



## On the Indispensability of Complete Openness for the Future of *Humanitas*

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**Abstract:** Karl Jaspers' and Hannah Arendt's remarkable friendship is documented in a forty-years-long dialogical correspondence where both could present their views – sometimes of entirely divergent nature – on a variety of political and ethical themes. Both were thinkers for whom communication was central. Following Jaspers, human beings realize the truth of their existence in existential communication where the communicating partners are equal. Arendt, on her part, put the world at the centre of politics. She could build on Jaspers' insights and transfer communication into the public political realm, thus giving preference to human plurality.

**Keywords:** Arendt, Hannah; Jaspers, Karl; Existenz; sincere dialogue; friendship; truth in existential communication; boundary situations; action and speech.

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*Forgot all my English. Am scandalously happy. In the midst of one uninterrupted conversation (not discussion, complete give and take) since the minute of my arrival.*

Hannah Arendt

when visiting Karl Jaspers for the first time after the war.<sup>1</sup>

### Arendt and Jaspers in and on Free Communication, Conversation, and Correspondence

The correspondence between these two original thinkers began in 1926 and ended with Jaspers' death in 1969. It documents the remarkable friendship that developed between Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers. A friendship between, in Anson Rabinbach's words, "temperamentally diametrically opposite individuals, the passionately engaged and Jewish identified Jewess and the Protestant German patriot, who once described himself as a 'norddeutsche[r] Eisklotz'."<sup>2</sup> What

is important in communication is the mutual respect for each other's articulated individuality. This was the reason for the existence of their forty-three-years-long dialogical correspondence, where the "sheer endurance is itself impressive" (NI 189) and in the course of which both could present their views – sometimes of entirely divergent nature – on a variety of political and ethical themes. For example, they were discussing the question of German guilt in the immediate post-war years.

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<sup>1</sup> Hannah Arendt to Alfred Kazin, April 6, 1952, in *The Correspondence between Hannah Arendt and Alfred Kazin*, ed. and intr. Helgard Mahrtdt, *Samtiden* 1 (2005), 107-154, here p. 131. [Henceforth cited as AKC]

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<sup>2</sup> Anson Rabinbach, "Negative Identities, German and Jews in the Correspondence of Karl Jaspers and Hannah Arendt," in *German and Jews since the Holocaust*, eds. Anson Rabinbach and Jack Zipes, New York, NY: Homes and Meier 1986, pp. 189-206, here p. 189. The German phrase is best translated as "lump of ice from Northern Germany." [Henceforth cited as NI]

Jaspers was a cosmopolitan thinker who wrote extensively on the threat to human freedom posed by modern science, modern economy, and political institutions. He embraced "the 'European Spirit' and... the basic unity of all thinking—Western and Eastern" (NI 194). The fact that the development of transportation and communication technology succeeded in making the earth into one world, led Jaspers to say in 1949, "The unity of the earth has come."<sup>3</sup> The world itself has moved into the centre of reality, and it was this shift that made Jaspers reflect upon the task of philosophy. He thought that a new way of thinking was necessary, a perspective that he called world philosophy (*Weltphilosophie*). "Philosophizing under such radically altered conditions necessitates new forms of spirit. They first shape themselves in concealment. The exciting part of our time is this claim of a new form in order to seize the primeval eternal in the containers in which they are accessible to us."<sup>4</sup> Philosophy of the world means in his words, "thinking in the great community of humanity, in a single common space" (KJN 104).

