

***From Global Justice and Global Governance to Global Judgment and Global Action:  
Rereading Hannah Arendt for International Relations\****

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While “global justice” and “global governance” mean different things to different people, in at least two senses their relationship appears straight-forward: Global governance is a *means* to global justice, and global justice is both a normative *end* to be achieved, and a *foundation* upon which to ground judgments about global governance. First, their relationship is generally seen in instrumentalist terms. Global governance—collective, more or less institutionalized international and transnational action undertaken in response to global problems—is typically seen as a means to the substantive end of global justice (the reduction of global inequality or exploitation or violence, say; or practices of post-conflict restoration); and those means are themselves frequently evaluated in the light of principles of procedural justice (such as fairness, impartiality, reasonableness, and so on). Second, in addition to being instrumentalist, these accounts of the relationship between global governance and global justice are also *foundationalist* in two respects: First, they are based on appeals to justice as a normative foundation for evaluating both the means and ends of global governance; and, second, they turn to institutional and other practices as political foundations for the (just) pursuit of global justice.

There are at least two reasons to be suspicious of attempts to construe global governance and global justice in such instrumentalist and foundationalist terms. The first concerns the existential demands of political life: The controversial requirements of global justice might overwhelm us with their magnitude and variety, cowing us into relative quietude in the face of a potentially unattainable end (and a potentially unattainable standard for means) that prompts flight from, rather than engagement with, the pressing problems of contemporary global politics that global governance means to confront. The second concerns the ontology of political action: If human beings are indeed political animals, as Aristotle suggested—if politics is a uniquely human undertaking-- then the instrumentalization of politics (as means to particular ends) threatens to denude that highest of human activities of its meaning, reducing political life to a technical exercise in problem-solving that fails to do justice to its actual character and to its higher possibilities—not only to address problems but to radically reconfigure the terms in which those problems are addressed. The increasing emphasis on the idea of global justice attests to the configurative, creative energy of politics that can be muted by an instrumentalist perspective.

In this paper I pursue these concerns through a critical engagement with Hannah Arendt, for two reasons: First, Arendt wrote almost all of her work in the wake, and in the shadow, of World War II and the Holocaust. To her, as to many other thinkers, those events shook the normative and political foundations of world politics, and a central aspect of Arendt’s intellectual project was to understand how to go on in the face of a profoundly shattered world—not by building new foundations, but by thinking and acting in the recognition of their absence. In doing so, Arendt reconstructed an account of

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political thought, judgment, and action that was non-instrumental and was deeply suspicious of foundationalism. Second, Arendt's thought is gaining traction in the study of world politics. A number of scholars have recently focused on Arendt's work on human rights, war, and a number of other critical issues for students of global justice and global governance. Despite these scholars' explicit recognition of Arendt's anti-instrumentalist and non-foundational account of action, their discussions of her work bear traces of the instrumentalist and foundationalist anxieties about politics that she resisted.

I propose an Arendtian critique and reformulation of the instrumental and foundational relationships between global justice and global governance, one that reflects Arendt's own non-foundationalist and anti-instrumentalist tendencies. Such a critique should provide a basis for rethinking an Arendtian approach to an array of global problems. First, we should not confuse the ongoing management of world affairs with political action. Arendt explicitly rejected as antipolitical any notions of rule and management. Instead, she saw the seed of politics in the phenomenon of beginning, in the fragile and unpredictable eruption of the new, the coming-together of people to act in concert. Where contemporary scholars praise and criticize institutions of global governance as such, Arendt encourages us to emphasize global *action* for which an historically contingent set of institutional arrangements provides (at different times and in different ways) a relatively durable background.

Second, because, as we'll see, action on Arendt's terms is eruptive and unpredictable, it calls for both critical thought and judgment. Together, thought and judgment as Arendt understood them are ways of engaging with normative problems *without* presuming the kinds of foundations implied in notions like justice—foundations that Arendt found unavailable. Thus, at the same time as Arendt encourages us to shift our focus from global governance to global *action*, she encourages us to reorient ourselves away from global justice and toward global *judgment*. These judgments are not made *in light of* conceptions of justice, but rather they gesture toward a shared and contingent sense of what justice entails. As in the case of global action, the contingent institutional arrangements to which global governance scholars point become the background conditions against which such judgments are made.

