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Justice as World-Making: Creative Citizenship in H. Arendt

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ABSTRACT: This essay proposes a novel interpretation of Hannah Arendt's political theory as a crucial contribution to a post-metaphysical, creative conception of justice and citizenship. It argues that Arendt's phenomenology of plurality, *amor mundi*, and critical thinking can be read under the prism of world-making. Against both ideal abstraction and empirical cynicism, the essay reconstructs the modern ideal of deliberative participatory democracy as a dynamic equilibrium between ontological shared power of beginning (i.e., freedom), interhuman trust, and communicative openness. It further situates this Arendtian model within the republican and cosmopolitan traditions, drawing on Kant's *Perpetual Peace* and contemporary political theories that defend fostering democratic innovation and democratic cosmopolitanism under conditions of global interdependence, authoritarian populism, digital fragmentation, and ecological crisis. The essay concludes that the "cosmopolitan constitution" envisioned by Kant and renewed by Arendt remains humanity's most demanding and hopeful vocation: the continuous creation of a habitable world for freedom.

Keywords: Political Philosophy; Deliberative Democracy; Perpetual Peace; Cosmopolitanism; Republicanism; Political Legitimacy.

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1. Introduction: The Problem of Democracy after Modernity

The modern world was born under the sign of crisis: revolutions that promised freedom, institutions that claimed justice, and histories that produced new forms of domination. In the aftermath of the twentieth century's disasters—wars, genocides, totalitarianisms, and the disillusionment of liberal democracies—political thought faced the task of re-imagining the relation between *justice* and *democracy*. The question is not merely how to distribute rights or design procedures, but *how to be a creative citizen*, i.e., how to sustain a peaceful *common world* in which human beings can live and relate with one another as free and equal.

Hannah Arendt (1906-1975) responds to this predicament by elaborating an original philosophical grammar to think the conditions of possibility of political freedom: the negative conditions that must be preventively avoided and dismantled (as historically demonstrated in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 1951), and the positive conditions that must be laboriously promoted and cultivated (as phenomenologically examined in *The Human Condition*, 1958).

Arendt's theory of action and appearance as world-making, as the communal creativity of being-with-others and being-in-between-others, constitutes an inspirational, critical, and compelling intellectual effort to understand how freedom and justice can coexist in a plural world after the collapse of metaphysical foundations and universalistic belief systems.

A) From the Crisis of Politics to the Question of Worldliness

In *Crises of the Republic* (1972), Arendt diagnosed the "loss of the world" that accompanies modern bureaucratic and technological forms of power. Politics, she warned, risks degenerating into administration and manipulation, while citizens withdraw into private interests or ideological camps. Her response was neither nostalgia nor technocratic repair but a call to re-create the *space of appearance*—the fragile public realm where speech and action reveal plurality. Democracy, in this view, is not the form of a political regime but the *formation of worldly existence*: a way of caring for the common world.

B) The Post-Metaphysical Horizon

Arendt refuses metaphysical, theological, and teleological justifications. After the "death of God" and the failures of ideological metanarratives, political reason must operate *without absolute guarantees*. Arendt's phenomenology of natality replaces divine creation with human beginning; thereby offering a *non-foundational process of grounding democracy: a way of generating justice in the practices of finite, plural, and unique beings* living *with* one another. At the same time, Arendt's politics is *aesthetic and existential*: the appearance of freedom in a fragile space of action through words and deeds, based on contingent trust (not on Absolute Authority) and intersubjective truthfulness (not on Absolute Truth). The challenge—and the opportunity—of thinking with Arendt lies in imagining democratic political life, our contemporary mode of citizenship, not merely as a compound of institutional structures and a stable set of juridical procedures (in keeping with a Rawlsian perspective), but as a living, collective *art of world-making*.

C) Beyond the Ideal / Non-Ideal Divide

Contemporary democratic theory often oscillates between *ideal and non-ideal paradigms*. Ideal theory, exemplified by Rawls (1971, 1993, 1999), constructs normative models of fairness and political liberalism under perfectly just conditions, under the famous *veil of ignorance*. By contrast, non-ideal theory attends to historical constraints, injustice, and power. Both, however, risk neglecting the *worldly* dimension of politics that Arendt foregrounded: the unpredictable, plural, and contingent realm where freedom actually appears. In this regard, Arendt's sensitivity resonates in Habermas's later work (1992, 1995, 1996), where he seeks to bridge the gap between ideal and non-ideal theory by grounding law in the communicative practices of real citizens rather than in the utopian ideal discursive situation with universal participation, argumentative equality, and an optimal consensus.

An integrated perspective must therefore treat justice not as a blueprint for a perfect order but as an *ongoing practice of renewal*: the maintenance of a world where freedom can continue to appear, where institutions remain corrigible, and where discourse remains open to common understanding and continuous criticism. This approach reframes democracy as a *process of self-critique and self-creation*—what Arendt calls the "capacity of beginning something anew," which might also inspire a *rapprochement* with the Rawlsian "reflective equilibrium," and the Habermasian "self-correction of discourse" (Arendt, 1958/1998, p. 9; Habermas, 1987, pp. 92-99; 1996, pp. 367-384; 1998, pp. 244-251; Rawls, 1971/1999, pp. 42-45, 96-97; 1993/2005, p. 97).