Arendt perceived Jaspers' vision of the newly forming global human solidarity as being closely related to Immanuel Kant's ideal of perpetual peace and as an instance of rethinking history with a cosmopolitan intent.<sup>5</sup> Carlin Romano paraphrases Kwame Appiah's view of discussion within cosmopolitanism: "It begins with the simple idea that in the human community, as in national communities, we need to develop habits of coexistence: conversation in its older meaning, of living together, association. And conversation in its modern

sense, too."<sup>6</sup> For Jaspers, "communication means a way to my fellow-man and a way to truth," more precisely, as Arendt puts it, "truth itself is communicative and disappears outside of communication" (CP 441). The communication that Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers upheld took place in various ways, in the form of their correspondence, in the form of numerous articles, and in extraordinary conversations whenever Arendt visited Jaspers in Basel, conversations that she described for example on her first visit to Jaspers after the war as being "in the midst of one uninterrupted conversation (not discussion, complete give and take) from the minute of my arrival" (AKC 131). Indeed, it is during these talks that all the senses came to participate in them in the liveliest of ways, thus helping to avoid misunderstandings. When the German book trade's Peace Prize was awarded to Karl Jaspers, Arendt delivered the address, praising his

incomparable faculty for dialogue, the splendid precision of his way of listening, the constant readiness to give a candid account of himself, the patience to linger over a matter under discussion, and above all the ability to lure what is otherwise passed over in silence into the area of discourse, to make it worth talking about. Thus in speaking and listening, he succeeds in changing, widening, sharpening—or, as he himself would beautifully put it, in illuminating.<sup>7</sup>

In her laudatio of Jaspers, Arendt explicitly links personality, humanity, and spirituality with the public space, and in so doing she tells us that the "personal element in a man...only [can] appear where a public space exists" and only "to the extent that this public space is also a spiritual realm," she goes on that it manifests itself in "what the Romans called *humanitas*" (KJL 73).

In 1962, when the Piper Verlag came up with the idea of a radio series entitled "Politics of the Times in Dialogue," Jaspers imagined the idea of a public dialogue with Hannah Arendt as a wonderful thing and "a minor sensation," and at the same time stressing that in "a real conversation dialogue is the only possibility."<sup>8</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Karl Jaspers, *Vom Ursprung und Ziel der Geschichte*, Zürich, CH: Piper & Co. 1949, p. 163: "Die Erdenheit ist da." All translations from German are by the author.

<sup>4</sup> "Für das Philosophieren unter so radikal veränderten Bedingungen sind neue Formen des Geistes notwendig. Sie bilden sich zunächst verborgen heraus. Das Erregende unserer Zeit ist dieser Anspruch eines Neuen, um das Uralte, Ewige in die Gefäße zu fangen, in denen es uns zugänglich ist." Karl Jaspers literary estate, quoted by Hans Saner, *Karl Jaspers: Mit Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten*, Reinbek bei Hamburg, GE: Rowohlt 1999, p. 104. [Henceforth cited as KJN]

<sup>5</sup> See Hannah Arendt, "Concern with Politics in Recent European Philosophical Thought," in *Essays in Understanding 1930-1954*, ed. by Jerome Kohn, New York, NY: Harcourt Brace & Company 1994, pp. 428-47, here p. 441. [Henceforth cited as CP]

<sup>6</sup> Carlin Romano, "Can we Talk?" *The Chronicle Review* 52/31 (April 7, 2006), p. B9.

<sup>7</sup> Hannah Arendt, "Karl Jaspers: A Laudatio," in *Men in Dark Times*, New York, NY: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc. 1968, pp. 71-80, here p. 78. [Henceforth cited as KJL]

<sup>8</sup> Karl Jaspers to Hannah Arendt, Basel, December 2, 1962, in *Hannah Arendt Karl Jaspers Correspondence*

Arendt on her part answered in a way that illustrates fundamental trust as an element of their friendship: "The subject matter is up to you. Whatever terms you set will be all right with me."<sup>9</sup> The perspective of the other one entering into a public dialogue does not cause in either of them fear of a fight, deadly competition, or any kind of victory or defeat. Instead, Arendt tells Jaspers that she is "thinking back on [their] many, many talks together [and they] should try to find some way to present the process of conversation itself, so to speak" (AJW 493).