This paper will proceed in three sections. In the first I show how two prominent approaches to global governance and global justice rely on foundationalism and instrumentalism. In the second I address the Arendtian turn in IR, resisting scholars' tendency to lapse into instrumentalism and foundationalism while highlighting the unique challenges and possibilities contained in Arendt's political thought. In the final section, I sketch what it would mean to shift our conceptual terrain from global justice and global governance to global judgment and global action.

### **Instrumentalism and Foundationalism in Global Governance and Global Justice**

Much of the contemporary literature on global justice and global governance is both instrumentalist and foundationalist. Global governance is treated as a means to the end of global justice; and global justice is treated as a normative foundation from whose point of view we can judge both the means and ends of global governance. Here are two examples, though I could offer many more. They are useful illustrations because they appeal to quite different senses of justice, but are all ultimately instrumentalist. When Nancy Kokaz (2005: 68) theorizes "international fairness" in light of Rawls' conception

of justice as fairness, she addresses both means (the institutional “construal of fairness claims”) and ends (“What would a fair distribution of burdens look like in environmental preservation schemes?”). Because she is ultimately concerned about the *justice* (fairness) of these claims and distributions, Kokaz is concerned with the justice of both ends and means.

From quite a different perspective, Iris Young appeals to justice as a means and as an end in her discussion of responsibility and global labor justice (2006). While Young does not frame this as a problem for global governance as such—her concern is with the shared responsibility of human beings for the injustice suffered by some of them—to the extent that global labor justice is of concern to the ILO, and of the UN more broadly, it is certainly an issue of global governance. While Kokaz is mainly concerned with the adjudication of fairness claims and the arrival at a result that is, in fact, fair and just, Young is concerned with what she calls “structural injustice.” For Young, such injustice “exists when social processes put large categories of persons under a systematic threat of domination or deprivation of the means to develop and exercise their capacities, at the same time as these processes enable others to dominate or have a wide range of opportunities for developing and exercising their capacities.” Young’s concerns about justice are not unrelated to Kokaz’, but she goes one step further. While Kokaz investigated the procedures by which people and institutions make and respond to fairness claims, Young’s conception of structural injustice points to questions about institutional or systemic structures—including global ones—that *enable* some to make claims while frustrating others. Despite this significant difference, Young shares with Kokaz a basically instrumental account of justice. Insofar as she sees the production of structural injustice in our purchasing practices that sustain the global exploitation of sweatshop labor, she considers justice as an end. Insofar as she sees the struggle for global social justice as a matter of “agents [challenging] one another and [calling] one another to account for what they are doing or not doing”—a deliberative procedure inspired by Habermas, which Young has elsewhere developed at length (Young, 2000)—she appeals to justice as a means.

Young’s and Kokaz’ claims about global justice are thus both instrumental ones. Moreover, while they appeal to significantly different *conceptions* of justice their appeals are both foundational because the *requirements* of justice themselves are never explicitly at issue. In Young’s case, those requirements are presented negatively: She develops a conception of structural injustice related to domination and people’s unequal abilities to “develop their capacities,” and on the basis of that conception finds sweatshop labor to be an instance of it. If we can talk meaningfully about structural injustice, we should be able to talk about structural *justice*, though Young herself does not do so in any great detail. However, I assume that structural justice involves the relative absence of domination so that everyone can develop their capacities equally—or, in an imperfect world perhaps the discrepancy in abilities would be smaller. This account is foundationalist in part because it provides a basis for making and assessing claims about justice and injustice, and in part because it demands a rejection—or at least a thorough-going critique—of Rawlsian foundationalism of the sort offered by Kokaz and others. Those accounts are inadequate as foundations for making and assessing claims about justice and injustice precisely *because*, on Young’s view, they do not address sufficiently the structural inequalities against the backdrop of which such claims are made. Kokaz appeals to Rawlsian fairness

in a similar way, though she puts the case positively as does Rawls. To the extent that her conception of fairness overlooks structural inequality, it constitutes a foundation for making and assessing claims about justice that is insensitive (partly by design) to the background conditions against which those claims are made.