D) The Hypothesis: Justice as World-Making

The guiding hypothesis of this study is that democracy and justice are co-original and world-constituting. They are not separate domains—one political, the other broadly moral, or strictly legal—but two aspects of the same human activity that constitutes the essence of citizenship: the art of creating and sustaining a common world of meaningful life. Arendt reveals the *ontological* condition of this art of common living (i.e., plurality and uniqueness of persons with their power of natality), preceding and nourishing the *moral-institutional* architecture (promoting fairness and reciprocity), which in turn gives stability to the *intersubjective praxis* (free communication and free foundation of legitimate institutions). Together, they delineate a triadic model of *justice as world-making*, which encompasses three dimensions:

1. An existential dimension, the appearance of plurality, uniqueness, and freedom achieved through the unity of action and speech;

2. An institutional dimension, the construction of fair and stable frameworks based on the shared power of natality, consolidated by the complementary powers of promising and forgiving;

3. A communicative dimension, the ongoing intersubjective freedom, whose political creativity has a foundational, critical, and justifying role.

In this model, democracy cannot be reduced to the mere aggregation of interests or the enforcement of rights. Democracy embodies the *mode of social and cultural existence* that accomplishes the *continuous constitution* of the common world through action, design, and dialogue. Justice is achieved when this world remains open, fair, and self-corrective—a space where each person can appear, deliberate, and act as a co-creator of meaning. *Creative citizenship* denotes here the affective, cognitive, volitive orientation towards the world-between, a shared and fragile world, whose continuity and transformability depend on freedom that renders the world inhabitable.

E) Method and Structure

In a time when democratic institutions survive yet democratic spirit wanes under the specter of new panoptical (Kaiser, 2019; Sunstein, 2017; Wylie, 2019; Zuboff, 2019) and authoritarian politics (Cooley & Dukalskis, 2025; Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018, 2023; Zakaria, 2007), the task of political philosophy is not only to rationally "discover" fair and just principles but to renew our sense of the world's worthiness for love and care. Against the backdrop of the contemporary erosion of common understanding and common political sense, Arendt's *amor mundi* can provide us with heuristic and methodological guidance. Justice, ultimately, is a mode of fidelity to the world—a commitment to its plurality, its fragility, and its possibility of renewal. The following sections pursue this conviction: that to think democracy today is to think the world itself as a shared, ever-unfinished creation.

The argument lies in the reconstruction of Arendt's conception of politics as the realm of plurality and natality, emphasizing her account of action, judgment, and *care for the world*, i.e., care for humanity and its conditions of possibility (*amor mundi*, or *dilectio mundi*, beyond self-contained *amor sui*, and otherwise than supramundane *amor Dei*). The idea of *justice as world-making* emerges from this reconstruction and contributes to deepening the analysis of the contemporary polycrisis of democracy—technocracy, populism, and the implosion of the public sphere. If all political ventures and all free actions manifest justice as world-making, then the essence of creative citizenship discloses itself as *amor mundi* in action.

2. The World as Ontological Condition and Vocational Horizon of Politics

For Hannah Arendt, political life in its public, democratic, republican form originates not in the structure of law, or in the machine of State administration, but in the event of appearance and dialogical peaceful encounter with deep creative power, despite and thanks to its agonistic dynamics where differences are not erased in a homogeneous fusional whole. The essence of "politics" does not reside in a juridical constitution but in a self-creative lifeworld, a living fabric of relations woven by unpredictable free beings through action and speech. When she writes, in *The Human Condition*, that "men, not Man, live on the earth and inhabit the world" (Arendt, 1958/1998, p. 7), she opens an ontological horizon where politics precedes formal institutions of government and justice precedes formal legislative bodies and law enforcement: the space between human beings is the first invention, the beginning of all possible institutions.

This human-made, inventive space of appearance and being in-between is the "public realm," or "the world itself, in so far as it is common to all of us" (Arendt, 1958/1998, p. 52), and in so far as it provides stability and permanence to action: a "community of things [and affairs] which gathers men together and relates them to each other," and, what is more, transcends their life-spans into a cross-generational past and future, i.e., into a kind of political immortality that constituted an authentically existential and metaphysical concern in Antiquity (p. 55). If Modernity is threatened by the loss of communality and wordliness, it is also because of its closure in the mortal present without the horizon of worldly historical immortality: the desire to participate and be "forever" recognized as having played a valuable part in the betterment of the polis.

The polis, for Arendt, is not an edifice of authority but a *space of appearance*, continually brought into being

whenever individuals act and speak in concert. In this space, freedom is not the private liberty to choose (*liberum arbitrium*), but the *public power to begin and to act according to principles*—the fundamental power of action as beginning not *ex nihilo* but historically *in medias res*, the "actualization of the human condition of *natality*," a miracle that acquires a personally distinct, self-revelatory dimension through the entwinement of action with speech. Speech actualizes the human condition of plurality and uniqueness, that is, "of living as a distinct and unique being among equals" (Arendt, 1958/1998, p. 178). Deeds and words, beginning and plurality, are inextricably united and performed together whenever a person participates in the common world. Speechless action is anonymous and opaque (thus not truly an action); inactive speech is vacuous, meaningless, and even self-contradictory (thus not truly a form of speech).

