Chapter 10
The Politics of Need

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> …in labour and consumption man is utterly thrown back on himself…on the biological, and on himself. And there you have the connection with loneliness. A peculiar loneliness arises in the process of labor. I cannot go into that right now, because it would lead us too far afield. But this loneliness consists in being thrown back upon oneself; a state of affairs in which, so to speak, consumption takes the place of all the truly relating activities. (EU, 21)

In this chapter I examine why Hannah Arendt views the satisfaction of human needs as, at best a pre-political concern and, at worst, the basis of an anti-political politics. This requires unpacking how Arendt develops her concept of the political in terms of her critique of Marx's valorization of labor. I argue that Arendt's rejection of the satisfaction of human needs as a properly political concern is premised on a reductive ontological conception of needs, which neglects their historical dimension. I agree with Arendt that the *end* of politics is the enjoyment of freedom in a community of equals. Against Arendt, however, I take it that politics often *begins* with the articulation of injustice, arising from the experience of unmet need. From this perspective, Arendt's conception of the political has the perverse consequence of potentially depoliticizing injustice. Yet Arendt's understanding of the political in terms of praxis might nonetheless enable a distinction to be drawn between an authentic (political) form of the politics of need and an inauthentic (anti- or a-political) politics. In this context, both Marx's concept of 'radical need' (as discussed by Agnes Heller) and the work of Jacques Rancière suggest the possibility of a politics of need that might have the world-disclosing potential that is, for Arendt, the defining feature of the political.

The Anti-political Politics of Need

In *The Human Condition*, Arendt provides a phenomenology of action through which she attempts to understand politics on its own terms (as *praxis*) rather than from the perspective of transcendent reason. As such, she delineates a 'specific political mode of rationality' in terms of the concept of the political (Vollrath 1987, 18). The concept of the political refers both to the proper domain of politics and the specific quality in terms of which we might judge phenomena (events, actions, institutions, etc.) to be political or not. It is in this sense that Arendt attempts to 'look at politics…with eyes unclouded by philosophy', as she puts it in her interview with Gaus (EU, 2).

Ernst Vollrath (1987) argues that the rationality of the political should be understood in terms of its autonomy and authenticity. By *authenticity* he means that the quality that distinguishes the political from the non-political is irreducible to an evaluative criterion drawn from some other human activity. According to Arendt, for example, the political aspect of an event depends on its testament to human freedom rather than whether it conforms to the moral standard of rightness. The closely related notion of the *autonomy* of the political means that the principles according to which the domain of the political is properly constituted are not derived from or subordinate to any other field or domain. In contrast to orthodox Marxism, for example, politics cannot be adequately apprehended in terms of economic categories.

The concept of the political therefore has an evaluative aspect since it enables us to describe things as more or less political. Indeed, as Vollrath (1987, 20) points out, 'we may, in this respect, speak of a-political politics or of non-political politics'. Neo-liberalism, for instance, may be understood to be intensely political as a project that aims to transform society according to certain core ideological values. Yet it may be described as an anti-political politics due to its disavowal of its own political nature. Its theory of limited government, which subordinates politics to the protection of economic freedom leads to an inauthentic politics. Moreover, its ambition to remake the social world in terms of the image of a perfect market denies the autonomy of the political.

According to Stephen White (2001, 174-5), the concept of the political describes a process of 'forging commonality from particularity' and 'isolates a kind of a kind of universality that is distinctive to politics'. For Hannah Arendt, the political describes a potential for the disclosure of a social world from the plural perspectives of individuals who come together to act in concert. This conception of the political can be delineated in terms of five aspects. First, the political is *initiatory* since it does not refer to an institutional domain but the event of world disclosure. As Sheldon Wolin (1996, 31) puts it, the political is 'episodic, rare'. Second, the political is *constitutive* since it refers not to instituted politics as enacted against a set of already established expectations. Rather, the political is prior to the establishment of institutions. It refers to the context in terms of which politics is represented or the 'scene' in terms of which politics is 'staged' to use Claude Lefort's (1988, 11) terms. Third, the political is *inclusive* since it does not refer to the intensification of being for/against others as in Schmitt (1996, 29) but rather presupposes a context of being with a plurality of equals. Fourth, the political is *performative* since politics is not understood in terms of an identification that makes collective action possible. Rather a unity emerges through a plurality acting in concert. Finally, the political is *disclosive* since it is not reducible to a moment of decision nor can it be circumscribed in terms of the reasonable. Rather, it is an 'associative moment' of praxis (Vollrath 1987, 27).