Instrumentalism and foundationalism are attractive perspectives for thinking about the relationship between global governance and global justice. Because instrumentalism is about means and ends, it allows us to have a sense of what we want our world to look like, and a sense of efficacy in bringing it about. Foundationalism, for its part, allows us to ground our thinking about means and ends in terms of normative ideals that, for some may be transcendent, while for others they are socially constructed. In either case, foundationalism provides a stable perspective from which to consider things like the relationship between global governance and global justice. Yet instrumental and foundational views of political life have been challenged on a number of fronts, particularly (though not only) in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. An early example is provided by Carl Schmitt, who rejected liberal, technocratic conceptions of politics in favor of an existential conception based on a distinction between friends and enemies. Schmitt's suspicion of instrumentalism is clearest in two areas: He criticized the Soviets' "anti-religion of technicity" their devotion to the powers of technology without regard to its uses or consequences. Similarly, he criticized the liberal humanitarian conception of a "war to end all wars" (Schmitt, 2007) because such unlimited aims promised horrible brutality. As John McCormick has put it, Schmitt was "against politics as technology," against the instrumentalization of politics for humanitarian or other ends (McCormick, 1999). A very different critique of instrumentalization came from the Frankfurt school of critical theory, particularly Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno. Their concern was that instrumental reason, a product of the Enlightenment and modernity, led to human domination over other human beings and over nature because it gave us the sense that the world is at our disposal (Horkheimer and Adorno, 2002).

I want to add two different concerns to this list of problems with instrumentalism: One problem is existential; the other ontological. By an existential problem, I mean a problem about how human beings manage, or fail to manage, the burdens of political life. One such burden is constituted by the demands of justice. Again, we may not—and I do not—think of those demands as being transcendental. They are socially constituted, collectively shared, and hotly contested senses of how to manage our collective existence. The trouble is that precisely because they are contested, and because they represent ideals, foundational conceptions of justice are difficult if not impossible to realize; both because ideals are demanding, and because we cannot agree upon what counts as realizing them. As a result, the pursuit of justice as an end tempts us into bad faith. The philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre pointed to bad faith as a flight from the burdens of human freedom and responsibility, wherein we deny our status as free and responsible subjects and adopt the posture of objects, inert matter helpless in the face of a world we deny any part in making (Sartre, 1948, 1956). Elsewhere I have used this insight to criticize the discourse of "Never Again!" that surrounds the prevention of genocide for tempting such a flight (Schiff, 2008). Bad faith is a defensive strategy in the face of confusing and potentially overwhelming demands that we pursue in search of a more just world.

The other problem is ontological: It has to do, not with the burdens of normative demands, but with the basic structure of human experience and activities, and the anxieties provoked by those experiences. While I will spell it out more fully later on, the ontological question has to do with whether instrumental activities like global governance can and should be thought of as properly political. The construal of politics as principally instrumental activity is a conceit of modern political thought. Machiavelli—for some the first truly modern thinker—took a famously instrumental view of politics that, in effect, turned conventional, Christian morality upside down: “In the actions of all men, and especially of princes, where there is no court to appeal to, one looks to the end. So let a prince win and maintain his state: the means will always be judged honorable, and will be praised by everyone” (Machiavelli, 1985, ch. XVIII, p. 71). Against the Greek, Roman, and Christian traditions, Machiavelli lowered our political sights from the ideal and unattainable to the practical and achievable—while recognizing the role of fortune in thwarting our designs. He urged us to “go to the effectual truth of the thing, rather than the imagination of it (*ibid.*, ch. XV, p. 61). For Machiavelli, politics was a means to an end. But is that a meaningful way to understand it?

Against instrumentalist and foundationalist accounts of politics, Hannah Arendt offered a conception that was both non-instrumental and non-foundational: She rejected instrumental accounts of action on the grounds that they reduce human beings to use-objects, and thus curtail the specifically human freedom, the freedom associated with beginning something new. The unpredictability of what we begin makes judgment—judgment without foundations that depends upon our capacity for thought—central to her conception of politics. From this perspective, the reduction of politics to instrumentality reflects a kind of denial that is different from bad faith: Rather than denying our freedom and responsibility, we deny the unpredictability and open-endedness of action in order to cling to illusions of instrumental control and the stability of normative foundations. In the remainder of this paper of this paper I consider the implications of Arendt’s rejections of instrumentalism and foundationalism for thinking about global justice and global governance. First, however, I need to briefly reintroduce Arendt’s conception of action to the field International Relations, in which—despite the best intentions—scholars have misconstrued that conception.