If the core of politics is creative peaceful speech, then the most disturbing domain of speechlessness must be envisaged as strictly pre-political, non-political, and anti-political: the eruption of violence and war, entailing necessarily the silence of victims, enemies, and laws, as well as the monological delirium of propaganda and self-justification that transforms citizens into mute warfare tools and destroys their double capability of natality and plurality (Arendt, 1963/1990, pp. 18-20). Totalitarianism, as the realm of ideology and terror, realizes the meticulous collapse of the conditions of creative citizenship through the destruction of truth, trust, and freedom (Arendt, 1951).

Political life is the ever-fragile renewal of commonly shared but irreducibly plural creativity; it relies on the dynamic unity between the power of beginning and the identification of uniqueness: a world continuously reinvented by truthful words and free actions, announcing the plurality of intentional, historical agents, confidently disclosing themselves in public, and exposing narratively who is acting and why. The common world is created, preserved, and cultivated when, involved in sheer togetherness, in a peaceful web of relationships, people act and speak *with* one another, neither *against* nor *for* one another (Arendt, 1958/1998, pp. 180-182). Here, virtually infinite new beginnings remain always possible, deeply entangled with the shared enactment of a radical plurality of unique lives, truthfully narrating themselves for love of the human world.

Against the long metaphysical tradition that sought foundations in God, Nature, Reason, or History, Arendt reverses the direction of grounding. The political is the foundation of the human world, not founded upon it. The world exists only insofar as human beings take care to build, sustain, and renew it through the plural activity of appearance, because to be politically capable of deed and word is to be capable of reality and presence, achieved by one's appearing to all (Arendt, 1958/1998, pp. 198-199). Thus, democracy is not merely a *sui generis* regime that empowers the people as the prime political agent; rather, it is the condition for the common appearance in the common world, in contrast with "private appearances" (e.g., dreaming) that form an uncommunicable "unique world." The Heraclitean distinction between *koinos kosmos* and *idios kosmos* resonates in Arendt's phenomenology of "publicity" and political appearance (Heraclitus, *Fragment* 89).

This ontological displacement also redefines justice. Justice is not a distributive equilibrium but the durability of the world between us. It is the existential quality by which the common world remains a space where plurality can endure without collapsing into violence. To act justly, in Arendt's sense, is to act in such a way that the world remains inhabitable for others—a deed of preservation as much as of renewal.

3. Action, Freedom, and the Promise of Beginning

In her book *On Revolution*, Arendt (1963/1990) traces the genealogy of modern freedom back to the experience of founding. Every revolution, she writes, is animated by the desire "to constitute freedom," yet most fail because they mistake liberation from tyranny for the positive institution of a new space of appearance. Only the social contract that enacts the "constitution of freedom" (*constitutio libertatis*; Arendt, 1963/1990, chap. 4), does celebrate the spirit of freedom, exhibiting by the same token a republican and federalist outlook (Pettit, 2012), for it performs an "act of mutual promise" based on reciprocity and equality, diametrically opposed to the social contract where an act of abdication of self-government irreversibly transfers individual natural rights and liberties to a new artifact, an all-absorbing Body Politic, like the Hobbesian Leviathan, or the societies plagued by voluntary serfdom (Arendt, 1963/1990, pp. 170-

171). The tragedy of modern revolutions lies not in their excess of passion but in their loss of the world: they dissolve into the social question, economic necessity, or the management of life. Only when revolution becomes *founding*—as in the American example she celebrates—does it create enduring institutions where freedom can appear and flourish.

The act of founding is the political translation of *natality*. It is the collective beginning that endows plurality with form. Yet this beginning is not a creation *ex nihilo*; it is an act of remembrance, of retrieving a promise. Political promises, as Arendt insists, are the only human devices that can stabilize the unpredictability of action without extinguishing it. The principle of fidelity and the principle of fairness overlap when one voluntarily commits themself to the obligation of fulfilling their promise (Rawls, 1971/1999, p. 303; Scanlon, 1998, p. 295f). Through promising, the future becomes trustworthy; through forgiveness, the past becomes bearable. Democracy thus produces a reliable common temporality, co-extensive world and time of life, sustained by these two faculties—the ability to forgive and the capacity to promise—which are themselves the ethical expression of beginning, and remain faithful to their beginning. One's self-fidelity to freedom in the plurality of action surmounts the irreversibility of past deeds (destroying the *what* to save the *who* of another's action) and the unpredictability of future deeds (inviting the other to a trustworthy joint venture) (Arendt, 1958/1998, part V, chaps. 33-34).

In this light, justice appears as the *reliability of the world*: the extent to which human beings can count on each other to keep promises, to repair, to begin again. The republic, in Arendt's vision, is a community of promise-keepers, a web of trust in the possibility of renewal. The opposite of this civic faith is not injustice alone but *worldlessness*—the condition in which human beings, deprived of a shared space and time of meaning, fall prey to ideology, terror, or apathy.

4. Judgment and the Enlarged Mentality

Arendt's *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* complete this ontological triad by giving democracy its cognitive organ: judgment. To judge is to *think representatively*—to take into account the perspectives of others without assimilating them into one's own (Arendt, 1992). Drawing on Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (especially Kant, 1790, § 20-21 and §§ 39-41; AA 5:237-239 and 5:293-296), Arendt reinterprets the *sensus communis* as the faculty that transforms private reason into public meaning (see Arendt, 1992, pp. 69-75). Politics, in this sense, is not the application of universal rules but the art of sharing and shaping the world through judgment, the art of expanding reflection, so as to include *a priori* "everyone else's way of representing" and reach, as it were, the enlightening spontaneity of "human reason as a whole" beyond one's particular standpoint of experience and one's preferred values.

