opt a population struggling to uphold a façade of normalcy to shield themselves from being singled out as subversives. Citizens were encouraged to practice a self-blinding strategy of ‘percepticide’ (Taylor, 1997: 119), to ‘look away’ and pretend that they had not observed the violence in the first place. As a consequence, everyday life became separated from the ongoing atrocities, and percepticide led to a blindness towards the plight of others and one’s involvement in that plight.

This difficult situation eventually affected the official political representative of the Jewish community, DAIA. Indeed, although Jews were not the target of the regime, the junta did harbour and engender widespread anti-Semitic attitudes (Feitlowitz, 2011: 123). They faced particularly extreme treatment in the clandestine prisons due to their identity, with victimizers drawing explicitly on Nazi ideology. Its complex effects on a Jewish community barely several decades removed from the tragedies of the Holocaust cannot be underestimated. At the end of the junta, many asked

³⁹ Although this violence was meant to be clandestine, the ‘disappearances’ were often highly visible.

what role institutions like the Jewish political organisation played in facilitating or inhibiting these crimes.⁴⁰

During the dictatorship, DAIA's leadership focused on ensuring the well-being of the Jewish organisations. Key to prosperity was a narrow definition of Jewish identity and trade-offs with the regime; the two strategies helped DAIA to separate being Jewish from suspected subversion. The separation affirmed the status of some Jews as legitimate targets, and therefore came at considerable costs for the broad group of Argentines the organisation had been set up to represent. A policy aim was furthermore to move attention away from the Jewish community. Resistance to subversion by members of the Jewish community became highly undesirable and potentially counterproductive. It risked increasing the visibility of the Jewish minority and exposing Jews further to a hostile climate.⁴¹

Through its close ties with the regime, the organisation was successful in negotiating some limits on anti-Semitic activities, as well as the liberation of high-profile journalist Jacobo Timerman. However, this success came at a high price for the Jewish community. DAIA in return pursued a campaign to ensure its position as Jews' sole representative, which included the discrediting of any national and international challenges to the military dictatorship that might have put significant pressure on the regime's support for anti-Semitism. The Jewish political organisation was unable to hide the widespread disappearance of Jews altogether or evade relatives' pleas for support. DAIA's collusion with the military regime and its self-understanding as sole representative of the Jewish community nonetheless appear to have had a devastating effect on the Jewish community.⁴²

Contrast their position with the judgements and actions of one of the Jewish heroes, Conservative rabbi Marshall T. Meyer. Originally from the US, but living in Buenos

⁴⁰ This problem gained in urgency, as the DAIA continued to maintain that it offered a protective, supportive role for the Jewish community and its disappeared. In contrast, Jews directly affected by the Dirty War, whose family members were kidnapped and never found, accused it of abandonment and complicity (Feitlowitz, 2011; Katz, 2011).

⁴¹ The leadership had initially raised some criticisms against the dictatorship's accommodation of anti-Semitism. However, the 1977 kidnapping of the son of DAIA's president Nehemias Resnizky, quickly undermined such resistance. The president used his good relationship with the US and Argentine governments to ensure the release of the badly tortured son, Marcos. In response, the organisation was forced to cooperate even closer with the regime.

⁴² DAIA and the junta maintained 'normalcy' by questioning the Jewish identity of the disappearing, highlighting that subversives, and not Jews, were the official target of the war.

Aires since the 1950s, he became a human rights activist during the dictatorship (Feitlowitz, 2011; Tarica, 2012: 101). Working closely together with other resistance movements, notably the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, in 1983 he co-founded the Jewish Movement for Human Rights, before serving on the Argentine Truth Commission, CONADEP⁴³ during the transition to democracy. Meyer made frequent visits to Jewish detainees and comforted the families of the disappeared, intervening on their behalf with the US, Israeli, and Argentine authorities.

Meyer also maintained that the Jewish case did not differ from any other social group that was targeted by the dictatorship, i.e. that Jews were one among many groups targeted. However, his position served to connect them to the broader resistance to the junta rather than denying anti-Semitism altogether. As elaborated by Estelle Tarica (2012) a central memory trope for the various Jewish perspectives on the dirty war was the Holocaust, invoked by the military junta, DAIA, and resisting groups including journalist Timerman and rabbi Meyer.⁴⁴ This prism proved pivotal to DAIA's role, which became unreceptive to the grey continuum between complicity and resistance and thus could maintain that it, unlike the Judenräte, was protecting its community. The trope, in short, facilitated their failure to judge responsibility-for-complicity. Meyer, while invoking the Holocaust, sought exactly to sidestep this narrow conception of resistance by aligning the position of Jewish Argentines with other minorities.

What can my theoretical hybrid reveal about how we should judge DAIA's position? What does it capture in comparison with the critical frameworks discussed? In the previous section, I indicated that judgements on responsibility-for-complicity must focus on the following objectives that enable the cultivation of a suitable ethos of reality. Judgements must attend to how structure, agency, and plurality together create a more or less flourishing, hospitable world, and thus contribute to an ethos of reality that affirms the multi-layered, shared reality and cares for a common world as the prism through which to respond to complicity. Even this brief discussion of the case, I hope, will give the reader a sense of how we can judge the organisation as complicit without losing sight of the world as being multi-layered and in common.

⁴³ CONADEP is the National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons, set up in 1983.

⁴⁴ Following his deportation, Timerman made connections between the Judenräte and the Argentine Jewish organisations, highlighting the problematic framework through which complicity and resistance were judged during the dictatorship: a black-and-white picture of Jewish resistance during the Holocaust.

First, I wish to highlight the interweaving of structure, agency, and plurality over time that formed and informed the position taken up by DAIA's leadership during the dictatorship. Our judgements must grasp the complex historical context DAIA's leaders worked in, after nearly a century of Jewish migration to Argentina. Judgement requires attentiveness to the ebbs and flows of migration from various backgrounds that raised difficult questions about what it means to be a Jewish Argentine, the importance of Zionism and the formation of an Argentine identity, *argentinidad*.

DAIA's decision-making was framed by the perceived threat to the Jewish community through assimilation, together with the younger generations' increasing secularisation and preference for communism. DAIA faced a choice between accepting assimilation and the dangerous path of remaining a separated enclave. Choosing the latter enabled a restrictive practice of Jewish identity, Zionism, but it meant also having to rely on a close relationship with Argentine's power elite for its protection, long before 1976. The precarious situation was further worsened by the general institutional pressures during the military dictatorship, and the Jews' particular political and economic isolation from the three main pillars of Argentina's society – church, military, and trade unions (Liebman, 1981: 316). DAIA's actions are, finally, framed by Israel's and the United States' close ties with the Argentine military regime, who at times similarly failed to respond to the pleas of the relatives of disappearing Jewish Argentines.⁴⁵

We should also acknowledge that Meyer, being an American Conservative rabbi, encountered structural conditions very different to those facing DAIA's governing elite. To fail to address these distinct interplays of structure and agency, for example by emphasising that one acknowledged foldedness whereas the other did not, is to risk falling back on narrow, liability conceptions of responsibility and complicity. With Marguerite Feitlowitz we can conclude that the 'DAIA behaved reprehensibly, it is true. But it was absurdly out of its league' (2011: 125), dealing with pressures unknown to most organisations and deeply traumatised by the Holocaust. A suitable judgment must consider this challenging situation.

Attentive to the structural context, we also need to think about the agency of the DAIA or, more specifically, of its key representatives. We can judge these to have

⁴⁵ Relatives in Israel consequently founded the Committee of Relatives of *Desaparecidos* in Argentina, later known as the Memoria Foundation (Rein, 2010: 237, 241).

failed to develop an adequate ethos of reality. Central to this failure was reflexivity. The internal conversation functions as a socially patterned lens on the unfolding events – neither fully unconscious or socially determined, nor a detached intellectual exercise.⁴⁶ From its very beginning, representatives of the organisation actively saw the world through a prism that denied the complexity of reality's worldly and vexatious character (Feitlowitz, 2011: 113). Their percepticide, as the self-blinding strategy of upholding a sense of normalcy despite evidence to the contrary, functioned by routinely reducing the common world to a narrow conception of Jewish identity, substituting 'the DAIA' for 'Argentine Jews' as a whole.

The desire for normalcy required detachment from the plight of the disappeared and this, in turn, meant denying one's agential contribution to the crimes. DAIA actively sought to undermine alternative counts of Jewish disappearances, told pleading families they had done all they could by lodging official complaints with their military partners, blocked collective action and the potential connection between Jewish struggles and other groups, and, following the transition towards democracy, remained defiant of claims about their complicity (Katz, 2011). As indicated above, the trope of the Holocaust played here an important role. It is by attending to this reflexive prism, alongside other agential capacities through which actors engage with the world, that we can come to understand how and why an institution that explicitly sought to avoid repeating the complicit behaviour of Jewish organisations during the Holocaust (cf. Tarica, 2012), failed to cultivate responsibility-for-complicity towards Argentines tortured by the dictatorship.

The DAIA thus serves as an extreme example of an impoverished ethos of reality, which is best understood by considering how structure, agency, and plurality came together over time to facilitate a problematic stance towards the common world. We may formulate this as a failure to acknowledge human foldedness, to take up collective responsibility, or to experience the suffering of others. Indeed, the acknowledgement of the different ways in which complicity was taken up by Meyer

⁴⁶ Of course, the DAIA is a collective agent and in talking about reflexivity here, I refer to the stances that key representatives of the DAIA exhibited in response to the dangers to the Jewish community. This raises questions about the use of people as a substitute for the analysis of an institution. I also make (problematic) assumptions about the relationship between external and internal conversation. It is possible, in principle, that the representatives' internal conversation differed significantly from their externally exhibited stance towards the everyday challenges posed by the military dictatorship, recorded in Katz (2011) and Feitlowitz (2011).

and DAIA's representatives should play an important role in our judgements upon the case. However, I argue that such an approach falls short unless it is able to capture the distorted ethos that developed over time through the responses of the DAIA and the Argentinian society to the demands and potential in structure, agency, and plurality. Only then can we make concrete judgements on complicity and responsibility that affirm the complexity of reality.

A second, more difficult, question is how DAIA could have developed this, more appropriate, ethos of reality, in light of undoubtedly challenging conditions and decades of carving out a particular identity and desire for normalcy. After all, their reductive stance over the years had proved successful in combating anti-Semitism. Aware of the briefness of my discussion of the case, I refrain from providing an answer which would have to look at the potentials of responsiveness and structure over time. Instead, it will be the purpose of the next chapter to explore further how judgements on complicity in injustice could look like, by drawing on a positive example of judging responsibility-for-complicity.

Chapter 5 – Resistance through Judgment framed by an Ethos of Reality

‘let’s live, but they don’t let us live. So let’s live
in the detail’

(Müller, 2016: 61, o.t.)