What is so unique about Jaspers and his philosophy is what leads Arendt to conclude her 1947 dedication to Jaspers with the words, "your life and your philosophy provide us with a model of how human beings can speak with each other, despite the prevailing conditions of the deluge."<sup>10</sup>

### Thinking, Communication, and Human Existence

It is precisely the relatedness to the world that Arendt stresses in Jaspers' ways of thinking. She claims that his thought is spatial, spatial not in the sense of being bound to an existing place – in fact, as Arendt is telling us, "the opposite is the case" – but spatial in the sense that

his deepest aim is to "create a space" in which the *humanitas* of man can appear pure and luminous. Thought of this sort, always "related closely to the thoughts of others," is bound to be political even when it deals with things that are not in the least political; for it always confirms the Kantian 'enlarged mentality' which is the political mentality *par excellence*.<sup>11</sup>

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1926–1969, transl. Robert and Rita Kimber, eds. Lotte Kohler and Hans Saner, San Diego, New York, London: Harcourt Brace 1992, p. 489.

<sup>9</sup> Hannah Arendt letter to Karl Jaspers, Wesleyan University, December 13, 1962, in *Hannah Arendt Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926–1969*, transl. Robert and Rita Kimber, eds. Lotte Kohler and Hans Saner, San Diego, New York, London: Harcourt Brace 1992, p. 493. [Henceforth cited as AJW]

<sup>10</sup> Hannah Arendt, "Dedication to Karl Jaspers," in *Essays in Understanding 1930–1954*, ed. Jerome Kohn, New York, NY: Harcourt Brace & Company 1994, pp. 212–6, here p. 216.

<sup>11</sup> Hannah Arendt, "Karl Jaspers: A Laudatio," transl. Clara and Richard Winston, in *Men in Dark Times*, New York, NY: Harcourt, Brace & Company 1968, pp.

It is true that, as Arendt writes, "all thinking demands a stop-and-think."<sup>12</sup> But this does not mean withdrawal from the "common-sense world of appearances" or detachment of oneself from others' thoughts. This is certainly true for Jaspers' philosophy. For, according to Arendt, whoever "conceives of truth and communication as one and the same has left the proverbial ivory tower of mere contemplation," and has, thus, become "practical" and "indeed...the only successor Kant has ever had" (KJL 74). Both have "more than once left the academic sphere and its conceptual language to address the general reading public" (KJL 74). For her, Jaspers' "numerous articles, lectures, radio broadcasts" during the immediate post-war years were all done in "the conviction that one can appeal to reason and to the 'existential' concern in all men."<sup>13</sup> Arendt was convinced that "philosophically this has been possible only because truth and communication are conceived as the same" (KJC 87). It also needs to be taken into account that for Jaspers and Arendt truth is the *Existenzerhellung*, the illumination of existence. Jaspers states:

Existenz, though never empirically discoverable, constitutes the true self which enters into all the roles I play...It is present when I am authentic...The question that concerns me as a possible Existenz is whether I am to preserve my identity, become firmly united with and unconditionally attached to my historical roots, and thus gain awareness of the being that enables the eternal to be felt within the temporal.<sup>14</sup>

*Existenz* is connected to the individual, and what is more, it cannot be discovered scientifically. It is "the indefeasible dark source of authentic being" (KJI 102) that can only be indirectly expressed. It may therefore be that, as Jaspers writes, "the most deeply moving of Shakespeare's plays may well do more to support 'the tragic view of life' than any philosophic argument" (KJI 139). If this holds true for Jaspers' thinking, one can

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71–80, here p. 79. [Henceforth cited as KJL]

<sup>12</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, ed. Mary McCarthy, New York, NY: Harcourt Inc. 1981, p. 78. [Henceforth cited as LM]

<sup>13</sup> Hannah Arendt, "Karl Jaspers: Citizen of the World?" in *Men in Dark Times*, New York, NY: Harcourt, Brace & Company 1968, pp. 81–94, here pp. 86f. [Henceforth cited as KJC]