This art of thinking, judging, imagining, and communicating lays the groundwork of politics, thanks to a self-decentering process focused on a plural, cosmopolitan "we" that emerges from an intersubjective commitment to understanding. Politics requires the overcoming of cognitive, affective, and volitional egocentrism, which can be achieved if one obeys the three "maxims of common human understanding" and therefore engages in "thinking for oneself" (i.e., in an unprejudiced way), "thinking in the position of everyone else" (i.e., in a broad-minded way), and "thinking in accord with oneself" (i.e., in a consistent way) (Kant, 1790, § 40; AA 5:293-294). In Kant's *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Standpoint*, there are two converging moments in which the "practical wisdom" of these maxims is re-endorsed as the most effective antidote to logical, moral, and aesthetic egoism through the enactment of humble pluralism, intersubjective agreement, and cosmopolitical goals (Kant, 1798, § 2 and § 43; AA 7:128-131 and 7:200-201; Jesus, 2010, 2023b).

The Arendtian notion of judgment restores the dignity of the spectator: not the passive observer but the one who, by understanding, keeps the world humanly meaningful. In dark times, when action becomes impossible or dangerous, judgment preserves the public realm by refusing lies and triviality. "Thinking without a banister," as Arendt (2018, p. 473) once called it, defines the modern situation or modern *ethos*; it implies the moral courage of democratic citizens who sustain the invisible infrastructure of truth by recognizing one's ignorance: "thinking as though nobody had thought before, and then start learning from everybody else," deepening and widening the inner dialogue ("the two-in-one", Arendt, 1971, p. 179f)

where maieutic moments and reconciling encounters may occur.

Justice, therefore, is inseparable from the exercise of judgment. To be just is to be capable of thinking from the standpoint of others—an ethical imagination that anticipates Habermas's discourse ethics but remains more existential and aesthetic. Where Habermas will later institutionalize this process as "communicative rationality," Arendt keeps it close to the spontaneity of world-disclosing speech and to the generosity of hospitality. However, unlike the radical other-centered ethics in which the intersubjective encounter places oneself under the oversensitive, unconditional vocation of being-*for*-the-other (Jesus, 2009; Lévinas, 1974), Arendt's hospitality has a symmetrical structure because it configures the foundational action of creating a communal space of experience at the heart of an ideal cosmopolitical friendship, rather than the relational possibility of self-sacrifice whose unbalanced self-gift (i.e., gift of one's life without any counter-gift) transgresses the rational co-construction of justice.

5. Worldlessness and the Unmaking of the Common

If the polis is the realm where plurality appears, totalitarianism is its annihilation. In *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951) and *Crises of the Republic* (1972), Arendt describes the modern condition not merely as injustice but as loss of world. Bureaucracy, ideology, and mass society conspire to dissolve the in-between, leaving isolated individuals and faceless systems. In such a world, truth itself becomes superfluous; facts lose their weight; reality becomes a function of propaganda or administrative convenience.

Arendt's diagnosis resonates uncannily with Claude Lefort's insight that democracy is "the form of society in which the place of power is empty" and in which the law is neither absolute nor transcendent but depends on a continuous debate around an empty place, a debate on the legitimacy of law itself as "the reason for their coexistence and as the condition of possibility of their judging and being judged" (Lefort, 1986, pp. 279-280; Lefort, 1988, pp. 39 and 225-228). For both, the danger arises when this empty place—the symbolic openness of the political—is filled by a totalizing image: the Party, the Nation, the Leader, the Market. Totalitarianism, in Lefort's phrase, seeks to incarnate the social body in a single organ; democracy, by contrast, preserves the indeterminacy of the social: no one possesses the supreme power of ruling, legislating, or judging. Power is limited by the norm of the empty place, and justice, therefore, requires vigilance in defending this emptiness, this open center where plurality can breathe.

In the twenty-first century, this worldlessness has taken subtler forms. As David Held (2006) observes in *Models of Democracy*, global capitalism and technocratic governance have displaced citizenship into managerial processes, while Robert Dahl's (2006) *On Political Equality* warns that formal rights mask vast asymmetries of influence. Timothy Snyder's (2018) *The Road to Unfreedom*, the analyses of Huizinga's (2016) *New Totalitarian Temptation*, as well as Eatwell & Goodwin's (2018) *National Populism*, all echo Arendt's fear: when citizens retreat into cynicism or digital tribalism, the common world erodes. The collapse of truth and the corrosion of trust are the deepest modes of contemporary worldlessness, which inevitably put democracy in jeopardy by inhibiting and manipulating the freedom of cognitive, affective, and volitive movements that underlines what we call here self-creative and self-humanizing citizenship (Applebaum, 2021, 2025; Fitzi, Mackert, & Turner, 2019; Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018, 2023; Snyder, 2017, 2018; Stanley, 2018, 2024; Wolin, 2008, 2016).