### **Arendt, Action, and International Relations**

In Arendt’s account of “the human condition” (Arendt, 1998), she famously sought to preserve the phenomenological distinctions between three sorts of human activities: labor, which is the reproductive activity of preserving the human species; work, through which we create a durable world of use objects; and action, in which, through the unpredictable and eruptive act of beginning, we insert ourselves into the world and initiate something beyond our control whose meaning will not even become clear until after the fact, once the actor is dead and his or her story is told. Arendt made these distinctions for a number of reasons, but especially because she wanted to preserve the unique character of action in the face of modern developments—especially the rise of Marxism that glorified labor, and the increasing instrumentalizing tendencies of modern life that privileged work. The distinction between action and work is the most critical for me here. While much can and has been said about Arendt’s conception of action, its basic characteristics suffice for my purposes: According to Arendt, action erupts without

intention, but rather unexpectedly. Moreover, it “can result in an end product only on condition that its own authentic, non-tangible, and always utterly fragile meaning is destroyed” (1998: 196). Arendt's conception of action is avowedly non-instrumental and non-foundational. It is partly on this basis that she distinguishes action from work, through which we make durable things that lend our world some measure of permanence. Because work consists in making useable objects, it is a thoroughly instrumental activity: “The actual work of fabrication is performed under the guidance of a model in accordance with which the object is constructed.” (Arendt, 1998: 140) Work is thus instrumental in two senses: It is a means to create durable use objects; and its activity is a means to realizing the model of an object.

In the past decade, a number of students of international relations have turned enthusiastically to Arendt's work in their explorations of, *inter alia*, violence and war (Owens, 2003, 2007), transitional justice (Schaap, 2003) human rights (Cotter, 2003; Benhabib, 2004; Birmingham, 2006), evil in the context of globalization (Hayden, 2007, 2009), political realism (Klusmeyer, 2003), and global protest (Lang, 2003). Most have understandably emphasized her conception of action, but in conflating it with work they undermine some of the more radical challenges that her thought poses to international relations because they have treated action as though it were instrumental or foundational, or both. Indeed some have treated her conception as an instrumental one, *even if* they also acknowledge that it isn't.

For instance, in her brilliant study of Arendt on war, Patricia Owens rightly notes that for Arendt action implies “inescapable contingency: action's futility, boundlessness, and uncertainty of outcome” (Arendt, 1998: 175, in Owens, 2007: 11). But later, she slips back into instrumentalism, claiming on Arendt's behalf that “*through* political action with a plurality of others it is possible to *make* new beginnings throughout our lives.” On Arendt's account, however, the elusiveness and fragility of our capacity to begin is that beginnings are *not* “made.” Making belongs to *homo faber*, to the realm of instrumentality, and to the activity of work. Andrew Schaap makes this mistake in a different way. Turning to Arendt's account of forgiveness to rethink practices of reconciliation in pursuit of transitional justice, Schapp rightly notes that for Arendt forgiveness is a crucial response to action's boundlessness and unpredictability (Schapp, 2003: 68). But the kinds of cases that call for forgiveness on Schapp's account—cases like “grave state wrongs and/or protracted civil wars” (*ibid*)--are *not* cases in which forgiveness compensates for the fragility or unpredictability of action. In such cases forgiveness enables us to move forward in the wake of intentional harms that offend our collective sense of justice. Thus, not only does Schapp implicitly fall back into an instrumental conception of action; that conception is also foundational, insofar as its normative content (something else which Arendtian action conspicuously—and, some say, problematically—lacks) is judged according to a sometimes-articulated standard of justice. In his account of an “international space in-between” (like the space between people that for Arendt constitutes the public realm of speech and deed), John Williams also plays fast and loose with Arendt's conception of action. While he acknowledges the unbounded, unpredictable character of political action—and thus the crucial place of forgiving *and* promising in Arendt's account of it (Williams, 2003: 204)--he also asserts that “freedom” is “the political goal to which she attaches the highest priority” (*ibid*,

201). He does so, interestingly, immediately after suggesting that “her analysis of revolution stresses how it is the pursuit of...freedom *into* politics, rather than freedom from it” (*ibid*). This is not quite right either—for Arendt non-sovereign freedom is a condition of the *possibility* of politics—but there is at least a moment at which Williams seems to back away from an instrumental conception of action grounded in a foundationalist notion of freedom.