My aim in this final chapter is to continue concretising the theoretical claims I advance in this thesis on judging responsibility-for-complicity informed by a less reductive ethos of reality. Whereas the previous chapter explored what political judgement should avoid – exemplified in relation to debates on complicity and the case of the DAIA – this chapter expands on what I understand under good political judgement.¹ I focus on the Nobel laureate Herta Müller who tackled the difficult challenges posed by complicity during Romania’s national-communist dictatorship. Müller’s reflections on her resistance to systemic oppression reveal what a cultivation of a less reductive ethos of reality, as a distinct ethico-political project, may look like.² Before I explain her work’s suitability for my purposes, let me briefly reiterate how my toolkit guides us in evaluating concrete political judgements.

As we look at the suitability of someone’s judgement, we ought to consider how they respond to systemic forms of reductionism of reality that impoverish the common world. Furthermore, we ought to look at the particular weight a person puts on creating a hospitable world-in-common through which humans can meaningfully come to terms with a multi-layered, shared reality. While this process can take many forms, it should be attentive to three interrelated components to human existence that together enable the formation of a flourishing common world: i) the role of *humans, as embodied, reflexive agents* that produce causally irreducible contributions to society; ii) the *relationships between people*, based on humans’ ability and need to act together; iii) the social and cultural *structures* that contribute to what it means to be human. The crux of my less reductive ethos of reality is that a judgement attentive to these components and their impact on the common world should ideally be able to affirm the complexity of social reality while, at the same time, telling ‘right from wrong, beautiful from ugly’ in relation to a specific event or

¹ Although this chapter moves beyond chapter 4’s concern with how the privileged might cultivate responsibility for complicity towards the flipside of complicity, resistance, the opposition of duality and dualism remains central.

² While all people have in some form an ethos of reality – similarly as all people refer in some way in their actions and judgments to common sense – what I have in mind in this chapter is a stance towards reality that is particularly attentive to the dualism and pluralism of reality.

context. My response to complicity is embedded in the belief that affirming the stratified character of reality does not have to come at the cost of concreteness and a capacity for judgement, and vice versa. It is in making judgements informed by an ethos of reality, in general, capable of this balance, that we can take a significant step towards tackling responsibility-for-complicity.

I will use Nobel laureate Herta Müller as an example of someone who successfully cultivated such a less reductive ethos of reality. The Romanian-German writer gained world-wide attention in 2009, following the publication of her novel *Atemschaukel/ The Hunger Angel* (2009a) about the deportations of Romanian-Germans to Soviet labour camps, and the award of the Nobel Prize for Literature.³ The writer offers a suitable case study, because i) she engages in a difficult context that brings to the fore the kind of de-humanising strategies political judgement should respond to; ii) Müller's use of auto-fiction means that writing is both instrumental to her ethos of reality and a source for us to evaluate the ethos, i.e. her written self-reflection helps crystallise the elements of an ethos of reality;⁴ iii) Müller captures the central aspects of my ethos of reality schematically, while, at the same time, exercising political judgement in a way that is unique to her context. In my discussion of Müller, I therefore hope to find the right balance between particularity and abstraction for the sake of clarifying what a less reductive ethos of reality entails.

My analysis focuses on Müller's essays and interviews, especially *Der König verbeugt sich und tötet/ The King bows and kills* (2010) and *Mein Vaterland ist ein Apfelkern/ My fatherland is an apple seed* (2014), written following her flight to Germany and situated at the intersection between literary work and theoretical

³ Müller had started gaining international acclaim in the 1980s with the publication of a series of collected short stories, *Niederungen/ Nadirs* (2015b). The series was followed by the novel *Der Mensch ist ein großer Fasan auf der Welt/ The Passport* (2015), dealing with her childhood in the Romanian countryside under dictatorship, and the novel *Herztier/ The Land of Green Plums* (2015a), which retells the effect of state terror on a circle of writers who shared a friendship.

⁴ Müller helpfully argues that we rely on writers not because they stand above society, but because their writing makes manifest their own agency (Müller and Liiceanu, 2011). In line with Arendt's democratisation of the spectator, Müller's writing therefore does not seek the detachment of the thoughtful intellectual. For both, the actor and spectator are innately connected – in Arendt's terms, this 'spectator sits in every actor' (Arendt, 1981a: 262). Because I focus on the writer rather than solely on literature, my use of Müller does not follow conventional ways of using literary work to clarify moral or political philosophy (Hämäläinen, 2016).

reflection on repression. Drawing on this literature, I first trace the problem she responds to, her persecution under the dictatorship of Nicolae Ceaușescu in Romania. Müller's work gives us ample insight into how the regime attempted to destroy meaningful human existence by targeting personhood and a common world. Once I have analysed this problematic context and how it informed Müller's actions, I turn to her response: political judgement orientated by the motto 'to live in the detail'. This judgement spans the continuum from living in the moment to writing as 'invented perception' meant to create, build, and protect a common world through autofiction and surrealism. In Arendtian terms, Müller's political judgement creates 'the space in which the objects of political judgement, the actor and actions themselves, can appear, and thus alter our sense of what belongs in the common world' (Zerilli, 2005b: 179). I will show how this political judgement is attentive to the three components I outlined above: agency, plurality, and structures. Fidelity to a combination of dualism and pluralism allows Müller to recreate the multiple layers to reality as the source for concrete judgements on responsibility and complicity that strengthen a common world.

5.1 Herta Müller's Life in Ceaușescu's Romania

Müller offers a sophisticated approach to an ethos of reality that can both serve as the starting point for thinking about our own ethos of reality and that is uniquely particular to her biography and the problems she faced. Müller's life trajectory plays an important role in her writing, as its motivation, source material, and as a framing device. I therefore begin with a summary of key contexts and episodes.⁵

Müller was born in 1953 in Nitzkydorf (Romanian: Nițchidorf), a Banat-Swabian village in south-western Romania. She belongs to an ethnic German minority that had moved to Eastern Europe over the last few centuries as part of the colonising efforts by the Habsburg empire (Drace Francis, 2013). During World War II, members of the minority fought, alongside the Romanian army, on the side of Nazi Germany. After the war, many Germans in the Banat region were deported to labour camps, as disproportionate punishment for the war damage caused to the Soviet Union. Romania, initially an ally of Germany, switched sides just before the end of the war and maintained accordingly a victorious, 'innocent' position. To this end, scapegoating the German minority became a powerful means to negate the country's dark past.

Müller's own family captures many facets of the historic developments: Her father Iosif Müller had joined the Waffen-SS during the Second World War, aged 17; the impact of the national socialist sympathies on Iosif's life would prove significant for his daughter's later rejection of totalitarianism of any kind.⁶ Her grandfather, formerly a well-off grocer of colonial goods and corn, had his properties nationalised by the communist regime. He had also been a prisoner-of-war following World War One, and the shock of losing his status and livelihood only added to his already traumatised state. Finally, her mother, Katharina, had been deported at the age of 19 to a labour camp in the Ukraine, where she was retained for five years only to return as a broken woman.

This challenging context sets the scene for Müller's resistance through a distinct form of political judgement in two ways. Firstly, her resistant agency is shaped by

⁵ For alternative biographical summaries, see (Eke, 2017; Haines, 2011).

⁶ Her uncle served similarly as an SS-soldier during the war, but died in battle, leaving behind Müller's grief-stricken grandmother. Müller's father survived but succumbed to alcoholism, which would eventually lead to his death in 1978. The death marked the starting point for Müller's full dedication to writing.

her experiences as a child living in a community with an unresolved, traumatic and shameful past; the inability and unwillingness to come to terms with the past expressed itself in various ways, including a general embrace of silence. This has significant implications for the role Müller attributes to communication through writing. The writer's first major book, *Niederungen* (Müller, 2015b; English: *Nadir*), portrayed the oppressive community of her native village, caught by ethnocentrism and still harbouring National Socialist sentiments in the context of 20th century Romanian communism. Katharina's experience, together with that of other villagers and Müller's close friend Oskar Pastior⁷, resonate in Müller's most recent book, *Atemschaukel* (Müller, 2009a; English: *The Hunger Angel*). The novel binds together various stories of the Soviet labour camps to a fictionalised recounting of the German minority's camp experience.

Müller's work is, secondly, framed by her experiences as a German-Romanian persecuted by the communist secret police. To fully understand why she became a target, let me first add to the background context. Between 1965 and 1989, Romania was ruled by Nicolae Ceaușescu and the infamous secret police Securitate, which relied on a widespread network of collaborators and informants (Mihai, 2016a: 151ff.). Under Ceaușescu's rule Romania proved unique in terms of the cult of personality, the repression of all opposition, and pervasive control of all aspects of everyday life (Haines, 2013: 94). Similar to the Argentinian context, explored in chapter 4 in relation to the DAIA, the general population responded to the difficult circumstance through the practice of percepticide in the form of social opportunism and political apathy (Müller and Liiceanu, 2011). Both entail an unwillingness or inability to respond to the plight of others and a desire to separate the supposed normalcy of everyday life from the implication in the suffering of others that one was encouraged to forget. Müller started to feel the full effects of the repressive state following her move to Temeswar (Romanian: Timișoara) at the age of 15, a city 30 kilometres from her native village.⁸

Through the move to the city, Müller left behind an agricultural society with little interest in the life of the mind. In the city, she engaged with Romanian culture and

⁷ Oskar Pastior was a Romanian-German poet and writer known for his sensibility to language and his play with words. As part of the previous generation, he fled to Germany in 1968.

⁸ Müller attended the Gymnasium in Timișoara in 1968, where she stayed to study 'Germanistik' and 'Romanistik' at university.

language, which she had previously been taught only as a foreign language. She also met and became friends with members of the Aktionsgruppe Banat, a group of ethnic German left-wing writers who had a significant literary influence on her (Haines and Marven, 2013: 2). First attempts in prose and poetry emerged in 1969. In 1982, a heavily censored *Niederungen/Nadir* was published.⁹ The secret police terrorised the Aktionsgruppe, weary of its political position, and approached Müller to convince her to become an informant on Timișoara's artistic scene and the Aktionsgruppe's activities. She rejected the offer.¹⁰ In retaliation, Müller was fired from her job as a translator in a machinery factory, where she had started working before she was approached by the secret police.