<sup>14</sup> Karl Jaspers, *Von der Wahrheit*, p. 83, quoted from Charles F. Wallraff, *Karl Jaspers. An Introduction to His Philosophy*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 1970, p. 102. [Henceforth cited as KJI]

say the same for Arendt's. For the objective of trying to understand the inner truth of events she often turned to literature, such as Joseph Conrad's novel *Heart of Darkness*,<sup>15</sup> to Marcel Proust's novel *A la recherche du temps perdu*,<sup>16</sup> and to William Faulkner's novel *A Fable*.<sup>17</sup>

Following Arendt, we may say that for Jaspers "the word 'existence'...means that man achieves reality only to the extent that he acts out of his own freedom rooted in spontaneity and 'connects through communication with the freedom of others'."<sup>18</sup> If we never can express what freedom is, if we accept "that freedom is not known and cannot by any means be thought of as an object [and that this] remains the alpha and omega of its elucidation," if we also consider Jaspers' statement, "I am sure of my own freedom, not through thinking but through existing, not through observing and questioning...but through achieving,"<sup>19</sup> how then does communication contribute to illuminate existence?

It is not scientific communication with its "clarity", "unanimity", "factual and logical conclusions", and "dispassionate objectivity" (KJI 114ff) that illuminates *Existenz*. Nor is it the communication of everyday situations, where we learn to "use speech as a stimulus to elicit desired responses, not to express thoughts" (KJI 118). Instead it is in an intimate relationship between the self and another where we, as April Flakne words it, enter into a "kind of communion or sharing... between an 'I and a Thou'," in which we, through communicating, realize the truth of our existence. Such a dialogue depends on a "preexisting ethical

relationship of trust, friendship, or good will."<sup>20</sup> This existential communication is a type of interaction that Jaspers understands as a permanent process of communicative struggle.

In the communicative struggle we find solidarity to be the dominant attitude. Jaspers means by this the mutual critique and support of the communication partners (P2E 65). The communicative struggle, also called in Jaspers the "loving struggle," is characterized, as Kurt Salamun explains, by "a kind of open-mindedness and frankness, which enables a person to communicate with another person without prejudice and masked purposes."<sup>21</sup> Its elements are "intellectual integrity and truthfulness which allow an openness to criticize one's own failings and dogmatized opinions of others" (MI 322). Such communication can never totally avoid the risk of sudden interruption, for a real intention to accept the personal freedom of the communication partner includes that the other chooses a different way of life. It is important to keep the disposition of existential solidarity even after one dialogue partner interrupted the communicative struggle, thereby avoiding making impossible a future recognition and understanding (P2E 66f).

The important background of Jaspers' thinking is that man realizes his life and his personality, as Salamun is detailing it, "in four modes or dimensions of being: The first dimension is naïve vitality or - vital existence," the second is "consciousness in general," the third dimension is the one of "spirit." Yet "these three modes of being...represent the human being only as an empirical phenomenon" (MI 317). However, for Jaspers "every human being is also...'possible existence'" (MI 318). This potentiality or the "dimension of the actuality of self-being, of true selfhood, the authentic and genuine self, of personal freedom, undetermined moral decision" (MI 318) is the fourth dimension of self-realization. "It is the authentic ground of human being", the "intimate dimension of humanity" and "cannot be described and explained by scientific approaches or scientific terms" (MI 318).

<sup>15</sup> For Conrad's novel as a synonym for civilization's road towards inhuman wilderness see Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, New York, NY: Harcourt 1993, p. 189. [Henceforth cited as OT]

<sup>16</sup> Arendt referred to Marcel Proust's description of the rise of nineteenth-century anti-Semitism in France (OT 80-8).

<sup>17</sup> Hannah Arendt, "On Humanity in Dark Times: Thoughts about Lessing," transl. Clara and Richard Winston, in *Men in Dark Times*, New York, NY: Harcourt, Brace & Company 1968, pp. 3-31, here p. 20. [Henceforth cited as HDT]

<sup>18</sup> Hannah Arendt, "What is Existential Philosophy?" in *Essays in Understanding 1930-1954*, ed. Jerome Kohn, New York, NY: Harcourt Brace & Company 1994, pp. 163-87, here p. 183.