Arendt's conception of the political provides an important basis for understanding the context in which politics is enacted.[1] However, it is precisely this conception of the political that Arendt invokes to criticize need as a non-political concern (see Hansen 1993, 42f.). In her interview with Gaus, Arendt remarks that 'in labor and consumption man is utterly thrown back on himself' (EU, 21). Prompted by Gaus, Arendt explains that this being thrown back on oneself means being subordinated to necessity and trapped in one's own subjectivity (cf HC, 115). Consequently, she says 'a peculiar loneliness arises in the process of labor' in which 'consumption takes the place of *all the truly relating activities*' (EU, 21 – emphasis added).

Drawing on the Greek experience of the polis, Arendt distinguishes between politics/economics and public/private in terms of 'activities related to a common world and those related to the maintenance of life' (HC, 28). Arendt recognizes labor to be an unavoidable aspect of the human condition. In laboring, human beings sustain life itself by satisfying the needs of the body and maintain the world created through work against the natural processes of decay. However, because labor 'obeys the orders of immediate bodily needs' (HC, 100), it cannot provide a basis for the kind of world-building activity that she values in work and action.

Fundamentally, Arendt's argument against the politics of need rests on a strong ontological claim that the needs of the body are radically isolating and so cannot provide any basis for an activity through which the world comes to be shared in common. While politics properly concerns freedom and association, needs are bound up with necessity and isolation. Consequently, any form of collective organization or social movement predicated on the satisfaction of human needs would be pre-political at best and at worst, anti-political. It would be pre-political insofar as politics, in Arendt's sense, is only possible to the extent that the needs of the body have already been satisfied. In order to actualize our freedom through public action, we first need to be liberated from nature by satisfying our biological needs for food, shelter and so on. Arendt insists that the realm of freedom begins only where 'the rule of immediate physical needs' ends (HC, 104).

A politics of need becomes anti-political when public life is overwhelmed by economic concerns. Arendt describes this anti-political politics in terms of the rise of the social: the organization of politics around the non-political activities of production and consumption, which amounts to 'collective housekeeping' (Mydral cited in HC, 28). Need cannot provide an organizing principle for an authentic politics because it is the opposite of freedom. For 'where life is at stake all action is by definition under the sway of necessity' (BPF, 155). As such, human activity related to the satisfaction of need remains bound to nature, which Arendt associates

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1   Liberalism simply presupposes this context and the fact of commonality by casting this in terms of individuals' shared interest in protecting private freedom. Marxism, in contrast, anticipates the classless society, in terms of which the liberal representation of market society appears as an alienated mode of human togetherness. Arendt points to the inadequacy of both of these conceptions by showing the political to be a fragile achievement of praxis rather than a context that can be institutionally determined.

with darkness, privation, anonymity, muteness, identity. In contrast, work and political action redeem human existence from the futility of mere life through the constitution of the human artifice of material objects and the inter-subjective world that she associates with light, publicity, distinction, speech, plurality. In politics 'not life but the world is at stake' (HC, 156). To the extent that politics is concerned with the satisfaction of needs, then, 'there can be no true public realm, but only private activities displayed in the open' (HC, 134).

Indeed, Arendt attributes the terror of the French Revolution to its preoccupation with the 'social question', namely, of how to satisfy the needs of the poor/people. Here, as elsewhere, she observes that the problem of satisfying needs is properly a 'matter of administration, to be put in the hands of experts' rather than an issue that could be settled politically through the exchange of opinions (OR, 91). The need of the poor was 'violent and, as it were, pre-political' (OR, 91). Consequently, the attempt to satisfy their needs by political means, to liberate the poor from necessity, gave rise to the anti-political politics of the Jacobins. As Hannah Pitkin (1981, 334) observes, Arendt's argument rests here again on the ontological claim that poverty is a 'dehumanizing force', which subordinates individuals to the 'absolute dictate of their bodies' (OR, 60). When 'the poor, driven by the needs of their bodies, burst on to the scene of the French Revolution politics was organized around the 'anti-political imagery of biological necessity' (OR, 60). For Arendt, as Phillip Hansen (1993, 45) puts it, need 'contains a "blind" drive for fulfilment which, because it contains an element of lack and dread, excludes or repels. Pain and desire have their reasons but are not themselves reason'.