Müller's 1980s were marked by repression, including interrogation, death threats, and house searches, but also growing literary success in the West. The success came with resentment and harsh criticism by her ethnic group and the dictatorship, who were displeased by Müller's bleak depictions of her childhood and life in the Banat-Swabian village. It also provided some initial protection and the opportunity to travel to Germany.¹¹ Following her third departure, however, Müller's privileges were revoked. The secret police acknowledged that they had underestimated her literary impact in the West and the terror increased once more. Finally, Müller gave up and requested an exit permit. In 1987, after one-and-a-half years of anguished waiting, and close to insanity, Müller fled to Berlin together with her then husband Richard Wagner.¹² The dictatorship collapsed in 1989 and Müller became part of the struggle to deal with this violent past that continues to overshadow the country's transition towards democracy. The increasing distance from the totalitarian experiences also seems to have marked a final shift in Müller's writing, today focusing especially on

⁹ Müller's writing came at a considerable cost to her and her family. Yet, the Nobel laureate also profited from an unsystematic and inconsistent approach towards minority literature and culture during the dictatorship, which enabled her to kick-start her literary career in the first place (cf. Eke, 2017: 8).

¹⁰ Her refusal to collaborate did not prevent the group from eventually falling apart and Müller and other members of the Aktionsgruppe later joined the Temeswarer Adam-MüllerGuttenbrunn-Literaturkreis.

¹¹ As Müller discovered upon reading her Securitate file, this unusual freedom was used as a means to discredit Müller in the West as a Romanian spy: only someone collaborating with the government, so the thought, would be given such privileges to travel and criticise the dictatorship freely.

¹² The move to Germany was made possible by a bilateral arrangement between the German and Romanian government to enable ethnic Germans to return to Germany. Müller however insisted on entry as political refugee.

producing collages, alongside a series of interviews that provide explanatory investigation into her writing style.

5.1.1 The Impoverished Common World

With the basic trajectory of Müller's life in place, I now trace the problem that Müller responded to. My discussion gives us a first insight into Müller's cultivation of a less reductive ethos of reality: her evaluation of the systematic reductionism of being human and a common world during the Romanian dictatorship that endangered humans' capacity to come to terms with reality and engendered complicity in oppression.

Key to Müller's resistance informed by a distinct ethos of reality is her analysis of how dictatorships impact on personhood and lead to paralysing loneliness and fear. She emphasises that, above all, her native village and Romania more generally were ruled by the fear that the individual 'I' could succeed over the institutionalised 'We' (Müller, 1998: 17, 22f.). The Romanian state, Müller claims, 'defined itself solely through repression. It had no other programmatic content than the control of its population' (Müller and Lentz, 2010: 15, own translation). The unpredictability of human beings was seen as a primary threat to this logic of control and the secret police targeted the individual qua individual.¹³ Under such extreme circumstances, the destruction of the person becomes inevitable and normal, a by-product of either the process of compliance with the regime's vision of society or of the persecution experienced in response to acts of resistance (Müller and Klammer, 2014: 100, 123f.).¹⁴

The destruction of personhood brings with it the end of a meaningful political existence as it obliterates the in-between of plurality known as common world. Müller captures this destruction of worldliness through the metaphor of the island,

¹³ Such a focus on individuality is of course ironic, as it means recognising the potential and possibility of individuality. As I highlight below, this tension between recognising and seeking to destroy individuality provides an important potential for Müller to maintain her defiant stance.

¹⁴ Müller encountered the extent of the compliance as kindergarten teacher. Her pupils, already fully ideologically conditioned, wished to stand like soldiers in a circle and sing an anthem that required no mental awareness (Müller, 2010: 187f.). Müller's initial attempt to change these circumstances, by teaching a different song, especially to young ones who may still be subjectively less constrained, failed and Müller quit her job after two weeks.

which the writer appropriates from the concept of 'Inselglück'/ Island happiness (Müller, 2008: 195ff.). A notion of island happiness has been used particularly in Western countries' tourism advertisements to represent finding peace and tranquillity on a faraway tropical island. In contrast, Romania became an island, because the regime brutally prevented any attempts at escaping the country.¹⁵ The Banat Germans, too, lived isolated as if on an island, branded by the Romanians as Nazis and kept apart by their own twisted sense of superiority. Further examples include the island of the ruling elite, afraid of the masses and of losing their privileges, and the islands of the collaborators and spies, at risk of being found out. Lastly, the metaphor island refers to the isolation in the heads of those separated by systematic terror and fear. As the country divided into myriads of islands, politics in Romania was reduced to shallow public engagement.

In sum, as succinctly concluded by Norbert Otto Eke in relation to Müller's novel *Herztier*, Ceaușescu's dictatorship

'completely destroyed *Eigensinn*, individuality, and humanity: the dream of individual happiness *within society*, the dream of self-determination and self-assertion *in opposition to society*, the dream of friendship and sincerity as an alternative to a society gripped by fear emotionally frozen and downright loveless' (2013: 106).

The consequence of living under regimes that seek to destroy the singularity and plurality of being human is loneliness. Its effects are of particular importance for Müller's work.¹⁶ Müller experienced three contexts of (totalitarian) loneliness, first, the context of growing up in the Banat-Swabian village, then through the persecution by the Securitate, and, indirectly, the Soviet labour camps, the experience of which she understands vicariously, through her mother's and her friend, Oscar Pastior's, narratives. Each comes with different combinations of fear and loneliness that prove highly destructive to personhood. Below I focus on the two that Müller experienced directly.

Loneliness became the defining characteristic of Müller's early life (Müller, 2010: 13). Her father's SS-past, the trauma of the labour and prison camp weighing on her mother and grandfather, the confiscation of her grandfather's livelihood and status,

¹⁵ In the 1980s, increasingly common attempts to illegally cross the border often ended in death.

¹⁶ The importance of loneliness for Müller's work is highlighted by her use of her Nobel laureate speech to emphasise the dangers of acute loneliness of humans during totalitarian dictatorships and beyond (Müller, 2009b).

combined with the Romanian communist narrative about ethnic Germans, prevented her family from reckoning with their past. In fear of punishment – Müller’s relatives, and the German minority more generally, turned highly opportunistic and politically blind (Müller and Klammer, 2014: 37). Keeping secrets and avoiding conversation became an acceptable way of life. An emphasis on solitude and a functional approach to thinking also linked well with the cyclical character of rural farm-life, while reading and independent thought, so central to Müller’s resistance, were seen sceptically.¹⁷

At the centre of this loneliness in the village was what Müller describes as ‘Dorfangst’ (Müller, 2010: 61) – village fear – as the built-in fear that arose from the various traumas which were not publicly addressed. Later, in the city, she encountered the planned fear created by the secret police in the fight against individuality (Müller and Klammer, 2014: 123). This fear arose from the penetration of the private sphere through repeated interrogations and the searching of her flat, but also the general ubiquity of threat: everyone who looked too closely, could become a target, almost anything was forbidden (Müller, 2010: 62). A second loneliness thus emerged following the failed attempts to recruit Müller and through the ensuing harassment by the secret police (Müller and Klammer, 2014: 62).

The destruction of individuality and the production of fear and loneliness give rise to what Müller calls an ‘alien gaze’ (Müller, 2010: 163ff.).¹⁸ The alien gaze refers to someone’s inability to confidently and automatically engage with a surrounding that should be familiar to them. The gaze is an internal, personal deformation rather than a spatial shift in a person’s position towards the world (Müller and Klammer, 2014: 178f.). One of the central strategies employed by the secret police to achieve this deterioration of familiarity – of trust in the objects and people around us – was house searches. This penetration of one’s privacy achieved its full effect by leaving the

¹⁷ The village’s isolation reflected its existence on the outskirts of the Austrian empire, far away from any major capital. Uninterrupted until the two World Wars and the labour camps deportations, the villagers held tightly to their centuries-old traditions. Being stuck in a glorified and romanticised past enabled them to hold on to a belief in their superiority over the other ethnic groups, which was increasingly undermined by the political developments of the 20th century (Müller and Lentz, 2010: 19, 23).

¹⁸ To possess the alien gaze, does not mean that one is foreign to a place. Nor does it refer to the detachment of an intellectual from the events occurring around them. Both these common conceptions of ‘alien’, in German ‘fremd/foreign, gaze have been attributed to Müller’s writing, which she however vehemently rejects. For, such a reading misses the crucial point that the alien gaze arises out of a *familiar* environment and its trusted objects losing their familiarity (Müller, 2010: 179).

searched location seemingly untouched, while at the same time carefully changing small features, which, notwithstanding their unimportance, proved highly effective in destroying a person's relation to the world: 'nothing seemed certain any longer, whether it is this, or that, or something completely different. With time only inane things existed with important shadows' (2010: 163; o. t.). The quote gives us some sense of how the alien gaze affected Müller as she struggled to maintain her way of being in the world, undermined by the doubt sown by the secret police.

The annihilation of confidence in one's perception of the world aggravates loneliness and fear. Together, they deny independent, critical thought, and leave behind a human being without the means to assure and confirm their perception on the world, in all its partiality. As a consequence, the person is continuously at risk of losing all confidence in adequately capturing and reacting to the world.¹⁹ Using the language of the hybrid established in chapter 4, the context potentially prevents any cultivation of a suitable ethos of reality. Müller therefore concludes that to come to terms with possessing the alien gaze and to find a way to live with it as one becomes weary of oneself is an art (Müller, 2010: 180, 183).

In the rest of the chapter, I explore Müller's reflections on how she responded to the destruction of personhood and the common world through loneliness, fear, and the increasing consumption by an alien gaze. The discussion traces her political judgement informed by an ethos of reality that seeks to enliven a narrative of a multi-layered, shared reality contra the reductionisms of the dictatorships.

¹⁹ The situation triggers the need for constant self-assurance through heightened self-vigilance. Müller for example put hairs at various strategic points in her apartment to monitor whether someone came into her rooms, but such a constant awareness necessarily took a toll on her person.

5.2 Müller's Ethos of Reality – Living in the Detail

I now engage with Müller's self-reflective essays to consider what her response to this reductionism looks like. The section reveals that Müller continued to make judgements on complicity, responsibility, and resistance that sustained her unwillingness to collaborate with the dictatorship. These judgements are embedded in a unique ethos encapsulated by the motto she borrows from Eugène Ionesco and repeats in *Hunger und Seide*: 'let's live, but they don't let us live. So let's live in the detail' (Müller, 2016: 61, o.t.). This life in the detail has a twofold significance for Müller, both as a basic survival strategy and its extension through her aesthetic-political resistance in her essays and novels. I first provide a discussion of how this motto frames her immediate response to loneliness, fear, and the alien gaze. In elaborating her initial survival strategy. I highlight how Müller focuses on the dualist and pluralist dimension to being human. I complete this picture of Müller's political judgement in section 5.3, where I show how Müller extends her ethos of reality – to live in the detail – through writing as 'invented perception'.