Arendt's account of action has also been appropriated to illuminate problems of global governance and global justice, with similar results: Anthony Lang turns to Arendt to investigate the relationship between global governance and political action in the context of the WTO protests in Seattle. One of the major animating goals of those protests was the pursuit of global justice—the reduction global economic disparities, the strengthening of protection of workers’ rights, and so on. This should alert us to something potentially problematic about appropriating Arendt to analyze these events construed in this way. Goal-oriented activities are instrumental in just the way that Arendt resists in her conception of action. Moreover, making reference to their appeals to justice introduces a foundationalism that Arendt likewise rejected. And yet Lang cannot escape either instrumentalism or foundationalism. He observes that “underlying the protests is a tension between the *desire to act politically*, and the need to create structures of governance” (Lang, 2003: 179). Two problems emerge here. One is that on Arendt’s account, it makes little sense to talk about a desire to act—action erupts unpredictably, its meaning never apparent except in retrospect. Action, on Arendt’s account, always turns out to have taken place, regardless—or even in spite —of any desire. Lang seems to recognize this (p. 184), but the terms his argument still resist it. The second problem is that to “create structures of governance”—that is, to create durable institutions—sounds suspiciously like what Arendt meant by work, not action; and the activity of governance itself sounds much more akin to ruling or management than to action which, on her terms were entirely different things. Lang turns to Arendt’s account of revolutionary councils in *On Revolution* as a framework for thinking about governance structures in world politics, and here his appropriation is a bit more ambiguous. On one hand, he describes councils and political parties as “structures that give individuals the means to engage in political action” (Lang, 2003: 180). Shortly after that, he says that such councils created “spaces” for action (Lang, 2003: 181). The latter is more consonant with Arendt’s account of what action is like, but he still speaks of the protesters “using the media to advance their cause” (Lang, 2003: 195). Such talk betrays a fundamentally instrumentalist approach to Arendt, an avowedly non-instrumentalist thinker when it came to political action.

And yet... The trouble with these criticisms of the Arendtian turn in IR, which is also the trouble with Arendt herself, is that we are so used to thinking about politics in foundationalist and instrumentalist terms, that if we relinquish those terms we feel bereft and anxious. This, perhaps, accounts for the ways in which the scholars discussed above cling to instrumentalism and foundationalism while acknowledging that Arendt herself rejects them. The task, I think, is to work out what a resolutely Arendtian approach to world politics would look like. In the remainder of this paper I suggest one way of working this out with respect to global governance and global justice.

### **Global Judgment and Global Action**

Thus far I have argued that students of international relations in general, and of global justice and global governance in particular, have misappropriated Arendt by implicitly claiming for her an instrumentalist and foundationalist conception of political life that is not hers. What I want to do now is to reformulate briefly the terms of the relationship between global justice and global governance in a manner more consonant with Arendt's political thought. In particular, I propose a conceptual shift toward global judgment and global action.

This move presents an apparent problem. One core feature of Arendt's thought is that it is resolutely state-centric. The public—even republican—space that makes the eruption of action possible, and that allows us to appear to one another in word and deed, is a creature of the state. The state, then, is also the site of action and judgment. One place in which this becomes clear is in Arendt's discussion of political responsibility. A condition of being politically responsible, she says, is that "I must be held *responsible* for something I have not *done*, and the reason for *my* responsibility must be *my* membership in a group (a collective), which no voluntary *act* of mine can dissolve" (Arendt, 2003: 149). The collective of primary interest for Arendt here is indeed the state.