In short, a politics of need is anti-political because it cannot bring about the associative moment of world disclosure that is the defining quality of the political. Arendt's argument about the anti-political politics of need can be reiterated in terms of the five aspects of her conception of the political identified above. Rather than initiating an event, it construes politics in terms of the collective life process. Rather than constituting a world, it construes society in the image of nature. Rather than presupposing a context of plurality it presupposes a context of identical biological needs. Rather than being concerned with the contingent founding of a polity, it represents the collectivity in the image of a social body. Rather than being predicated on enjoyment of praxis, politics becomes a means toward the satisfaction of collective needs. The 'politics' of need therefore amounts to a 'perverted form of "acting together"' (HC, 203).

The Marxist Conception of Need

Critics of Arendt have shown the inadequacy of understanding needs as a pre-political concern. Nancy Fraser (1989) points out that far from being self-evident natural phenomena that can be adequately dealt with by experts, public recognition of needs depends on their political articulation. Indeed, politics typically involves articulating a need that previously could not be recognized within the prevailing

terms of discourse and in this process new subjectivities are often formed. Hannah Pitkin (1981) similarly argues that politics typically involves relating private needs to public freedom by recourse to the principle of justice. By engaging in politics, what was previously experienced as private suffering may come to be understood as an actionable public issue and therefore a matter of justice. Importantly, neither Fraser nor Pitkin relinquish Arendt's insight that what is specific to politics is praxis. For instance, Nancy Fraser (1989, 303) suggests that struggles for public recognition of unmet needs are political to the extent that they become a 'moment in the self-constitution of new collective agents or social movements'. Needs *per se* are neither inherently political nor un-political but the potential object of politics and, therefore, *politicizable*.

The problem with Arendt's argument about the anti-political politics of need is that it is grounded in a reified ontological (and hence 'meta-political') distinction between the necessity of life and freedom of the polis. But, as C.B. Macpherson (1977) argues, needs always have both an ontological and an historical aspect. Any theory about human needs must presuppose some conception of human nature or the human condition. However, if part of what it is to be human means being able to determine the conditions of our own existence, then human needs will also be historically specific. This gives rise to a contradiction between Arendt's dogmatic ontological distinction and her characterization of human nature as opening up to man 'the possibility of becoming something highly unnatural, that is, a man' (OT, 455).

In viewing needs as 'antithetical to our essence as free beings', Arendt adopts a basically Kantian position according to which 'motivation by needs and inclinations is heteronomy' (Chitty 1993, 26). Arendt explicitly mobilizes this ontological argument to critique Marx for whom needs are, in contrast, 'shaped and transformed through our appropriation of external nature' (Hansen 1993, 41). This leads her to develop an uncharitable reading of Marx as valorizing *animal laborans* when, in fact, Arendt's characterization of labor is much closer to what Marx saw as alienated labor.

According to Arendt, Marx inverted the traditional hierarchy of activities, promoting labor to the highest value while denigrating politics as only a means to bring about the classless society. Marx's valorization of labor gives rise to an anti-political politics, according to which the central concern of public life is the life process itself. Consequently, necessity is substituted for freedom and politics is organized according to the values of economics. Ironically, Arendt thus tends to read Marx as an economic determinist while neglecting his concern to promote the very possibilities for free action with which she is concerned. As Bikhu Parekh (1979) points out, where Arendt sees three ontologically distinct human activities, Marx invests labor with significance and dignity in according it many of the characteristics associated with work and praxis. For Marx, labor 'raises man above the realm of necessity and is a vehicle of human freedom and creativity' and so also has the disclosive quality of the political (Parekh 1979, 86). Arendt's over-determined distinction between the realm of necessity and the realm

of freedom means that she thinks it inevitable that 'labor must remain cyclical, repetitive, monotonous, and can never become meaningful and fulfilling' (Parkekh 1979, 86).

From a Marxist perspective, the connection Arendt asserts between need, necessity and labor is ideological. As Andrew Chitty (1993, 26) explains, for Marx, 'the refinement and diversification of needs is the essence of man. Accordingly, his freedom consists in this elaboration. It is only social conditions that make us experience things otherwise'. The reason we experience our needs as an external imposition on us is because under capitalism they become alienated from us. As such, it is in class-based society that we experience needs as a compulsion on our being. In non-alienated conditions we would experience our needs as part of our essential activity since the object of our needs and the means of satisfying them would not be separated in terms of the exchange relation.