By 'living in the detail', Müller acknowledges the necessity to live without the kind of plots and narratives that usually give someone's life meaning. Overcome by fear, her full attention had to be on an adequate response to the immediate moment, and that moment alone (Müller and Lentz, 2010: 37f.). Living from day to day, in the present, was essential, without concrete plans for the future. Faced with the dictatorship's distortion of social reality, Müller's resistance depended on the accuracy of perception by focusing on the detail of specific objects and events.²⁰ Resistance thus expressed itself in the holding onto small things that ensured immediate survival. This accuracy sustains the basic survival strategy by providing the means to continuously monitor the aims and mechanisms of the apparatus of terror.

The concern with the detail is also the starting point for the larger project of recuperating and protecting a common world that Müller seeks to juxtapose to the flight from reality that only empowered the dictatorship. As the writer puts it, to

²⁰ Bearing in mind that the Romanian dictatorship seemed capable of formulating regulations for any purpose it deemed necessary, Müller was initially puzzled by the secret police's decision to come up with trumped up charges of prostitution and black market trading against her (Müller and Klammer, 2014: 193). This strategy, however, was not chosen arbitrarily. The invention of facts allowed the secret police complete control over what was to be considered as the legitimate narrative of reality, while retaining a thin connection to the real world – after all, prostitution and black markets were prohibited.

defend herself she also opened her own surveillance office. The observance of simple things and objects, their precise monitoring, Müller discovered, could give her a sense of control and provide some immediate protection against the anti-human strategies of the totalising regime (Müller and Lentz, 2010: 24, 33). Of course, as stated in relation to the alien gaze, such hyper-vigilance comes with its own costs and dangers, constantly putting a person on edge, which leads Müller to writing as its necessary extension. Yet, life in the detail emerges for Müller also as a larger point about judging reality: 'who cannot live with the detail, who prohibits and despises it, becomes blind. A thousand details provide something, but not a thread of life, not an overall agreement, no utopia. Details are not to be put in a chain, transformed into a clear-cut logic of the world' (Müller, 2016: 61, o.t.). As the quote reveals, Müller holds on to the particular as juxtaposed to a superficial whole, which she often seems to associate with ideological oppression. Out of the immediate survival thus emerges a normative project – a less reductive ethos of reality. The rest of the chapter explores the different dimensions to her ethos of reality in more detail.

5.2.1 Resistant Agency

Of particular interest for this thesis is that Müller displays an acute awareness of the importance of highlighting how structure, agency, and plurality together constitute reality, *and* the tendency to distort their interplay. A 'life in the detail', or in my terms an 'ethos of reality', fails as a normative project that seeks to build and protect a common world, *unless* it is attentive to how the three components shape our capacity to judge and make our way through the world. For the sake of clarity, I address structure, agency, and plurality, separately, starting with human agency. In each step I show how Müller both reveals the deep ways in which the causal powers of a component are curtailed and distorted by the regime and how she nonetheless holds onto the continued importance and potential of structure, agency, and plurality for resisting the reductionism.

Throughout this thesis I have highlighted the centrality of what it means to be human contra modern de-humanising tendencies in society and sciences. Chapter 4 summarised that in order to cultivate a suitable stance towards reality, a less reductive ethos of reality, a person should be attentive to their distinct, emergent causal properties as humans. These include a capacity for reflexive engagement

with the world, a sense of self which builds on an emotional, embodied, and relational existence, and a commitment to the unceasing potential in humans for social innovation. To fail to practice a stance towards reality informed by these characteristics may result in political judgements and actions that systematically aggravate de-humanisation. I referred to Diana Taylor's concept of percepticide as illustrative of the consequences: political judgement that lacks orientation towards the components to human existence risks a blindness towards the plight of others and one's involvement in their suffering. Müller's response centres on what she terms her 'individualism' (Müller, 1998: 19), through which she captures central features of human agency.

Attentive to the destructive force of totalitarianism on personhood, Müller holds on to the belief in people as a source of innovation: 'I wanted to address the unpredictable that inhabits each person, whether in me or in the powerful' (Müller, 2008: 57f., own translation). Elsewhere, she adds that 'every person is a unique individual in the world and has a unique relationship with that world. And everything each one of us does we do differently, because we have no other option' (Müller and Liiceanu, 2011). Müller acknowledges that this individuality brought with it a failure to follow the implicit rules of the village, which would have made her life easier. As a child, Müller was unable to prevent the 'Irirlauf im Kopf'/rush through the head (Müller, 2010: 16), and to avoid looking too closely and to raise unwanted questions (Müller, 2010: 101, 200), all manifestations of her unpredictability.²¹ She struggled with uniformity, enforced in a pre-dominantly Catholic region with the doctrine of an all-knowing God (Müller and Klammer, 2014: 20). Müller sought normalcy and yet foreclosed the possibility of assimilation through her independent, critical thought.

Individuality also finds its expression in Müller's work through a sustained engagement with different ways of thinking.²² Through her move from a village to the

²¹ Accordingly, in her interviews, Müller recounts that she was aware that no one could know that, as she spent considerable time alone in the fields herding her family's cattle, she would eat flowers in order to become part of the surrounding nature or that she married flowers with each other – games that might indicate the child's 'abnormality' (Müller and Klammer, 2014: 14). Müller understood the drastic consequences of revealing her abnormality and the deviation of her behaviour and thoughts.

²² Müller's writing, especially the novel *The Appointment*, can furthermore be read as a journey into the mind of the main protagonist that helps illustrate what happens to a mind under state persecution (cf. Boase-Beier, 2014). Her emphasis on reflexive agency must furthermore be read as part of a commitment to account for a situated, embodied human. Müller emphasises that thinking is tied together with feeling and goes beyond words (Müller

city, Müller learned to appreciate the continuum between silence and speaking, thought and non-thinking. At one extreme of the continuum, the members of her village, especially her grandmother, shied away from expressing their thoughts freely. Their communication remained closely connected to silence. In its narrative and fragmented character, their conversations also resembled more internal conversations thought-out-aloud rather than external speech (Müller and Klammer, 2014: 19). In the city, Müller encountered the other extreme, abundant speech that seemed to lack prior thought or that actively sought to prevent it (Müller, 2010: 100f.). Finally, Müller herself couldn't escape the rush in the head, a double-edged term that captures a capacity for unpredictability and a form of restless challenging of reality.

Müller's work highlights patterns of thought familiar from Archer's theorising on modes of reflexivity. Müller's rush in the head resembles a contrary-meta-reflexivity, characterised by a critical stance towards society and the natal background, in a context of pre-dominantly communicative, and even fractured, reflexive communities. Communicative reflexive practices played an important role in maintaining the coherence and homogenous character of the 'ethnic island' and its supposed superiority and separateness from the larger ethnic group. Müller's meta-reflexivity also stands in stark contrast to her depiction of the people representing the oppressive orders who, in their almost caricature portrayal, reveal typical autonomous reflexive concerns of instrumentality and social mobility.

The unpredictability and critical thought that marked her early individualism, came primarily to the fore in her later life in opposition to the secret police. They enabled a form of integrity that culminated in the decisive moment of declining the offer of collaboration. Müller summarises her refusal to collaborate as her willingness to lose anything but herself (Müller and Klammer, 2014: 65). To sign the Securitate pledge would have meant to be a person 'gegen mich selbst' (Müller, 2010: 83), against one's self.²³ This moral resolution arose in part from her engagement with her

and Klammer, 2014: 82, 141). Loneliness and fear were felt and thought even where she could not adequately express them. The thirst to capture these experiences in speech ultimately animated her writing (Müller, 2010: 19).

²³ However, again Müller recognises the limits of self-awareness during a heightened state of fear. Müller's vigilance during the period of intense persecution fostered a thirst for giving up the fight, not by assimilation but the oblivion promised by insanity (Müller, 2010: 180). The writer was also for some time plagued by thoughts of suicide, which she however claims to have overcome, because her suicide would have meant the ultimate triumph of the secret police: she realised that she would have done 'their dirty work for them' (Müller and Lentz,

father's dark past.²⁴ The writer however rejects the idea that integrity is dependent on one's parentage and origin, whether one had a happy childhood or not. Framed as her individuality undoubtedly is by the unique context she grew up in, Müller states that no one can be forced to become something against themselves (Müller and Klammer, 2014: 40). Her resistance may therefore also entail a certain naivety about the complex ways in which humans can become complicit, showing that an ethos of reality is always prone to failure and imperfect.

As a positive example of resistant agency irrespective of the context and background, Müller relies routinely on her close friend Jenny, who was part of the socio-economic and political elite, which protected her from some of the dangers of living under a dictatorship. In her outspoken nature, however, Jenny revealed an uncompromising, robust approach to the anti-individualist strategies of the regime (2014: 147). Müller's integrity was also informed by the costs of collaboration and spying. The seemingly easy life of the collaborators and spies is marred, claimed the Nobel laureate, by having to effectively live a double life. The situation is worsened further by the fear of being found out and the constant danger of being dropped by, and thus becoming the target of, the secret police (Müller and Klammer, 2014: 102). The attacks by the Securitate therefore created a reverse effect, emboldening Müller to stubbornly defend her individuality – her right to be a source of innovation and to keep the 'rush in the head' going. She even seems to relish the secret police's frustrations and irritations that her strong inner moral commitments to truths and reality caused. Müller argues that to love life temporarily out of anger and out of spite may just give sufficient meaning to one's existence (Müller, 2010: 65).

In sum, the Nobel laureate paints a picture of a resistant agent, shaped by her unique autobiography and struggling with the demands of living under a dictatorship. She reveals an awareness of differences between humans, their unique modes of thinking and acting upon the world, and maintains the need for agency as source of innovation and integrity against oppression.

2010: 29; o.t.). Müller suddenly 'wanted to live, became addicted to life, exactly because she wasn't deigned worthy of it' (2010: 30; o.t.).

²⁴ Müller was 17 at the time she was approached by the Securitate and her father had been enthusiastic about Hitler at a similar age. Müller therefore argued that she could not be critical of his acts and simultaneously collaborate with a different totalitarian system (Müller and Klammer, 2014: 37).

5.2.2 Objects and Structures

The second dimension to 'life in the detail' entails Müller's engagement with material objects and the structures of society, notably gender, sexuality, and language. This dimension does not simply provide a staging device that gives political judgement a particular tint. Nor are structures (and culture) and materiality merely an obstacle to being human, to be overcome. Ordinary objects are integral to human agency and structures.²⁵ Social and cultural structures provide the relatively enduring relations and ideas that shape humans and the social positions they inhabit in society. Their generative mechanisms are unobservable and their effects often invisible due to the interplay of many structures and agents in a multi-layered social reality, in which structures and agency equally provide emergent causal contributions. Structures like language, gender, and sexuality, and objects play an active role in shaping resistance. Müller's writing establishes this function, as she seeks to capture their positive and negative contributions to social formations.