However, there are important indications that what is *outside* the state is important to her as well. As Schaap rightly notes, even if "Arendt is a 'theorist of the bounded community'...it is not evident that this commitment to community must be defined in terms of the modern nation-state" (2003: 84). For example, in the context of her claim about the conditions of political responsibility Arendt avows the *non-responsibility* of stateless people, arguing that "politically, regardless of their group or individual character, *they are the absolutely innocent ones*; and it is precisely this *absolute* innocence that condemns them to a position outside, as it were, of mankind as a whole" (Arendt, 2003: 150). For Arendt such innocence was "the greatest misfortune" (1948: 295) because its price was the deprivation of all rights associated with citizenship (see also Volk, 2010). On the other hand, stateless peoples and refugees raised a profoundly *political* problem for Arendt. Occupying what Williams called the "international space in-between," deprived of all human rights and dignity, stateless people underscored for Arendt that after totalitarianism "human dignity needs a new guarantee which can be found only in a new political principle, in a new law on earth, whose validity this time must comprehend the whole of humanity while its power must remain strictly limited, rooted in and controlled by newly defined territorial entities" (Arendt, 1948: ix). That new principle was "the right to have rights." While this is often read as Arendt's affirmation of the primacy of the state in world politics, there are two reasons to read it more ambiguously. The first is that the guarantee Arendt seeks can only be found "in a new law on earth." On earth: Not in states, or even between them. Since, as Arendt would later tell us, "men, not Man, live on the earth and inhabit the world," her claim puts human beings, and not states, at the forefront of world politics. States are only the ultimate guarantors of their rights, not the source of their force or meaning. Second, Arendt writes that the power of the new principle ought to be limited, controlled by, and rooted in "newly defined territorial entities." She does not elaborate, but she might well have envisioned a world of something other than legally sovereign states. Arendt knew well how sovereignty could be used to justify unspeakable evils. Unwilling, however, to give up on territoriality, she might well have gestured toward the more limited sovereignty that emerged out of the ruins of World War II and the



Holocaust. While, as we all know, those limits are frequently transgressed in practice, Arendt would have thought them essential to any right to have rights. From this perspective Arendt's state-centrism is, at least, ambivalent.

If it is plausible to decouple state sovereignty from the right to have rights, this opens up a way of thinking global justice and global governance in Arendtian terms—that is, without recourse to foundationalism and instrumentalism. We can do so, as I said, by moving away from the conceptual framework of global governance and global justice to one of global action and global judgement. Global action entails the unpredictable eruption of the new on the global scene, with all of its fragile promise and potential peril. One instance of this might be the ongoing wave of protests across the Middle East and North Africa. When Egyptians ultimately overthrew President Hosni Mubarak, it is clear that they intended to do so. From this perspective, their activities have little in common with Arendtian action. But Egyptians (and rebels in other countries as well) could never have known, never could have predicted, that they were inserting themselves into what turns out to have become the seeds of a potential transformation of the Middle East. Eruption, unpredictability, meaning only discernible in retrospect—these are some of the hallmarks of Arendtian action, and they give us a perspective from which to view those events in non-instrumentalist terms. . This perspective also allows us to rethink Lang's interpretation of the WTO protests along similar lines. What matters from the perspective of Arendtian action is not the protesters' aims as such but, rather, that their activities inserted them into a web of action whose meaning is and will always be, uncertain—the critique of rebellion against global neoliberalism. The retrospective meaning assigned in stories is only a provisional means of securing the past. There are always more stories, more pasts to confront. That not only complicates our efforts to discern the meaning of action; it also complicates the problem of judgment.

Arendt's reflections on judgement were incomplete (see Arendt ed. Beiner, 1989). They were intended to constitute the third section of her book, *The Life of the Mind*, the first two sections of which concerned thinking and willing. Drawing on Immanuel Kant's third Critique—the Critique of Judgement—Arendt transformed his analysis of *aesthetic* judgement into her own analysis of *political* judgement, a faculty she rightly deemed necessary in a fragile world we hold in common, and whose most wonderful and most terrifying possibilities are frequently revealed, sometimes side by side. Arendt turned Kant's concern with judgements of the beautiful and the ugly into her own concerns with judgements of right and wrong, without ever abandoning the latter.