For Marx the fundamental contradiction of capitalism is that it both expands the range of possible needs while thwarting their realization. Positively, needs are free to exhibit an unprecedented richness and diversity; negatively, the commodity form of need satisfaction and the need for profit fetter their development (Leiss 1979; Berry 1987; Hansen 1993). Marx insisted that the laborer's needs for mere survival are not simply biological but historical, a product of the alienation of his labor power within the capitalist economy: the worker labors not to meet his human need for development (which has a non-economic value) but to exchange his labor power for money in order to meet his crude need for survival within capitalist social relations.

Contrary to Arendt's critique of modern consumer society, capitalist societies are not organized in order to satisfy human needs but to valorize capital. The alienation of needs in capitalist society is expressed in the reduction of genuine human needs (as ends in themselves) to economic needs (instrumental to survival). As such, 'need appears only on the market, in the form of effective demand' (Heller 1976, 26). Capitalism reduces other humans as a means to the satisfaction of the individual's own alienated needs through the exchange relation. The manipulation of needs thus becomes a way of dominating others. In contrast to this alienated experience of need, Marx argues that needs are truly human only when other humans are their highest object (Heller 1976, 41).

In order to critique the reduction of the needs of workers under capitalism to the economic need for mere survival, Marx posits the ideal of the individual 'rich in needs' who will be a member of the future society of associated producers (Heller 1976, 44). While the development of capitalism enriches the species it impoverishes the individual by subordinating him to the social division of labor. Overcoming alienation would thus mean providing the individual with a share in social wealth. Capitalism reduces all needs to the need 'to have'. For the dominant class, need is directed to accumulation of private property; the worker's need to have relates to mere survival. The worker is poor in needs in the sense that he 'must be deprived of every need in order to be able to satisfy one need only, that, is the need to keep himself alive' (Heller 1976, 58).

In the Gaus interview, Arendt refers to interests as political since, as she often pointed out, interests refer literally to what *inter-esse* or lies between individuals, relating them to each other (EU, 17f.).[2] In contrast, Marx rejects the concept of interest as an alternative to need because it is irremediably embedded within capitalist social relations. Private interest expresses the reduction of needs to greed, which already amounts to the alienation of human need. The notion of a general interest is doubly alienating since it represents the interest of society as potentially in conflict with the egoistic interests of the individual. Despite Engels' use of the concept, Marx sees class interest as incapable of animating a radical politics because it is embedded in the structure of social relations it seeks to transcend. For example, the struggle for wages is one predicated on class interest, which remains within the social division of need that capitalism establishes.

In contrast, Marx turns to the notion of radical need to articulate a principle that is irreducible to interests yet has the potential to transcend capitalist social relations (Heller 1976, 65). Radical needs refer to those needs that capitalism produces but is unable to satisfy. Exemplary among such needs is the need for free time. Due to the imperative to increase profits, capitalism reaches a point at which it is unable to shorten labor time any further so that the need for free time can only be satisfied by transcending capitalism. Capitalism thus creates the need for free time, while the need for free time mobilizes the working class to transcend capitalism (Heller 1976, 91). In contrast to the wages struggle, the struggle for free time aims to overcome the wages system as a whole. The need for free time is elemental because 'it always thrusts beyond the limits of alienation' and so potentially leads to a consciousness of alienation (Heller 1976, 91).

Against Arendt's characterization of Marx as an economic determinist, Agnes Heller thus develops a reading of Marx according to which the possibility of social transformation is not predicated on historical necessity but is immanent within capitalist social relations in the form of expectations arising from radical need. Radical needs bring to consciousness the antinomy between the social wealth of the species that capitalism produces and the impoverishment of individuals. While capitalism produces radical needs among the masses, it cannot provide the means for their satisfaction. At the maximum point of capitalist alienation this contradiction reaches a point at which capitalist social relations can no longer accommodate it. At this point radical needs emerge, which express a consciousness of the alienation that capitalist society produces.

The importance of Heller's interpretation of Marx for our purpose is that it emphasizes the relation between the experience of unmet need and the agency of the collective subject in bringing about radical social transformation. In

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2 In contrast to the needs of the body, Arendt thinks interests are inherently related to the world both as the material artifice produced through work and the web of social relations constituted through praxis. In contrast to needs, which are identical between individuals yet unshareable (HC, 119), interests are discovered and constituted through the exchange of opinions and, as such, presuppose both plurality and equality.