Müller emphasises the role material objects play in her encounter of reality. She provides a 'surreal but deeply materialist aesthetic' (Haines, 2013: 104). Objects are an extension of who we are, and provide separate influences on our behaviour. Sensitive to this fact, Müller observes that humans define themselves through specific objects, including their clothing, and that in doing so they also express and display their character (Müller and Lentz, 2010: 25f.; cf. Müller, 2010: 17). Body and objects are interlinked and the internal and external world of humans extend into each other.

In her own writing, the multi-functional role of objects for human agency emerges in various ways. Mundane objects, a nut or nail scissors, and objects captured by using compound terms, such as wood melon²⁶, are taken from their context and given multiple meanings to invoke in language a multi-layered reality. A nightgown

²⁵ The emphasis on material objects arises out of the *objectivism* introduced in chapter 3. Contra anthropocentric models that focus primarily on intentionality and language, the critical realist framework highlights how structures consist in the relations between human and non-human material parts and their interaction and –relation. For a discussion of the relationship between social structures and ordinary objects in critical realism and its importance for debates on social ontology, see Dave Elder-Vass (2017).

²⁶ Through the metaphor wood melon Müller captures a failed transformation of an agricultural society into an industrial economy, as envisaged by communist social engineers: the farmers in the processing plants produce valueless wooden melons instead of harvesting fruit.

which features on a German train advertisement, for example, links Müller back to a series of experiences during Romania's dictatorship that she remembers as connected to similar nightgowns. Objects and locations thus gain an important narrative function and are attributed an independent causal role (Müller, 2010: 121f.). They do not merely offer a passive backdrop, but play an essential part in the story.²⁷ As illustrated painfully by the secret police moving and removing objects in a flat to suggest their presence and instil fear, this interplay between materiality and agency, subjectivity and objectivity can have positive and negative implications.

Physical objects, together with agency and human interaction, constitute social structures – the network of relationships among social positions that frame human agency – which play a key role in how agency resists reductionism. To understand more fully Müller's objectivism, I focus on how she deals with the social function of gender, sexuality, and language in Romania. Together, they reveal how structures both enable and constrain a person resisting a dictatorship. More specifically, as I focus on Müller's interviews and essays, I consider the role she attributes to structures, which, in turn, gives us a sense of how they framed her own response to persecution.

Müller challenges the totalitarian misuse of sexuality and gender that led to a highly poisonous system of gender relationships. She attributes the emphasis on gender and sexuality in her work to the fact that, during the dictatorship, all areas of the citizen's life were colonised, including the sexual. The erotic is both a site of oppression and a useful, necessary release valve for all the fears and anxieties: under the dictatorship, relationships and desires gain a more intense, immediate and yet particularly vulnerable character (Müller and Klammer, 2014: 108). Müller is especially interested in how distorted structures of gender and sexuality impact on human relationships: 'I see humans, how they seem to act freely and do not know that they do so under certain constraints, that they are part of a mechanism, that they act with the freedom of string puppets. I try to depict this mechanism' (cited in Eke, 1991: 12; o.t.).

In her considerations of how structures such as gender and sexuality define and inform resistance to the totalitarian state, Müller describes various forms of oppression, from rape to sexual harassment as part of political interrogations. The

²⁷ Müller also breaks with the Euclidean notion of container space where space is merely the backdrop for moving objects (Johannsen, 2013).

cases are framed by her critique of the regime's inhumane reproductive health policies, part of a pro-nationalist population strategy banning contraceptives and abortions: 'the state monitored the most private of humans, intimacy was owned by the state. Nasty methods were used to enforce check-ups on women, as they for example needed attestation by a gynaecologist to access treatment by a dentist' (Müller and Klammer, 2014: 107; o.t.).

Müller highlights the interpersonal reproduction of domination. Although she makes a point about depicting both men and women as victims and perpetrators, they differ in that women's power remains derivative and secondary to men's and Müller often describes their power as a response to male violence (Bauer, 2013).²⁸ Women are caught in two hierarchical power relations, a patriarchal and a totalitarian. Both men and women are in a sense the victims and enactors of the asymmetrical interdependence, but it is men who are in a position to systematically exploit their dominance over women. Müller's story is therefore also one of (distorted) patriarchal structures in the contexts of her village and Romania more generally. Rural and city life followed strict division of labour, men occupying positions said to require force or authority, a system only gradually transformed by the introduction of machines (Müller and Klammer, 2014: 58).²⁹

Attentive to the gender dynamics of her time, Müller's ethos of reality seeks to open up a space in which resistance is possible – in full awareness that any resistance must successfully negotiate the system of gender domination as she herself tries to. Her female characters are deeply shaped by the sexual violence they experience every day. They also continuously find ways of taking control of their bodies and sexuality, often seeking to participate in the exchange economy in ways that enable them to protect themselves from the threats of living under a dictatorship. Yet, whatever strategy the protagonists involved in sexual domination employ, Müller

²⁸ Possibly the most prominent example of male sexual victimhood in connection to Müller is her friend Oskar Pastior, turned informant to evade reprisals for his homosexuality.

²⁹ A farmer's wife, Müller notes in an interview, seems to have little independence in such a patriarchal context and yet, her individuality and sense of self emerges out of practising a pragmatist self-confidence, out of always being seemingly able to respond appropriately to life (Müller, 1998: 19). Müller however remains sceptical of this pragmatism, and her scepticism is informed by the (political) blindness that came with it in her ethnic group, as captured by her mother: traumatised by the labour camp and struggling with her husband's alcoholism, the writer's mother practiced an obsession with cleaning as a means to escape the everyday problems.

always articulates the looming negative consequences and the heightened vulnerability that comes with it, defying any desire for a break-through moment.³⁰

Language provided another structure of central importance in the relationship between Romania's citizens and between citizens and the totalitarian state. Müller's considerations on language as a tool of oppression and resistance are framed by her distinct position to her mother tongue, German, and to Romanian. I will address the gap caused by her movement between the two languages as part of the discussion of her writing approach in section 5.3. For now, my analysis focuses on how Müller approaches the political character of language and resists a simplistic connection between one's language and homeliness. Language, for Müller, means initially the German she learned in Nitzkydorf. An Austrian variation of German, the rural dialect is said to have 'slowed down' as if encapsulating an agricultural life at the periphery of the Habsburg empire (Müller and Lentz, 2010: 41). Later on, she encounters Romanian, as a more lyrical language rooted in its folkloric tradition.

Both languages became political instruments, and Müller surmises that all dictatorships instrumentalise language (Müller, 2010: 37). The first oppressive regime she encountered consisted in the Banat village's regime of conformity. Müller recreates the linguistic working of this dictatorship through the use of the proverb 'the devil is seated in the mirror' for the title of one of her novels.³¹ This proverb, representative of numerous phrases taught to children by their family to curb individuality, characterises how language was used as a form of indoctrination: 'one puts something into people's heads through a harmless phrase, which later gets stuck and takes effect in various situations. That is how you control people' (Müller, 1998: 17; o.t.).

Language is for Müller innately political as it is tied to the relationships and interactions between people. Because of the danger of political misuse, Müller is especially disconcerted by the fact that German writers confronted her with the notion that 'language is homeland' (Müller, 2010: 33). She notes the problematic origin of this term – its use by emigrants fleeing from a totalitarian Germany – and

³⁰ This is representatively visible in the case of Lola in *The Land of the Green Plums*, who defies the exchange system by engaging in numerous sexual activities before becoming pregnant and committing suicide.

³¹ The devil in the mirror is meant to warn against vices including vanity, but Müller reads it as a means to discourage critical self-evaluation and impose an unreflective, collectively imposed identity.

the xenophobic character of those nationalists in Germany and Romania who continue to rely on the term 'homeland'. Her scepticism also links back to her general focus on a life in the detail as response to a context where home/homeliness has become foreign and a place of insecurity. Contra this naïve relationship with language, Müller encourages a critical engagement with language that considers in each case what meaning is conveyed and whether the action that language motivates is legitimate or unacceptable, good or bad (Müller, 2010: 46f.). And, while language, like gender dynamics, may at first seem to offer little in resistance, Müller finds new ways in which language moves from being a tool of interrogation and terror to providing a tool for resistance. These gain their full force in relation to her approach to writing.

5.2.3 Plurality through Friendship

The pluralist dimension to being human refers to the fact that humans share a world in common which they can only make hospitable together. Furthermore, pluralism captures the fact that, as each person has a partial perspective on the world, they have to rely on others to make suitable judgements and come to terms with reality. In Müller's work plurality is framed by her insight that to retain moral integrity in the private sphere necessitated public failure (Müller and Klammer, 2014: 40). Put differently, to be successful under a totalitarian regime likely requires compromises and showing support for the regime, both of which leaves a person in a difficult moral situation. Plurality under Ceaușescu's rule proved highly constrained and distorted, undermined by a state-produced 'ugly' equality in all areas, from architecture and fashion, to the party language (Müller and Klammer, 2014: 73, 76).

In Müller's childhood, plurality is primarily visible in the form of an acceptance of one's common identity, which in the German minority was presupposed rather than being formed in the process of acting together. The oppressive silence of the village created a state of loneliness further heightened by Müller's realisation that her own 'abnormality' had to be hidden from others (Müller and Klammer, 2014: 17f.).³² The Aktionsgruppe Banat proved therefore crucial for Müller in discovering something

³² Highly limited forms of solidarity emerged only between the deported who brought back from the labour camps a common, short hairstyle and teeth prostheses – external manifestations of the suffering caused by the terrible conditions in the camps, and the former soldiers who would drunkenly sing their national socialist songs together.

akin to a pluralist public sphere, in which views could be shared and strategies developed against the secret police.

While such forms of togetherness and friendship can be looked at as ersatz pluralism, it too is marred by encroachment of the alien gaze. Müller later discovered that the secret police had bugged their rooms and used the information gathered clandestinely against the group. Her writing and its increasing success in Germany opened up another public sphere to Müller, but again, the pluralist dimension to being human was undermined by the Securitate's extensive strategy of publicly defaming her (Müller and Klammer, 2014: 168f.). If we accept, as Müller does, that to be human is to meaningfully share a world together, the question therefore remains: what could friendship offer under these extreme circumstances?

Positively, friendship may have offered a means to cope with the planned fear produced by the secret police (Müller and Klammer, 2014: 114). Emblematic in this respect is fellow worker and friend Jenny who, despite being part of the Romanian political elite, remained supportive. Müller had been terrorised to force her to quit: she was removed from her office and rumours were spread about her being a collaborator. The friend nonetheless chose to sit with Müller during lunch and share a private friendship (2014: 150ff.). This support and confirmation by another person was of utmost importance to Müller during this difficult period.