<sup>19</sup> Karl Jaspers, *Philosophie II, Existenzerhellung*, Berlin, DE: Springer 1973, p. 185. [Henceforth cited as P2E]

<sup>20</sup> April N. Flakne, "Beyond Banality and Fatality: Arendt, Heidegger and Jaspers on Political Speech," *New German Critique* 86 (Spring-Summer 2002), 3-18, here p. 5.

<sup>21</sup> Kurt Salamun, "Moral Implications of Karl Jaspers' Existentialism," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 49/2 (December 1988), 317-323, here p. 322. [Henceforth cited as MI]

Jaspers emphasizes that in order to realize *Existenz* we have to experience "boundary situations and (or)...existential communication." Boundary situations (*Grenzsituationen*) are situations in which we are confronted with problems that we cannot resolve with the help of the rational knowledge that we use in solving problems in everyday life. Such boundary situations are guilt, suffering, struggle, contingency, and death (P2E 50ff, KJI 142).

According to Arendt, in Jaspers' time the "unity of mankind" consists of a new fragile unity "brought about by technical mastery over the earth" (KJC 93). "Politically," this new fragile unity "can be guaranteed only within a framework of universal mutual agreements" (KJC 93). Based on this Arendt concluded, "political philosophy can hardly do more than describe and prescribe the new principle of political action" (KJC 93). And that is precisely what she tried to do in exploring the "human condition of plurality...as specifically *the condition*—not only the *conditio sine qua non*, but the *conditio per quam*—of all political life."<sup>22</sup>

### Action and Speech

Arendt builds on and takes issue with Jaspers for whom reason "is neither entirely within nor necessarily above men, but, at least in its practical reality, between them" (CP 442). She appreciates "that Jaspers' definitions of reason hark back to very old and authentic political experiences" (CP 443), however there are limitations. She argues:

it seems rather obvious that (for Jaspers) "communication"—the term as well as the underlying experience—has its roots not in the public, political sphere, but in the personal encounter of "I and Thou." This relationship of pure dialogue is closer to the original experience of thinking—the dialogue of one with oneself in solitude—than to any other... (It thus) contains less specifically political experience than almost any relationship in our average everyday lives. [CP 443]

It is precisely this limitation in Jaspers that Arendt tries to overcome by developing her notion of the public space as a space of appearance. This space is closely associated with the extraordinarily difficult concept that Arendt calls "world." Lawrence Biskowski

writes: "For Arendt the world is the entire pragmatic web of relationships in which human beings are caught up, the total interplay between people, things, and relationships."<sup>23</sup> He elaborates that the world "provides the common framework that relates individuals to one another," it "serves as a context and record for action," and it can also provide human beings "an ethical foundation or orientation for political judgment" (PF 879) without incurring the risk of the collapse of plurality. To that end Arendt looks deeper into our-being-with-others. She does so by investigating separately the two activities proper to human plurality: action and speech.

In Arendt, human plurality has "the twofold character of equality and distinction" (HC 175). The mode of communication Arendt is concerned with establishes equality, and at the same time makes it possible for each one of those involved to express his or her distinction. Speech is essential to the human being for action. The unique and necessary role of speech becomes very clear in the following passage taken from *The Human Condition*:

Without the accompaniment of speech, at any rate, action would not only lose its revelatory character, but, by the same token, it would lose its subject, as it were; not acting men but performing robots would achieve what, humanly speaking, would remain incomprehensible. Speechless action would no longer be action because there would no longer be an actor, and the actor, the doer of deeds, is possible only if he is at the same time the speaker of words. The action he begins is humanly disclosed by the word, and though his deed can be perceived in its brute physical appearance without verbal accompaniment, it becomes relevant only through the spoken word in which he identifies himself as the actor, announcing what he does, has done, and intends to do. [HC 178-9]

It is speech that relates action to humanity. We understand even better how important speech is when we look at another aspect of speech and action, namely their revelatory quality:

In acting and speaking, men show who they are, reveal actively their unique personal identities and thus make their appearance in the human world... This disclosure of the "who" in contradistinction to "what" somebody is—his qualities, gifts, talents, and shortcomings, which he may display or hide—is implicit in

<sup>22</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, intr. Margaret Canovan, Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press 1998, p. 7. [Henceforth cited as HC]

<sup>23</sup> Lawrence J. Biskowski, "Political Foundations for Political Judgment: Arendt on Action and World," *The Journal of Politics* 55/4 (November 1993), 867-887, here p. 879. [Henceforth cited as PF]

everything somebody says and does. It can be hidden only in complete silence and perfect passivity, but its disclosure can almost never be achieved as a willful purpose, as though one possessed and could dispose of this "who" in the same manner he has and can dispose of his qualities. On the contrary, it is more than likely that the "who," which appears so clearly and unmistakably to others, remains hidden from the person himself. [HC 179]

However, Arendt qualifies that the "revelatory quality in action and speech" only "comes to the fore where people are with others and neither for nor against them – that is, in sheer *human togetherness*" (HC 180, my emphasis). Consequently, Arendt concedes that whenever "human togetherness is lost...as for instance in modern warfare...speech becomes indeed 'mere talk,' simply one more means to the end, whether it serves to deceive the enemy or to dazzle everybody with propaganda; here words reveal nothing, disclosure comes only from the deed itself, and this achievement, like all other achievements, cannot disclose the 'who,' the unique and distinct identity of the agent" (HC 180).

Considering Jaspers' theory of existential communication and its demand for complete equality for the communication partners, for the I and Thou, one then might say that Arendt's revelatory character of speech and action in sheer human togetherness moves Jaspers' communicative ideal into the public realm. In this realm we have to take plurality into account. In fact it is amongst the Greeks that Arendt finds the daily practice of public speech, "citizens talking with one another."<sup>24</sup>

To persuade and to influence others presupposes a kind of freedom that is mentally bound to one's own standpoint or point of view. The Greek's ideal Arendt refers to, "lies in *phronesis*, the insight of the political man...Such insight means nothing other than the greatest possible overview of all possible standpoints and viewpoints from which an issue can be seen and judged."<sup>25</sup> *Phronesis* is the cardinal virtue of the political man, and we find this idea again in Kant's discussion of

the common sense as a faculty of judgment. He calls it an "enlarged mentality," and explicitly defines it in the *Critique of Judgment* as the ability "to think in the place of everybody else."<sup>26</sup>

Arendt did not believe in common convictions amongst free people. However, she did believe that free discussion amongst reasonable individuals is the way to better founded opinions, yet she did not opine that the end of communication lies in anything resembling objective truth. On the contrary, her premise of unending discourse, the "boundlessness of action" (HC 191) which accompanies speech, demands a different attitude and approach to the human affairs.

Not only action and speech are closely related. The same holds true for action and opinion. Arendt argues that opinion, *doxa*, is "a word that signifies both fame and opinion, for it is through the opinion of the audience and the judge that fame comes about" (LM 94). In other words: "It is decisive for the actor...how he appears to others; he depends on the spectator's it-seems-to-me (his *dokei moi*, which gives the actor his *doxa*); he is not his own master, not what Kant would later call autonomous; he must conduct himself in accordance with what the spectators expect of him, and the final verdict of success or failure is in their hands" (LM 94).

The public deliverance of one's opinion is, thus, of particular importance to Arendt. As it is well known, she presented her political opinions on several occasions; she had her own opinions on "Little Rock," and gave her own account of the Eichmann trial, for just to mention two instances of public intervention. Crediting Kant, that presenting one's opinion in public was "to communicate and expose to the test of others...whatever you may have found out when you were alone,"<sup>27</sup> her friendship with Jaspers too can be understood as an unending communication, in which she was performing "a natural vocation of mankind, (that is) to communicate and speak one's mind" (KPP 40). The same can be said regarding critical thinking, while usually a solitary activity, thinking with the help of imagination renders possible the others' presence

<sup>24</sup> Hannah Arendt, "The Concept of History," in *Between Past and Future, Eight Exercises in Political Thought*, New York: Viking Press 1968, pp. 41-90, here p. 51.