Thus, Arendt's reflections become prophetic. The crisis of democracy today is not merely institutional but ontological. The social ontology of the polis is undergoing a series of seismic currents, losing its creative plasticity: the disintegration of shared reality (into preferred narratives), shared belonging (into irreconcilable identities), shared truth and history (into dogmatic convictions and cynical depreciations), shared values, goals and projects (into exclusivist fidelities) (Fukuyama, 2018; Moghaddam, 2023; Mounk, 2018, 2022, 2023; Müller, 2017). Justice, under these conditions, must mean the reconstitution of the world as a space of visibility, accountability, and care. To restore democracy is to restore the freedom, openness, or *publicity* in the critical and plastic search for political truth(s) and good(s).

Faith and hope in the effectiveness of freedom require shared confidence in the overall process of economic

growth and economic distribution. Indeed, the authoritarian, populist, and nationalist temptations, which currently disrupt the stability of liberal democracies, are galvanized by an acute sense of economic injustice, frustration of "material" expectations, and impatience of the middle-class towards political solutions perceived as temporally remote, too moderate (even weak), and too complex or indirect (Acemoglu, & Robinson, 2012; Eichengreen, 2018; Judis, 2016; Mattei, 2022). Responding to the economic grievances of social democracies, namely by consolidating the minimum wage, securing affordability, and reducing inequalities, is the "material condition" for the contagious flourishing of freedom.

6. Freedom (and political human life) as Dilectio Mundi

What, then, is freedom and its political enactment for Arendt? Not a system of representation or a set of procedures, but a form of *care and love for the world—cura mundi et dilectio mundi*, behind and well above mere hedonistic "craving" (*appetitus*, *cupiditas*, *concupiscentia*) and closed "selfhood" (*cura sui et amor sui*). The analysis of Arendt's concepts of world, worldliness, and love of the world must take into account her Augustinian origins, where "world" means both the entire God's creation, prior to all love of the world, and the human world, formed by those who inhabit and love (*diligere*) the world:

> What happens by our will turns heaven and earth into the world in this second sense. … What happens by our will is guided by the love of the world (*dilectio mundi*), which for the first time turns the world, the divine fabric, into the self-evident home of man. When living man finds his place in the pre-existing creation he is born into, he turns the fabric of creation into the world.
>
> Love for the world, which makes it 'worldly,' rests on being 'of the world' (*de mundo*). … In the pure act of finding himself as part of God's creation, the creature is not yet at home in the world. Only by making himself at home in the world does man establish the world as such. (Arendt, 1929/1996, pp. 66-67)

Within the Christian theological ethics, elaborated by Augustine, the love of the world is never a truly free and liberating choice, but a naturally perverted relationship moved by *cupiditas*. In this sense, the only true love consists in returning to the original relationship with the source of being, which means choosing to love God in *caritas*. By loving the world, humans belong solely to what they made themselves, while in the love of God one belongs to the first and absolute Creator. So, love of the world is for Augustine a destructive expansion of self-love because, in loving the world, man loves nothing but what he has himself willed and created, as though he were God (Arendt, 1929/1996, pp. 77, 81-82). Under this Christian spirit, loving the world amounts to ignoring one's authentic being and vocation, mistaking the desert of this world for one's true divine, thus radically other-worldly *patria*. For, theologically imagined, humanity is called to perform a full ontological cycle, starting *from* God, moving *in* God, and returning *to* God. All attachment to the world constitutes the most fundamental human flaw: it encloses the basic structure of "sin," implying self-loss and self-misunderstanding.

The anthropological, political, and historical creative meaning of loving the world can only be recovered by affirming the primacy of ontological immanence over eschatological transcendence. The eternal "truth" of Christianity and its axiological hierarchy must be dialectically overcome so that the world may be worth loving and caring for. Interestingly enough, the love of the world is positively articulated by Arendt when she pays tribute to exemplary profiles of some men and women who, even in the "darkest of times," have proved by their concrete lives and works that we have always "the right to expect some illumination" (Arendt, 1970, pp. ix-x). This love of the world is not the romantic and projective fruition of one's imagination and desire; it is instead a courageous and perilous adventure, because the world is never a purely beautiful being, intrinsically lovable by nature. On the contrary, *this* world can be dark and monstrous. Yet, *this* world remains always a human world: both its darkness and its illumination are entirely human. Similarly, both the world's changing monstrosity and its fleeting beauty belong to human worldliness and are always intimately entwined with the human mode of inhabiting it.

To love the world is to assume responsibility for its flourishing, to act optimistically but without guarantees, to judge with humility and deliberate with uncertainty: to care for the world in its plurality and fragility. It is, as Lefort would say, to dwell in the "indeterminacy of the social and of history" without succumbing to fear (Lefort, 1988, p. 229). This is why Arendt praises Lessing's intellectual power of criticism as the

epitome of productive courage, truthful freedom, and educational friendship, capable of nourishing the love of the world (Zamotkin & Leiviska, 2025). In other words, Lessing embodies the Socratic and Kantian practical wisdom, encompassing "freedom of movement" under the guise of psycho-political openness to otherness with existential consistency and cosmopolitical orientation, which ensure the real humanization of the world in fearless "speech" inspired by *irony*, *maturity* (*Selbstdenken*), and *fraternity* (Arendt, 1970, pp. 8-13).