Jenny is, however, also a reminder that friendship is always potentially a source of fragility. Jenny became susceptible to the secret police's manipulation strategies following a diagnosis of terminal cancer. Desperate to see her friend, she agreed to spy on Müller, who by then had emigrated and settled in Berlin. Because of the importance of their friendship, this betrayal hit Müller particularly hard. It proved a traumatic event that Müller has tried to come to terms with throughout her work, not least as Jenny offered her a friendship outside the targeted artistic circles and therefore some distance and 'normalcy' – Jenny and Müller enjoyed conversations about non-political topics (Müller and Klammer, 2014: 148). Thus, friendship for Müller can at best avoid facing the terror alone, and help cope with the planned fear of the secret police. For this function, the relationships are close and tight-knit, as visible in her relations with the Aktionsgruppe Banat. Friends help share and temporarily ignore the fear (Müller and Klammer, 2014: 113f.). They cannot prevent or hinder the destruction of the individual as each is targeted separately and affected by terror and fear differently.

Friendship thus cannot provide a suitable alternative to a public sphere. The Securitate acknowledged the friends from her literary and cultural circles as a 'we'-group of resistance and set out to exploit the weaknesses of a collective. Additionally, people sought to avoid engaging and being seen with potential targets of the secret police, in fear of becoming oneself a target. Jenny and other people who ignored this separation between those subversive and the nomenclature were at great risk. This meant that friendship was restricted to those who were already targets of the secret police (Müller and Klammer, 2014: 112). Given that the measure of worldliness, instantiated through friendship, offers only limited protection, the totalitarian devastation achieved its full potential.

Friendship as source of plurality found its low point in Müller's life with the death of two friends. She was forced to find a different medium to express her life in the detail: 'I searched for words for the fear we had in common. I wanted to show what friendship looks like when it is no longer self-evident that one will survive' (Müller, 2008: 62; o.t.). Another world-building form of judgement was needed, and Müller relies on writing to supplement a life in the detail.

5.3 Writing in Defence of an Ethos of Reality

At stake for Müller and the regime under which she lived until 1987 was nothing less than control over the human ability to independently judge and come to terms with reality. Contra the de-humanising reductionisms of the Romanian dictatorship, Müller proposed 'living in the detail'. It starts off with the basic survival strategy of maintaining one's sense of self from one moment to another – to simply hold on and avoid giving up – and requires attentiveness to the three components that together constitute the common world: agency, structure, and plurality. Their function is curbed by the totalitarian experience and the encroachment of the 'alien gaze'. Müller therefore mounts her strongest defence against the persecution: a form of writing that she terms 'invented perception'. This writing seeks to strengthen a sense of reality, by insisting on the complexity of social processes. It opens up space in the description of the world for all three components of human existence to play their part. The success of writing in Müller's case depends on whether it allows her to maintain, build and protect a common world denied by the state, as the source for concrete judgements that take the dualism and pluralism of human existence into account. It does not depend on the reproduction of the potential of structures, agency, and plurality *by other means*.³³

Müller's political judgement through writing is dedicated to the production of what she terms 'erfundene Wahrnehmung' (Müller, 1991: 38), invented perception. This form of realisation is a variation of what I term affirming a multi-layered, shared reality, and entails the use of autofiction, surrealism, and the gap between Romanian and German. It is the inversion of percepticide, the motivated separation from reality, because invented perception seeks to rebuild our sense of reality. In order to understand what Müller means by this form of realisation, we first need to consider the particular role she attributes to everyday realities that motivate invention. From this consideration emerges once more the central motto of her response to the dictatorship, 'life in the detail'. Building on these insights I analyse the three strategies autofiction, surrealism, and the valorisation of the gap between languages as her means to exploit the motto without falling for reductive narratives.

³³ The purpose of invented perception is not to replace the deformed interplay of structure, agency, and plurality with writing and its unique ability to re-create reality, but to both show the deformation and reveal their continued potential as sources of social transformation and resistance.

The continuous harassment in the factory and the death of Müller's father brought back the village experience and led her to search for some alternative hold in writing.³⁴ The need to write was therefore instinctive, part of the immediate survival strategy by living in the detail. Müller was compelled to put forward something protected from the regime's vigilant eyes by entering a quasi-fictional terrain (2010: 18). Admittedly, writing may seem, at first, an unlikely solution when faced with the demands for a defence against fear and terror. To write is not to resolve the challenges to daily life under a dictatorship. If anything, writing ensures a more in-depth immersion in an environment of terror, as it often comes with a cultivation of a particular sensibility for the way the world is. Müller is certainly no exception to this problem for writers.³⁵

Müller's extension of 'life in the detail' through writing is further faced with the difficulty of how to depict life under the Romanian dictatorship without creating a pedagogic, ideological book 'with reverse sign' (Müller, 1998: 18). Müller seeks to avoid any connections between her writing and Socialist Realism, i.e. the compulsory style of glorified depiction of communist values cultivated by the communist regime, which provides a highly reductive narrative of reality.³⁶ This form of realism contributed significantly to Müller's desire for the fictional and literary, and its capacity to create a space for reality to be complicated (Müller, 1998: 18). Painfully aware of these tensions that arise from the connection between writing and a 'life in the detail', Müller nonetheless insists that writing, over time, provides some certainty, some internal stability that can be used to oppose the pervasive fear (Müller and Klammer, 2014: 42; Müller and Lentz, 2010: 7, 15). To write is to hopefully gain access to the many things that have been silenced, distorted and perverted, to reveal the truths about everyday reality by expressing them in the simplistic beauty, and precision, of a written sentence (Müller and Klammer, 2014:

³⁴ Haines reads Müller in connection with Arendt. She concludes that it is 'gestures, objects, and the free life of words that, for Müller, lend some temporary stability to Arendt's subject in crisis' (Haines, 2013: 104).

³⁵ The complicated relationship between writing and a need to resist by living in the detail is further heightened through Müller's rejection of any means-ends-thinking about literature. She emphasises that writing would be unlikely to fulfil the demands put upon it (Müller and Lentz, 2010: 8).

³⁶ What particularly concerned her about the potential corruption of her work by Socialist Realism is its connection to utopian thinking: 'utopias implemented in reality have always turned into misfortune. They always created dictatorships. For me, this was self-evident. If an idea knows about everything, it cannot do but force and coerce the particular' (Müller, 1998: 22; o.t.).

77). Her first attempts, including the novel *Niederungen*, enabled reflection on what had been silenced in her home-village (Müller and Klammer, 2014: 81).

The different meanings – rather than functions – of writing interlink for Müller through her concern with individuality: the quality of a text is defined by its ability to create a ‘rush in the head’ that undermines silence and ideology, and produces new understanding and meaning both in Müller and her readers (Müller, 2010: 23f.). Its beauty depends on whether it reveals a multi-layered reality, and how it purposefully avoids protecting humans from the truth by provoking a wild, independent thought beyond dogmatic presuppositions. Invented perception lacks direct reality and yet, crucially, enables a new, different perspective on reality (Müller and Lentz, 2010: 39). And, although writing remains an individual and silent activity, Müller further uses it as a platform for discussions with her audience, publishing essays and providing numerous interviews in German and Romanian. In seeking to strengthen the ‘it-seems-to-me’, to create a more hospitable common world, and in interacting with others to do so, Müller’s writing constitutes an exemplary political judgement that helps sustain a suitable ethos of reality.

There are numerous literary devices that Müller deploys to achieve this invented perception in her writings, starting with the focus on autofiction. By autofiction Müller means that her work relies on a first-person narrator resembling Müller and that it constructs stories by relying on true occurrences.³⁷ The choice of autofiction is a consequence of living under a state that forces the individual to engage with the question of how to live as a person under a totalitarian regime, and that turns the aesthetic into a space of political contestation. Müller uses her real experiences as a background, which is then extensively rewritten into fiction that shares similarities with reality, without directly reproducing any particular fact or event. Her fictionalised reality is hence juxtaposed to the contorted reality experienced, and achieves its credibility because of the latter – the experience of numerous actual interrogations enables the invention of a fictional situation of interrogation (Müller, 1998: 15, 18).

Müller frames autofiction with what commentator Paola Bozzi identifies as surfiction – the critical encounter with the ‘fictional’ nature of reality (Bozzi, 2013). By this she means that surfiction rejects any clear-cut divide between reality and fiction, where the latter, fiction, is merely an ‘unreal’ abstraction of the former. Surfiction combined

³⁷ Müller builds her understanding of autofiction on the writings of Georges Arthur Goldschmidt (Müller, 1998: 14).

with autofiction thus becomes a form of realist surrealism or surreal realism. Indeed, Müller does not understand surrealism as an alternative to reality, but rather as a deeper version of reality, as she seeks to capture the surrealism *inside* reality. In her Leipzig poetry lecture following the award of the Nobel Prize in 2009, Müller accordingly stated that for her 'reality is something far further reaching than others might suggest. How far does reality reach, and where and when does surrealism begin? It certainly does not start outside the real and not underneath it. The surreal is always inside reality'; many may 'believe that the surrealism goes above or deep beneath reality. I simply go inside, to find the surreal' (Müller and Lentz, 2010: 35f.). Autofiction thus offers the first means by which Müller recreates the multi-layered character of reality as the source of a hospitable common world that enables her to judge and come to terms with this difficult context.

Müller's invented perception, or surreal realism, gains in strength through her reliance on fragmented narratives. Discontinuity is for Müller not the opposite of reality: we might *perceive* reality as continuous and embedded in simple stories with clear directions and with a beginning and an end; in reality, as Müller emphasises, objects and events around us remain scattered and their connections complex (Müller, 1998: 18). Yet, the prevalence of fragmentation in her work³⁸ does not mean that the Nobel laureate denies the narrative dimension to reality altogether. Continuity *and* discontinuity are part of a multi-layered reality in which some things are connected and numerous things happen at the same time.

Other literary devices exploring the nexus between realism and surrealism include a particular attentiveness to the role of dreams and to how children, in taking things (too) literally, often reveal a surrealism that can make manifest something concrete, otherwise hidden (Müller, 1998: 18; Müller and Klammer, 2014: 21). Furthermore, Müller relies on repetitive use of numerous metaphors, including objects such as the nut in *Herztier/heart animal* (2015a) or a king in *Der König verbeugt sich und tötet/the king bows and kills* (2010). These metaphors are increasingly estranged from their original context and given numerous levels of meaning that help reproduce a sense of complexity and ambiguity to reality.³⁹ The estranged terms are however also returned to their original contexts and resolved, which helps Müller maintain the

³⁸ The fragmentation is often read as closely connected to her collages which she puts together out of separated words taken from newspapers.

³⁹ Thaler (2018) helpfully differentiates this kind of estrangement as estrangement *for* the world from estrangement *from* the world.

connection between reality, especially materiality, and fiction in her political judgement (Müller, 1998: 18). All of these devices serve to create, build, and protect a common world as part of which Müller is able to make concrete judgements about her context that affirm the multi-layered character of reality, contra the state narratives.