Power, Judgment and Political Evil

rejecting the inherent connection between need and necessity on which Arendt's ontological argument is premised, Heller's work suggests a basis for articulating an authentically political politics of needs grounded in the 'truly relating activity' of praxis. On this account, the working class is the revolutionary class because it has no goals of its own. It is 'a class in civil society that is not of civil society' and claims 'no particular right because no particular wrong but unqualified wrong is perpetrated on it' (Marx cited in Heller 1976, 89). The working class is characterized by its experience of the contradiction between its 'reduction to paltry particular needs' on the one hand and the 'rise of radical needs' on the other hand (Heller 1976, 89). Contrary to Arendt's characterization of the poor/people in the French Revolution, revolutionary class consciousness does not amount to consciousness of biological needs that demand satisfaction. Rather radical needs articulate the simple consciousness of alienation and the need to overcome it (Heller 1976, 95).

Policing and Politicizing Need

As with her characterization of sovereignty, love and truth as anti-political, Arendt discerns a certain imperative in need that makes it antithetical to political freedom. The obdurate nature of needs means that they are unable to be altered by political debate and so do not afford the free exchange of opinion among equals according to which a world might be disclosed between them. But Arendt's equation of need with natural necessity depoliticizes human needs by definitional fiat. For it is precisely to the extent that human needs are a product of political organization that they have a contingent aspect.[3] Arendt's reductive ontological argument obscures this. To recognize the historical aspect of needs, in contrast, is to see that, far from being necessary, needs might be constituted otherwise. To recognize human needs as contingent is to recognize the potential for a properly political politics of need. For, to be able to look on what is given in the light of how it might otherwise be, is the fundamental condition for politics and politicization with its world-disclosing potential.

What remains, then, in Arendt's distinction between political freedom and social need that is worth retrieving? James Clarke (1993) argues persuasively that although Arendt's ontological argument about needs is untenable, we should retain Arendt's insight that the question of the political is in a certain sense always prior to questions of social justice. Although the effects of oppression are always personally experienced,

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3   Phillip Hansen (1993, 43) points out that Arendt recognizes a crucial connection between the economic and the political when she notes that 'only within the framework of political organization, where men not merely live, but act, together, can specialization of work and division of labor take place' (HC, 123). Despite this acknowledgement that the organization of the labor process in modern conditions is politically determined, however, she fails to see the potential scope for freedom within the realm of necessity which Marx hoped for.

oppression 'only becomes political when others recognize it as a shared reality, and further, when it can become the basis for solidarity and action' (Clarke 1993, 342). In other words, demands for satisfaction of need only become political when they carry with them the world-disclosing potential that for Arendt is the defining feature of praxis. As Clarke puts it, while the social world in which women's developmental needs are not met was always sexist, the 'we' that recognizes this social world as such has not always existed. 'Thus relations that retrospectively appear "always already" political are, for Arendt, "not yet" political. They "become" political when mediated through public interaction' (Clarke 1993, 342).

To develop this Arendtian insight about the possibility of a political politics of need, we might turn to another of Arendt's critics, Jacques Rancière. In *On Revolution*, Arendt agrees with John Adams that the fundamental political wrong of poverty is not that basic needs are not met but that the poor are excluded from the public realm so that their lives remain in darkness (OR, 69). In this context, she also observes sympathetically that 'Marx's effort to rewrite history in terms of class struggle was partially at least inspired by the desire to rehabilitate posthumously those to whose injured lives history had added the insult of oblivion' (OR, 69). Rancière concurs that the fundamental political wrong consists in the invisibility of the poor. However, he rejects her suggestion that only someone such as Adams, who had experienced the joy of public life, could appreciate what it would mean to be deprived of the *bios politikos*. On the contrary, Rancière (2001, 26) argues that the politics of the poor have invariably concerned 'precisely their mode of visibility'.

Rancière argues that Arendt's deafness to the political claims of the poor results directly from her distinction between the social and the political as ontologically grounded in that between *zoe* (the needs of mere life) and *bios* (the freedom of the good life). Against Arendt, he insists that the partition between the social and the political does not have an ontological (and therefore meta-political) basis. Rather, this partition is the 'permanent object of litigation constituting politics' (Rancière 2001, 26). For Rancière, the opposition between the social and the political cannot be determined philosophically but rather is always a matter of politics. He thus rejects Arendt's Aristotelian identification of the political with a fully human life achieved through praxis in contrast to the mere life sustained through labor. In positing a particular way of life that is proper to politics, he argues, Arendt remains caught within the vicious circle of political philosophy, which explains politics by positing a distinction between a 'character who possesses a good or a specific universality, as opposed to the private or domestic world of needs' (Rancière 2001, 3).