Arendt held that judgement was impossible without thought. Thinking for her entails neither philosophy—the activity of professional philosophers (2003: 187, 1971: 129, 150), amongst whom she did not count herself—nor common sense, the sense which bound the others together and enabled the experience of a common world (1971: 50-52). Rather, thinking is, like action, an eruptive and fleeting activity. It is eruptive in the sense that it constitutes a fundamental break in our taken-for-granted, unreflective—thoughtless—experiences of the world. It disrupts our everyday doings—Arendt says that we must “stop and think”—and thus has the potential to expose them to critical examination (2003: 189). Thinking, for her, is precisely the opposite of such thoughtlessness. Also like action, thinking is fleeting in that it produces no result. It is

critical, it exposes, and leaves no trace of itself (1971: 123). And yet Arendt holds out hope for this resultless, ephemeral activity. Why? Because just as the meaning of action can be preserved in stories, the disruptions of thinking can lead to judgements which outlive, and can give meaning to, the thought that occasioned them. Arendt writes that thinking can awaken our conscience and, with it, the faculty of judgement—the ability to say “this is wrong.” (Arendt, 2003: 189). “The manifestation of the wind of thought”, Arendt tells us, “is...the ability to tell right from wrong, beautiful from ugly. And this indeed may prevent catastrophes, at least for myself, in the rare moments when the chips are down” (*ibid*). Two features of such judgements are worth noting for my purposes. The first that they are not transcendent or eternal, not given to human beings from the outside, but generated by us as we navigate, create, and recreate our common world. Secondly, this means that there are no firm *grounds* for judgement, no universal standard of appeal. There are only evolving judgements in the context of provisional, and shifting, normative frameworks. This is not a relativist position. In any given time and place, those frameworks may be experienced as settled normative contexts that facilitate our manifold acts of judgement. But that they are *experienced* as such—and that those experiences can be, and often are, disrupted and in need of reconfiguration—suggests that such contexts cannot count as *foundations* in any straightforward sense.

What, then of *global* judgement? If we can say, on Arendt's terms, that what counted as action in the Middle East protests was not the protesters' aims, but the meaning of what they may have begun, then we might see judgments around the world *about* what they may have begun as instances of global judgement. It is perhaps a reflection of the provisional and shifting character of judgements that there is little agreement today on what those protests *do* mean, and how we ought to judge them as they unfold. Judgment is not like action—it cannot be given meaning only after the actors are dead and what turns out to have been the deed is over. Sharing a common world lends acts of judgment a sense of urgency, even if—or perhaps precisely because—they are always provisional and never final. This is so precisely because of the absence of secure foundations for justice claims. It is not that judgments—claims about justice-- can never be articulated. But because the meaning of action unfolds only through retrospective stories and does not inhere “in” it, judgments about action can always only be made in the course of that unfolding. While Arendtian judgment is necessarily insecure, it is not groundless. Arendt is a non-foundationalist thinker not in the sense that she rejects foundations as such, but in the sense that she understands them to be always contingent. The “global” in global judgment attests to the fact that when we judge events—like the Arab Spring, or the WTO protests—we are affirming a common world not defined solely by territorial boundaries.

If we shift from the instrumentalist and foundationalist terms of global governance and global justice to the non-instrumentalist and non-foundationalist terms of global action and global judgment, where does this leave international institutions of various kinds? Schapp's comments on the role of institutions in promoting reconciliation point to the consequences of misunderstanding Arendt for this sort of question. First, the appeal to “transitional justice” itself risks lapsing into the foundationalism of which Arendt is suspicious. Second, Schapp's endorsement of reconciliation “in its truest form”

which could be promoted by the ICC (Mendez, 2001: 44, in Schapp, 2003: 86), appeals to a foundationalist account of reconciliation in which it is an end to be achieved rather than an insecure, ongoing process of contestation and revision. Second, Schapp's suggestion that "international civil society can promote a culture of universal rights within a transitional society by appealing to internationally recognized norms and conventions" (Schapp, 2003: 86) is another foundationalist appeal at odds with the spirit of Arendt's work. An Arendtian account of institutions might see them, not as providing foundations for justice claims, but as constituting a contingent backdrop and global public arena for both assessing the meaning of action and engaging in acts of judgment.

### **Conclusion**

In this paper I have offered a very preliminary critique and reformulation of an Arendtian perspective in International Relations. Specifically, I have argued that Arendt's thought should make us reconsider the framework of global justice and global governance. Against its foundationalist and instrumentalist tendencies, Arendt gestures toward global action and global judgment as activities through which we might address global problems in a fragile world.

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