Lastly, Müller's production of invented perception gains in strength through her use of the gap between her mother tongue German and the second language she learned in her youth, Romanian. As Haines argues, 'Müller's texts create an Arendtian newness out of a reconfiguration of the gaps between languages and words' (2013: 102). Typical example is the pheasant, from her novel *Der Mensch ist ein großer Fasan auf der Welt* (Müller, 2006, english: *The Passport*), an animal that for Germans epitomises arrogance and for Romanians being a loser. The gap is in part a result of Müller's lack of affection for her mother tongue, which she associates with her stifling community in the natal village. German, at best, provides her with a useful familiarity (Müller, 2010: 32). Romanian lacks this familiarity and Müller rarely writes in Romanian. However, by having to learn the language abruptly upon her arrival in the city aged 15, and struggling to do so, it is also a language Müller learnt much more consciously. This gave her time to appreciate the gap between German and Romanian, the way things have different meanings in the two languages (Müller, 2010: 31).

Romanian takes part in all her German writings, and both languages encounter each other with every newly learned word (Müller, 2010: 32; Müller and Klammer, 2014: 84, 86). The language offers a particularly potent contribution here because it diverges significantly from Germanic languages. Müller claims that Romanian has also remained closer to its folklore roots which offer the language protection from the totalitarian inversion of language (2014: 87f.). This Romanian, Müller argued 'is in its sensuality and in its way of looking at the world, completely different, and I was always much closer to this different way of looking at the world. Structurally, this language's images, the metaphors, the idioms, and the folklore have always suited me better' (Müller, 1998: 15; o.t.). These differences enable Müller to make new

poetic connections between words and extend her surreal realist conception (Müller and Klammer, 2014: 49).⁴⁰

At the same time, language is a structure deeply embedded in the oppressive mechanisms of the dictatorship and, as articulated in section 5.2, Müller exploits language as a tool for writing in order to simultaneously highlight the multi-faceted role of language. The gap helps create a situated position sufficiently distanced to help interrogate the structural underpinnings of her culture and to simultaneously impose one's own individuality – as Müller exploits the gap to give new meaning to words. The gap also forces upon the reader a choice between meanings and thus creates, once more, a rush in the head. Dis-embedded from the familiarity of one's own language, Müller's play with words sustains multiple layers of meaning to a reality and also, crucially, an echo of the plurality of perspectives on shared objects that should be available to humans as they seek to come to terms with reality.

In sum, the writer Herta Müller offers an insight into what political judgement framed by a less reductive ethos of reality in practice might look like by focusing our attention on the difficult context of Romania between 1965 and 1989. Her ethos is encapsulated by the motto 'to live in the detail' and centres around a strategy of upholding the complexity of reality. She attends to how the ethnic German minority and the Romanian dictatorship sought to destroy both personhood and a world in common. This I identified as the first objective of a less reductive ethos of reality: to explore the pernicious reductionisms of a multi-layered reality that impoverishes the common world. Müller also affirms the need to create and protect a common world independent from the distorting strategies deployed by the secret police. Writing offers an appropriate political judgement, and maintains the ethos of reality by combining an everyday survival strategy of 'life in the detail' with the abstraction and estrangement of surrealism. Deploying a number of different devices, including autofiction and the gap between languages, Müller's work can thus be read as illustrative of the framework I develop in this thesis: the affirmation of a multi-layered, shared reality through which critical evaluation of events is made possible without falling for a problematic strategy of reductionism. As I indicated above during

⁴⁰ As elaborated above, Müller is aware of the ambiguous character of language for resistance. Language remains a potent tool favoured by the dictatorship for its distorting state narratives. These narratives consist out of a language that in its uses of stock phrases could be assembled in various combinations without any need for reflection. Müller's use of language can also not be separated in style and content from the fear and loneliness she experienced (Müller and Lentz, 2010: 14).

my discussion of a suitable toolkit for evaluating political judgement, such a less reductive ethos can only be achieved through an engagement with its three components: structure, agency, and plurality. My discussion of Müller's reflection on gender, sexuality, language, materiality, reflexivity, and friendship has illustrated that Müller is sufficiently attentive to both the dualist and pluralist dimension of political judgement. This makes Müller exemplary of the kind of ethos of reality I wish to put forward as suitable, good political judgement.

Conclusion

My interrogation into political judgement started with the observation that recent public debate, informed by social movements including Black Lives Matter and #metoo, has seemingly made it impossible for the privileged to deny their complicity in systemic injustice and oppression. I also argued that the continued, widespread failure to affirm complicity and take responsibility should serve as a catalyst for a sustained engagement with how we judge responsibility-for-complicity. The thesis contributes to this project by providing a refined theoretical toolkit centred on debates about judgement, complicity, and social conditioning.

An attempt to transform late modern injustices must address the issue of how humans disavow their complicity and responsibility in the suffering of others. Recent approaches to responsiveness have taken up the challenge of disavowal. They insist on theorising different ways of cultivating a greater receptivity towards domination and exploitation. I showed that they remain caught by a problematic duality of oppressive structures and responsive agency that relies too heavily on ruptures and heightened agency as the source of social transformation. The ethics of responsiveness approach fails to account for the role that structures and human agencies play, together, in resistance and oppression. To avoid these limitations, I propose a focus on a less reductive ethos of reality, by which I mean a stance towards reality attentive to the dualism and pluralism of the human condition. This ethos, as a distinct ethico-political project, should inform how we judge responsibility-for-complicity. By way of conclusion, I shall provide a brief summary of the contribution this thesis has sought to make, including a review of the key findings in each chapter, a discussion of lessons and limitations, and a postulation of potential trajectories for further research.

Key Conclusions

This thesis puts forward three key findings. First, in response to debates on how human beings can judge their responsibility-for-complicity in injustice and oppression, I showed that we must focus on our sense of and engagement with reality as a neglected, irreducible and paramount problem of political theory. Chapter 1 retraced Hannah Arendt's thought and highlighted the relationship she identified between a person's sense of reality, the potential of a pluralist public sphere, and reflective judgement. Their interdependence gains in importance following the modern erosion of standards and traditions that facilitated 20th

century's totalitarianism. The break in tradition also enables the re-positioning of human activities in the gap between past and future, for which politics plays a crucial role.

Arendt connects politics and reality through a thick conception of plurality, by which I mean the implications she drew from the fact that humans can only make the world hospitable together. She identified three key elements to the human condition of plurality, the distinction and sameness of human beings, and the existence of a common world. This notion of plurality stands opposed to a dominant view in society and political philosophy that perceives politics as reducible to means-ends-thinking and focuses on issues of sovereignty, violence, and authority. In its place, Arendt highlighted that politics, in the form of acting together in the gap between past and future, enables people to appeal to others without reliance on exhaustive moral frameworks and, in so doing, produces meaning.

Pluralist politics maintains the separation and interconnection between people, and enables objects to appear and become issues of common interest and contestation. Judgement contributes to this political manifestation of plurality and its capacity to facilitate an appropriate engagement with reality, by enabling people to take up a position towards public appearances. In particular, reflective judgement brings together a plurality of spectators and actors, incorporates plurality through representative thought, and is oriented by and informs a community sense through which people can refine their 'it-seems-to-me'. Together these various mechanisms enable a judging person to enlarge their sense of reality by interacting with others, without ever reaching objectivity or losing sight of one's partial, yet unique, perspective on the world.

The second finding of this thesis concentrated on the connection between the conceptualisation of political judgement and the issue of social conditioning. Chapter 2 summarised the debate that followed Arendt's theorisation on political judgement, and identified two phases with a variety of different responses. The second phase directs attention particularly to the problem of how judgement can gain critical purchase – once freed from the clutches of rationalism and supposedly universal principles. I considered a number of theorists who respond through a discussion of the related concepts imagination, emotions, the unconscious, storytelling, and the pre-discursive structuring of judgement. Through their projects, the thesis gained invaluable insights on political judgement and showed how Arendt scholars are

increasingly seeking answers by looking at the interplay between structure and agency.

The thesis extended the insights of judgement scholars by connecting Arendt's political thought with Margaret Archer's realist social theory. I propose a hybridisation of Arendt's and Archer's work as the suitable means to capture the inescapable dualism of structure-agency and pluralism that underpins judgement. Archer shares Arendt's concern with attending to a multi-layered reality and with modern dehumanising tendencies. In response, Archer proposes a morphogenetic approach to structure and agency: we, social and political theorists alike, need to consider the analytically and temporally separate powers and mechanisms of agency and structure that shape society, to explain when social reproduction or transformation occurs. Chapter 3 took from Archer that the second dimension to political judgement requires attentiveness to the dualism of structure-agency or, in short, objectivism, subjectivism, and their mediation through reflexivity. A focus on the distinct properties and mechanisms of structure and agency amounts to a commitment to a mind-independent, stratified reality alongside a concern with personhood that is embodied, emotional, relational, capable of social innovation, and with a sense of self, emerging out of a varied engagement with a stratified world. The dualist approach enables judgement scholars to attend to the object and subject of judgement, without denying their interrelation or the crucial role that a public sphere plays for judgements.

The third finding of this thesis is therefore that we should judge existing responses to complicity by their ability to account for the dualism and pluralism to judgement, i.e. their capacity to create, build, maintain, and protect a world that is multi-layered and held in common, through a suitable focus on the interplay of structure, agency, and plurality. This focus translates into a less reductive ethos of reality, by which I mean a normative project tied to a person's stance towards reality with two objectives: i) to respond to the subjective, objective, and intersubjective powers and mechanisms that impoverish the common world, notably the systematic reductionism of a multi-layered reality; ii) to identify and engender contributions by structure, agency, and plurality that facilitate a more hospitable, flourishing common world as the prism through which we can make concrete judgements on responsibility-for-complicity that affirm the multi-layered character of reality.

Chapter 4 went back to the starting point of this project, complicity in systemic injustice and oppression, and showed the comparative merits of my approach over competing theorisation of this problem. The importance of adhering to dualism and pluralism in judging complicity became evident in my discussion of the methodological individualism that continues to frame the dominant legal and moral philosophical perspective on complicity, but also in the critical responses that opposed it, most recently through an ethics of responsiveness. The proponents of such an ethics build on post-structuralist thought and the work of Iris Young, which sought to articulate a broader conception of complicity as taking up collective responsibility and affirming human foldedness in contexts of systemic injustice and oppression. This ethics highlights that, although both poststructuralists and Young acknowledge socially embedded human agency, they nonetheless fail to account for the cultivation of responsiveness towards the marginalised, victimised, excluded, and suffering. This is something that authors who build on these perspectives do. While supportive of their attempts to expand the critical alternatives by engaging with the problem of receptivity, I criticised the ethics for the image of a duality that comes with their proposals for how humans can become more responsive to injustice. The duality opposes deeply rooted systemic injustice with receptive agency, which leads to a theorisation of responsiveness in separation from the structural contributions to transformation.