<sup>25</sup> Hannah Arendt, "Introduction Into Politics," in *The Promise of Politics – Hannah Arendt*, ed. and with an Introduction by Jerome Kohn, New York, NY: Schocken Books 2005, 93-200, here p. 168. [Henceforth cited as *IP*]

<sup>26</sup> Kant cited in Hannah Arendt, "The Crisis in Culture", in *Between Past and Future. Eight Exercises in Political Thought*, New York, NY: Penguin Books 1993, p. 220. [Henceforth cited as *CC*]

<sup>27</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, ed. Ronald Beiner, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press 1982, p. 40. [Henceforth cited as *KPP*]

and thereby becomes a potentially public activity. Trains of thought are brought into the common world in the way of public judgments of them, and they are being described by Arendt as "coeval and coequal, of the same rank and the same kind" as political action: "Finding the right words at the right moment, quite apart from the information or communication they may convey, is action" (HC 26).

The spectator, on the other hand, is not involved in the act, but he is always involved with fellow spectators. The faculty they have in common is the faculty of judgment. Free individuals are inescapably plural; they are not mere embodiments of the processes of logic. They are distinct individuals revealing 'who' they are through action and speech. How then is the activity of judging in the sphere of inter-human affairs after the loss of standards adequately to be understood, which according to Arendt "does indeed define the modern world in its facticity" (IP 104)?

Arendt finds the answer in Kant's theory of aesthetic judgment. Aesthetic and political judgments are arguable, but in a particular way only. Taste judgments "do not compel in the sense in which demonstrable facts or truth proved by argument compel agreement," they can only, as Kant says "'woo the consent of everyone else' in the hope of coming to an agreement with him eventually" (CC 222). Arendt explains that judging events or things in the realm of human affairs "is not, like the thought process of pure reasoning, a dialogue between me and myself, but finds always and primarily, even if I am quite alone in making up my mind, in an anticipated communication with others with whom I know I must finally come to some agreement. From this potential agreement derives its specific validity" (CC 220).

The convincing quality of the argument can never be separated from the person who is making the

judgment. It is, in Arendt's wording, "as though taste... not only (decides) how the world is to look, but also who belongs together in it" (CC 223). In other words: In the act of judging we discover our communality with others.

Arendt is convinced that "we humanize what is going on in the world and in ourselves only by speaking of it, and in the course of speaking of it we learn to be human" (HDT 25). She is also of the opinion that "*Humanitas* is never acquired in solitude and never by giving one's work to the public. [Instead] it can be achieved only by one who has thrown his life and his person into the 'venture into the public realm'" (KJL 73f). But this "is only possible when there is a trust in people. A trust—which is difficult to formulate but fundamental—in what is human in all people. Otherwise such a venture could not be made."<sup>28</sup>

In 1964 Günter Gaus asked Hannah Arendt: "What do you think is the greatest influence that Professor Jaspers has had on you?" She answered: "He has an unreservedness, a trust, an unconditionality of speech that I have never known in anyone else" (GG 22).

We may say that Jaspers' thinking has become practical; through connecting truth to communication, it has made an important step away from a long tradition, which understood philosophizing as mere contemplation. Arendt, on her part, thought highly of his view on communication as well as the communicability of his philosophy. However, for her interest in political experience it turned out to be important to place the roots of communication in the public sphere.

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<sup>28</sup> Hannah Arendt, "What Remains? The Language Remains": A Conversation with Günter Gaus," in *Essays in Understanding 1930-1954*, ed. Jerome Kohn, New York, NY: Harcourt Brace & Company 1994, pp. 1-23, here p. 23. [Henceforth cited as GG]