Given that the efficacy of such practical wisdom requires its bold public fulfilment, then the unfailing *ethos* of courage is the inner core of creative citizenship, the beating heart which animates the love of the world. However, being truthfully courageous does not equate with being in possession of absolute truth. Quite the opposite, the authentic human practical wisdom entails fundamental ignorance and relativity, which gladly—in keeping with Lessing's spirit of tolerance and philanthropy in *Nathan, the Wise* (1779)—admits a virtual infinity of valuable opinions into the interhuman realm, thus rejecting Kant's "inhumanity," i.e., the ever-recurring Platonic temptation to attain absolute truth in human affairs realm and consequently deduce goodness and justice from the absoluteness of truth (Arendt, 1970, pp. 25-28).

In this light, democracy appears as the ethical style of worldliness itself: the continual creation, through speech and action, of a space where the creative movement of freedom can appear. Its institutions—parliaments, courts, public spheres—are not ends but vessels for this appearing. When they ossify into mere procedures, democracy decays; when they serve as theaters for renewal, it lives.

The Arendtian notion of world thus mediates between Rawls and Habermas. Rawls's basic structure of society corresponds to the material durability of the world; his principles of justice as fairness are attempts to codify the reciprocity that Arendt saw enacted in the polis. Habermas's public sphere and discourse ethics extend Arendt's space of appearance into the communicative networks of modernity. But both, in different ways, risk neglecting what Arendt alone makes central: the pathos of beginning, the affective and narrative texture of freedom as lived experience.

To integrate Arendt into a broader conception of justice, then, is to remember that, before fairness and communication, there must be appearance. Without the luminous exposure of speech and the courage to act among others, justice becomes abstract, and democracy becomes administration.

7. The Contemporary Situation: Re-Worlding the Republic

Today, when democracies falter under populist passions and bureaucratic inertia, Arendt's thought returns as both warning and promise. The warning: that when the public realm is abandoned, politics turns into spectacle or management, and citizens become spectators of their own disappearance under the shadow of an antiparty Master (Urbinati, 2019). The promise: that the world can always be rebuilt, because each birth is a beginning, and every act of speech renews the web of relations.

This re-worlding of democracy demands more than institutional reform; it calls for the cultivation of judgment, courage, and care. It means educating citizens not only to claim rights but to appear—to speak, to listen, to imagine, to forgive, to promise. It means defending truth not as dogma but as the common texture of the real. It means rediscovering the joy and labor of plurality, the delight and the disquiet in the presence of others who are not like us, the self-critique of nationalism and antagonistic identities on behalf of common goods and common projects of life that are tolerant and welcoming towards the virtual infinity of utopias. Arendt's plurality is a mode of being that fosters life-with-otherness and recognition-of-uniqueness in a community of virtually infinite changeable communities. All particular communities, which genuinely cultivate freedom, design their utopias so that they can co-exist in an absolutely reconcilable manner because none of them claims the superior right to establish a dominant totality, as also imagined and desired under Nozick's libertarian framework for multiple simultaneous utopias (Nozick, 1974, chap. 10, pp. 297 ff).

In this sense, Arendt's political philosophy is neither conservative nor mono-utopian. It is a poetics of the common world, a call to inhabit the in-between. Democracy, for her, is the recursive rhythm of human togetherness—fragile, unpredictable, radiant return to the beginning. Justice is its duration in time, the

possibility of common history, the articulacy of meaningful lives, and the ever-renewed promise that the world, though wounded, shall remain the careful co-presence of many: "No human life, not even the life of the hermit in nature's wilderness, is possible without a world which directly or indirectly testifies to the presence of other human beings" (Arendt, 1958/1998, p. 22).

The recent reports on the Global State of Democracy (IDEA, 2023, 2024, 2025), as well as on Freedom in the World (Freedom House, 2025, 2024; Gorokhovskaia, Shahbaz, & Slipowitz, 2024), present irrefutable evidence of democratic backsliding and erosion of deliberative quality, even in long-established regimes, with some disturbing generalized symptoms, such as a decrease in popular electoral participation, combined with an increase in contestation of electoral results. In other words, the basic and common trust, *conditio sine qua non* for all communication and participation, has been suffering a significant disintegration in a communicative context where opposing and alternate discursive creations enjoy the same formal and experiential qualities, thus jeopardizing the formation of shared values and hence the efficacy of any evaluation, critique, and change.

It is worth noting that the spirit of deliberative and communicative citizenship underlies clearly the UN Resolution outlining the future regulation of AI, insofar as it places a strong emphasis on "transparency, predictability, reliability and understandability throughout the life cycle of artificial intelligence systems" (UN, 2024, art. 6-k) so that human decision-makers remain responsible for the impact of AI on human end-users. When disinformation corrodes trust, communicative rationality becomes an act of resistance; when populism despises compromise, deliberation becomes courage. In this sense, Arendt's philosophy is not merely descriptive but prescriptive: it calls us to rebuild the public sphere as a space of self-critical, slow free speech in an age of acceleration.

Our epoch requires what we might call a digital republic of discourse—a moral-technological infrastructure where truthfulness, dialogical respect, and accountability are re-institutionalized (Couldry & Mejias, 2019). Several concrete directions emerge and converge, namely:

1) Algorithmic transparency and deliberative design: public regulation of digital architectures to ensure the visibility of reasons over the virality of passions (namely, inflammable passions entangled with closed identities);

2) Global ethical standards for information ecosystems: a cosmopolitan extension of Kant's "public use of reason," enforced through international norms akin to human-rights regimes (Habermas, 1998, 2006); and

3) Digital civic education: cultivating the judgment Arendt saw as the cornerstone of freedom—the capacity to discern, compare, and imagine other perspectives.