Chapter 5 took up the challenge of mapping out how actual judgements of responsibility-for-complicity, embedded in an ethos of reality, could look like. I drew on the reflections of Romanian Nobel laureate Herta Müller in her interviews and essays. Müller responded to the everyday challenges of resistance and complicity during the Romanian communist dictatorship. The writer's ethos of reality is captured by a resistant practice of 'living in the detail', which highlights the need to hold on to the complexity of reality and the concreteness of particulars contra a regime that distorted reality to oppress its citizens. The complex layers of reality are articulated in Müller's work, which serves to protect an alternative reality, through attentiveness to variations in agency, the contributions of objects, places, and structures, and the friendships and exchanges that together create a hospitable common world. Literary devices including autofiction and surrealism serve to maintain the ambiguity and complexity of this reality, as they deny the closure and simplistic narratives offered by the dictatorship.

Put together, my thesis hybridised Archer's and Arendt's distinct contributions to social and political theory, to propose a less reductive ethos of reality that focuses on human's engagement with structure, agency, and plurality as the source for facing and coming to terms with reality. Judgement should be orientated by our sense of and need to give meaning to reality. Taking up responsibility-for-complicity in injustice and oppression therefore depends on a person's ability to cultivate such an ethos as one of the paramount demands of politics.

Contribution

The thesis contributes to debates on judgement, on structure-agency, and on complicity, and I combined their insights to engage with a variety of other scholars and schools of thought. The first debate centres on Arendt's political thought and her theorisation of reflective judgement. The numerous companions and handbooks currently in production and recently published (Baehr and Walsh, 2017; Bernstein, 2018; Gratton and Sari, 2020; Hayden, 2014; Krimstein, 2018) attest to the fact that Arendt's thought remains highly relevant for contemporary political theory. The widespread use of her thought is also visible in the diversity of scholarship drawing on Arendt, some of which I reconstructed in the debate on judgement in chapter 2. Nonetheless, scholarship is still grappling with the tensions that emerged in Arendt's thought, and, alongside social-political theory more generally, it remains caught between a desire for a priori principles and a socially attuned framework informed by post-colonial and feminist literature. Debates on Arendt also continue to shy away from social theorising, as they retain Arendt's scepticism towards social sciences, which makes them ill-equipped to explore the kind of insights I drew from debates on structure and agency and in particular Archer. This lacuna leaves many questions unanswered – especially on the 'realist' dimensions to Arendt's thought. The thesis offers an initial attempt to reveal the contribution that hybridising Arendt's insights and a sympathetic social theoretical account of human agency can provide. Sharpening Arendt's formulation of the different dimensions on which a common world – and with it judgement – builds, this thesis seeks to take forward the dialogue on judgement with major scholars to which it is indebted, notably Ferrara, Azmanova, and Zerilli, and with Arendt scholarship more generally.

Feminist, post-structuralist, and Bourdieusian scholars have helped uncover and counter-balance problematic tendencies in Arendtian conceptions of the political and judging politically. Politics in their reading is too easily dis-embedded from

relationships of conflict and domination that they consider constitutive of it. The thesis seeks to take seriously both the normative insights of Arendt and the need to embed her insights in contemporary social and political theoretical debates. Substantiation through Archer's realist social theory, I claim, achieves this, because she leaves space for the Arendtian normative commitments and adds concreteness on social conditioning. Put simply, Archer helps maintain a focus on human agency that avoids reverting to a conception of dis-embedded mastery of the world through a rational human, but also avoids the image of humans as embodied, largely unconscious, social vessels where reflexivity and receptivity come only into play in sporadic moments of crisis. The thesis thus seeks to help refine the critique of Arendt further.

The second debate concerns Margaret Archer's realist social theory and the critical realist insights into structure and agency. My main aim has been to show the complementarity of Arendt and Archer's thought while highlighting their distinct contributions. Critical realists tackle a wide variety of key issue in social theory, from meta-theoretical considerations about scientific enquiry to renewed efforts to conceive of reflexivity, and the normative project of ensuring human flourishing in late modern societies. The school of thought nonetheless reproduces broader social theoretical tendencies to give preference to socio-economic concerns over the political dictum to give meaning to reality through a strong pluralist public sphere.¹ Following the lead of Arendtian social theorists Philip Walsh and Peter Baehr, I sought to highlight the contribution that Arendt and political theory can bring to social theory through their particular focus on politics.

Thirdly, this thesis addresses debates on complicity and provides a critical evaluation of its key commitments together with a counterproposal of introducing a less reductive ethos of reality. The thesis aligns with critical positions that have done much to illustrate the varied ways in which power works on and through judgement. I therefore hope that this thesis offers an opportunity to engage in dialogue with a position that does not follow the dominant binary of methodological individualist, rational approaches and post-modern and critical theory perspectives, but instead provides a means to interrogate both in order to develop their sophisticated

¹ To give just one example, Ismael Al-Amoudi (2017) explores the insights of Archer's work on reflexivity for political philosophising, but remains largely concerned with resource distribution.

accounts further. Accommodating concerns with identifying morally wrongful acts and culpable agents, as well as the need to cultivate greater receptivity towards those excluded and suffering, the cultivation of a less reductive ethos of reality provides the pre-condition that these demands could lead to positive social transformation. Rather than tackling the moral and legal philosophical challenges of injustice directly, the thesis contributes by adding precision to the ever-changing articulation of the potential in being human. In hybridising Arendt and Archer, the thesis seeks to provoke renewed efforts to account for agency in all its contingency, neither to immortalise, idealise, and glorify, nor to succumb to scepticism and denial when faced with the numerous challenges of late modernity.

Potential Criticisms

Leading on from this overview of the findings, argument, and contribution of the thesis, and prior to an articulation of the potential avenues for further research, I shall address some potential criticisms one might wish to raise against my argument. As a primarily theoretical project, the thesis would benefit from empirical research, for example into reflective judgement and its connection to the identified changes to reflexivity in late modernity. In awareness of this limitation, I have refrained from stretching the extensive empirical research done by Archer beyond its original purpose. The restriction undoubtedly leaves an important gap to be filled by research into the relationship between political judgement and reflexivity, as well as into politics as Arendt understood it and the conditions of late modernity. For such a project to get off the ground, however, significant under-labouring is necessary. To this end, I sought to provide an appropriate articulation of Arendt's and Archer's positions. For the purpose of an imminent critique of approaches to responsibility, complicity, and judgement, the theoretical insights prove crucial. Furthermore, in light of the continued dominance of an emphasis on 'burdens to judgement' in political theory and the social imperialism in contemporary social sciences, there is a particular value in revealing the combined force of the humanising project that emerges out of Arendt's and Archer's theoretical and normative, rather than necessarily empirical, insights.

A second challenge may focus on the (over-)emphasis on three dimensions, structure, agency, and plurality, which risks obscuring other categories, e.g. time and space, that could potentially help evaluate the limitations of how people take and theorise responsibility-for-complicity. Critics might additionally point out that the

separation of the three dimensions is insufficiently attentive to their interplay. Chapter 4 underlined the value of a focus on the separate categories of structure, agency, and plurality. It provides an important tool that lays bare the traditional failures of a conceptualisation and exercise of complicity. Theorists of complicity show an acute awareness of the challenge of structure-agency and the need to create a hospitable world amidst systemic violence and injustices; the failure of their sophisticated responses to account for the dualism and pluralism of judgement is therefore particularly problematic. It raises serious doubts about their ability to contribute to positive social transformation, which, after all, is the common normative project of complicity scholars.

Lastly, readers might challenge a turn to critical realism without a prior consideration of the realist position available in contemporary political theory. Arendt had a strained relationship with major political realists, notably Isaiah Berlin (Dubnov, 2017; Hiruta, 2014), and a comparison of their work may help delineate Arendt's contribution to a less reductive ethos of reality further. While I agree that political realists provide a means to distinguish Arendt's pluralist realism further, they lack a suitable approach to political judgement and recent realist criticisms of Rawls do not provide a sustained attempt at putting forward a comprehensive alternative to Arendt's realism (Bourke and Geuss, 2009; Galston, 2010; cf. Vogler and Tillyris, 2019).

Further Research

In response to the potential limitations, but also from within the various debates that I considered, arise a number of ways in which the insights in this thesis warrant extension. The changing interrelationship between structure, agency, and plurality in late modernity, for example, provides much potential for further investigation and re-imagination.² The following focuses on one avenue for further research that I take to be particularly important and most neglected in this thesis and in contemporary social and political theory: a systematic approach to the common world. Such a project gains in urgency, as the constitution of a hospitable and flourishing common world is crucial in articulating a positive response to systemic injustice and political oppression. My hybridisation of Arendt's pluralism and Archer's dualism goes some way in refining our understanding of the three components that constitute the

² The debates on trans- and post-humanism provide a case in point of how the insights in this thesis could be extended by revisiting what it means to be human (cf. Chernilo, 2017).

common world, structure, agency, and plurality. A failure to address adequately one of the three dimensions of being human risks falling back into an overly structuralist or individualist conception of reality. However, worldliness and common world remain opaque terms whose full meaning has not been sufficiently unpacked *in terms of plurality*. For this purpose, a cross-pollination of social and political theory may prove particularly fruitful.

As a potential avenue for further research, I therefore suggest the combination of three concepts of social and political theory: Arendt's common world, Archer's relational goods and evils, and Rosa's resonance. Each, I would argue, provides a different aspect to conceptualising plurality and goes beyond existing literature, including on recognition, solidarity, trust, and friendship, in important ways. Together with Pierpaolo Donati, Archer (2015) argues for a conception of relationality as 'w-ness' where the relation itself has emergent properties irreducible to the intentionality of the participants. People offer reflexive orientations towards the emergent relational goods, e.g. trust, or evils (distrust). In his recent monograph *Resonanz: Eine Soziologie der Weltbeziehung* (Rosa, 2016; transl. Resonance: A sociology of the relationship to the world), social theorist Hartmut Rosa argues that in a sociology (and world) narrowly focused on the distribution of resources, critical theory must concern itself with the elementary issue of the state of human relationships with the world. His work looks at how people resonate with the world, as a suitable response to forms of alienation. A comparative analysis could help capture a refined understanding of the potential in human plurality as an irreducible, distinct socio-political phenomenon.

With these three theorists, it is my intuition that it is our responsibility as academics to articulate new ways of recuperating a stronger theoretical notion of plurality and relationality in order to create a hospitable world as the starting point for tackling injustices and oppression. For now, the thesis has shown that judging responsibility-for-complicity should come with the cultivation of an ethos of reality attentive to the three dimensions to being human, structures, agency, and plurality that, together, constitute the common world.

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