These are not merely policy recommendations but manifestations of world-care: ensuring that the human conversation remains public, truthful, and plural.

Participation is expanding in digital form while trust in institutions declines; consensus democracies display greater resilience, yet deliberative quality weakens under populist pressure. Polyarchies mutate into technocracies; publics fragment into echo chambers. The ancient republican fear of corruption and the modern liberal fear of tyranny reappear in new guises: disinformation, surveillance, and oligarchic control of platforms. These trends confirm what Arendt foresaw: worldlessness as the gravest political danger. The cosmopolitan constitution thus confronts its first empirical trial: how to restore deliberation under conditions of communicative excess and asymmetric communicative power.

8. Justice as World-Making: Toward a Cosmopolitan Constitution of Humanity

Every age of humanity inherits a fragment of the world and adds a contour to its moral geography. The Greek *polis* made freedom visible as appearance; the Roman *res publica* made it durable as law; modernity sought to universalize it as natural, self-evident, human rights (Van Gelderen & Skinner, 2002). Yet only in Kant's vision of a "cosmopolitan constitution" (*weltbürgerliche Verfassung*) does the vocation of humanity appear whole: a federation of free peoples governed not by domination but by public reason, whose end is perpetual peace.

Arendt renews this Kantian impulse in a secular key. Her philosophy describes the conditions of possibility for the progressive deepening of justice—from the fragile in-between of plurality to the structural fairness of institutions, and finally to the communicative circulation of creative power. Under the regulative light of Kant's cosmopolitanism, Arendt sketches the outline of a moral-political trajectory: from the appearance of freedom in the local world to its institutional embodiment in a global commonwealth of freedom.

Kant imagined that humanity's political evolution followed a secret plan of nature: the unfolding of reason through conflict toward lawful freedom. His *Idea for a Universal History* (Kant, 1784) and *Perpetual Peace* (Kant, 1795) do not prophesy inevitability; they articulate a regulative faith and hope in the self-creative powers of humanity. The "cosmopolitan constitution" remains a guiding star, orienting moral navigation amid the storms of history. Arendt saw in this regulative idea not a mechanical *telos* but the promise of natality: every action and every word may enclose the courage that inaugurates or consolidates a new beginning amidst the thickest darkness of human history. The cosmopolitan constitution is thus no super-state but the evolving form of the empathetic plurality of freedom in *this* world and concern for *this* world; it displays the ever-expansive world-making creativity, enacted by promise and forgiveness, reinforced by the recognition of law, animated by mutual freedom and respect.

9. The Republic of Ends: An Ethical-Political Vision

Kant's categorical imperative already anticipated this world-making ethos: "all rational beings stand under the law that each of them is to treat himself and all others never merely as *means* but always *at the same time as ends in themselves*," and thereby recognize that to be *an end in itself* implies to be capable of autonomy, capable of beginning, and to enjoy an absolute "*inner worth*, that is, *dignity*" (Kant, 1785, GMS, AA 4:433-434). When generalized to the universal realm of interpersonal relationships, this becomes the ideal—and only ideal—"Kingdom of Ends" (*Reich der Zwecke*) or, more aptly expressed, in the context of political freedom, where sovereignty is fully internalized and equally distributed among all persons, the Republic of Ends: a moral community in which every person is always both a law-giving authority and a law-abiding citizen. When the "Republic of Ends" is projected onto the international plane, the Federal Union of Free States may arise as a cosmopolitical and juridical community in which every free nation, state, or people is and always remains both a law-giving sovereign and a law-abiding citizen (Kant, 1795, ZeF, AA 8:354-358; 1797, RL-MS, § 54, AA 6:344; Jesus, 2017).

Arendt's public realm attempts to "politicize" this Republic of Ends. Autonomy is redefined as co-constructible autonomy: the freedom that arises only in common. In this sense, the cosmopolitan constitution is the institutional approximation of the moral law; it is the world made by beings who recognize each other as ends through speech, law, and deliberation.

Such a constitution cannot be decreed; it must be built and rebuilt as an unfinished and ever-promising project. It exists wherever the moral imagination transcends the limits of identity—where the citizen becomes a world-citizen (*Weltbürger*) not by renouncing locality but by universalizing care. Justice, in this highest sense, is the daily *poiesis-praxis-theoria*, the daily wisdom of extending the circle of those whose suffering counts and whose voice is heard. Kant called progress "the crooked timber of humanity" (1784, IaG, AA 8:22): reason carving its own order out of imperfection. This patience exhibits *amor mundi*: a slow, moral evolution through crises. Moral evolution relies on moral education that inspires the creative citizen to pursue, with anthropological and historical optimism, the imaginative goal of infinite betterment of humanity (Jesus, 2007, 2023a, 2023b).

The historical democracies studied by Dahl (1971), Lijphart (2012), and Hendriks (2010, 2023)—polyarchic, consensual, vital—show how ideals translate into resilient institutions only through constructive conflict, compromise, and innovation. Democratic representation is creatively enriched by democratic participation and democratic "monitoring," thus fostering fruitful political experimentations with "open government" initiatives, including "participatory policy-making" (see Keane, 2009, 2018, 2020; OECD, 2020, 2025a, 2025b; Przeworski, 2010; Roth et al., 2025; Schudson, 1998; Vibert, 2007). Philosophy's revival after totalitarianism was itself an act of faith in reason's capacity for self-renewal (Zuchert, 2011). In the ruins of ideology, the cosmopolitan idea survives as an ethical rhythm: critique,

dialogue, reconstruction. Thus, justice as world-making demands both tragic lucidity and practical hope. We cannot found the perfect polis or constitute the perfect common world, but we can prevent the sea from engulfing us—as Estlund's (2019, p. VII) Baldwin epigraph reminds us—by not "breaking faith" with one another.

Justice as world-making must design a realistic utopia, descending from the regulative idea projected on an indefinite future into the dense atmosphere of the present—an age of ecological emergency, algorithmic governmentality, and civilizational fatigue. Political philosophy after Kant has always wrestled with this descent: how to preserve the dignity of reason without losing contact with the world's opacity.

Modern democracies oscillate between two pathologies: technocratic governance without meaning and populist passion without truth, all unfolding in a wide scenario of economic inequality. Economies must again become public economies—subject to the judgment of those affected. Global supply chains, financial institutions, and corporate algorithms should be governed by norms of transparency and contestability. A cosmopolitan republic of rights must include economic voice alongside political participation, ensuring that the structures of production do not silence the moral dialogue of humanity.

10. Conclusion: The Democratic Vocation of Justice

Every philosophy of justice begins, not with a model code, but with an invitational gesture: the turning of a person toward the world. For Arendt, this gesture is natality, the act of appearing; linked to reciprocity, the act of reasoning while listening; and to understanding, the act of meaning-making through critique and history. Together, these creative acts of citizenship compose the rhythm of democratic existence: to appear, to reason, to listen, and thereby to build a world that can endure its own plurality.

Democracy is not a form of power but a form of life: the perpetual beginning again of human coexistence. Each generation inherits a damaged world and a fragment of its promise, and must re-learn the craft of caring for both. In that renewal lies the true vocation of justice. Recognizing the absolute worth of persons as beginnings and ends in themselves, Arendt also examines the ambiguity of freedom: the joy and fragility of plurality, the unpredictable movements of creation and destruction, the efficacy of revolutions and constitutions. The Republic of Ends thus becomes, in political language, the Common World: a sphere of visibility where each voice counts, each act leaves a trace, and each difference contributes to the texture of the whole.

Justice, then, is not the cold arithmetic of rights, but the harmony of coexistence: fragile, dissonant, self-correcting, yet irrepressibly human. Our century inherits the exhausted splendor of the modern national state. No single polity can contain the moral drama of global interdependence (Steger, 2009). Wars, migrations, climate disruptions, and digital simultaneity have already woven humanity into a single, uneven fabric. The only adequate response is a renewal of the cosmopolitan imagination—revisiting Kant's *Weltbürgerliche Verfassung* not as utopia but as vocation. The cosmopolis is not an ideal city; it is this unique planet, material condition of human action and history, viewed as a republic of mutual creativity and vulnerability. Its constitution is written in treaties, networks, and conversations; its citizens are those who accept responsibility beyond borders. Here, the moral law becomes worldly: to act so that freedom and dignity can appear anywhere on earth. In truly "material terms," however, cosmopolitan justice presupposes inclusive and egalitarian economic development that renders every human being capable of fully accomplishing their capabilities; otherwise, cosmopolitanism betrays the concreteness of universal human dignity (Nussbaum, 2019).

Democracy requires a faith without dogma, a reasonable faith in humanity's capacity to learn: "the fact of reasonable pluralism" (Rawls), "communicative reason" (Habermas, 1981), "the moral faith that practical reason finds necessary" (Kant). This faith and this hope are not temperamental optimism but perseverance "despite everything"—the quiet conviction that the world, though unjust, remains worth saving. In Arendt's words, to love the world is "perhaps the most difficult of all human tasks," yet it is the only one that redeems action from despair. Justice, at its deepest, is this love disciplined by reason.

The future of justice is planetary and biospheric. It will depend on the capacity of global and local

institutions to embody fairness without erasing culture, on the courage of digital citizens to defend truth without violence, and on the imagination of educators, artists, and thinkers to translate cosmopolitan duty into local care. The moral law now has an ecological accent: act so that the Earth may remain the dwelling world of freedom.

Here, the metaphysical and the material reconcile: the world that reason commands us to respect is the same world that sustains our breath. The polis widens into biosphere; the republic of discourse becomes the republic of life. Justice as world-making thus joins ethics and ecology in a single act of stewardship. The work of philosophy ends where the work of citizens begins. Every deliberation that resists manipulation, every institution that protects speech, every act of judgment that refuses cruelty continues the conversation of humanity. The cosmopolitan constitution is renewed not in congresses but in consciences, not in decrees but in dialogues.

Democracy's eternity is not chronological but conversational: it lasts as long as human beings keep speaking to one another in good faith. To sustain that dialogue amid noise and despair is the calling of our time. The question of justice is finally the question of the world's worthiness for love. If we still ask what democracy means, the answer is neither sovereignty nor procedure, but care—care for the common, care for the true, care for the yet-to-be-born. Kant gave us the principle; Arendt, the courage. Their legacy is not a doctrine but a task: to make the world a fitting home for equal freedom. To undertake that task is the essence of the democratic vocation.

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