Despite his critique of Arendt's pure concept of the political, however, Rancière implicitly reconstructs her distinction between the social and the political in terms of his distinction between police and politics. The concept of police refers to 'a symbolic constitution of the social', which involves a 'partition of the sensible' (Rancière 2001, 20). By participation of the sensible, Rancière means a parcelling out of the terms of political discourse or distribution of the roles and speaking positions in terms of which one can participate in

public discourse. 'The partition of the sensible is the cutting up of the world and of "world"; it is the *nemein* [division] in terms of which the *nomoi* [common laws] of the community are founded' (Rancière 2001, 20). This cutting up of the world both partitions by defining the parts of the whole in terms of which the social order is constructed and enables participation by delineating a public. Importantly, the division of the distributive aspect of the social order is always also predicated on a division between what is visible and what is not, what is sayable and what is not within that order.

In contrast, the essence of politics is to disturb the police order by 'supplementing it with a part of the no-part identified with the community as a whole' (Rancière 2001, 21). The logic of the police is to identify the people with the population, to account for the people in terms of the sum of its parts. Politics, in contrast, always involves the subjectivization of an agent who makes a claim to participate in an order in which it has no part. Politics is always enacted by a subject (the demos) whose only qualification to rule is its 'freedom' (in contrast to the qualifications of wealth of oligarchs or the wisdom of *aristoi*). As Rancière points out, before the demos was understood to refer to the whole community, it was a name given to one part, the poor. 'The "poor", however, does not designate an economically disadvantaged part of the population; it simply designates the category of peoples who do not count' (Rancière 2001, 12). What Rancière wants to resist is the reduction of the category of the people either to a part of the population (the needy poor) or to the general interest of the population as a whole. Rather, the 'people' is the supplement that inscribes the 'the count of the unaccounted-for' or the 'part of those who have no part' within a police order (Rancière 2001, 14). This part that has no part is, for Rancière the proper subject of politics.

In Arendt's terms, Rancière's subject of politics is disclosed through collective action. However, the condition for the possibility of world disclosure is not the presence of a community of equals. Rather, it is the torsion between the social order that institutes the partition between rulers and ruled and the presupposition of a fundamental equality on which every social order rests. Every social order is inherently hierarchical since it concerns the distribution of the benefits and burdens of social co-operation according to each member's assigned place within that order. Yet the division between rulers and ruled that every social order institutes requires that the ruled are capable of understanding the rules and in this way takes for granted a fundamental ontological equality manifested in the ability of ruled to 'understand' their place in society.

The concept of police thus refers to an anti-political politics that disciplines social conflict in terms commensurate with the social order. Politics in contrast, is that which disrupts the rationality of police by revealing the contingency of the distinction that founds that order in the first place (the division between rulers and ruled). It follows that needs might either be policed or politicized. Indeed, Fraser describes the way needs might be policed in terms either of expert discourses (which interpret needs in terms of the management of satisfying needs that are taken to be self evident) or reactive discourses (which deny the legitimacy of

needs as the proper object of politics by seeking to re-privatize them). In contrast, Fraser describes a politics of needs in terms of oppositional discourses which seek to transform the existing terms of discourse through which needs come to be recognized (Fraser 1989, 303f.).

This brings us finally to the way in which Rancière thematizes the potentially world-disclosive aspect of a politics of need. The 'principle function of politics', Rancière insists, is to 'disclose the world of its subjects and operations. The essence of politics is the manifestation of dissensus, as the presence of two worlds in one' (Rancière 2001, 22). Rancière's understanding of politics here crucially still entails the world-disclosing aspect, which is the defining feature of Arendt's conception of the political. However, the conditions of possibility for this world-disclosure differ from Arendt in at least two important respects.

Firstly, the possibility of world disclosure does not depend on the presence of a community of equals. On the contrary, it depends on the appearance of a subject that has no part in the police order, who is defined by its lack of a part within that order. We are reminded here of the proletariat as a 'class in civil society that is not of civil society' (Heller 1976, 89). The condition of possibility of the appearance of this subject is its demonstration of the wrong of the police order (social invisibility), which depends upon occupying the position of speaking subject and making visible what was previously invisible. On this account, the presence of a community of equals is not so much the condition of possibility for action but rather a presupposition that enables the demonstration of the wrong. In other words, equality is what is disclosed rather than a precondition for disclosure.

Secondly, while for both Arendt and Rancière politics is agonistic, Rancière thematizes the struggle that leads to the event of world disclosure very differently from Arendt (Deranty and Renault 2009). In reviving the Greek understanding of the agon, Arendt views the struggle of political life to be fundamentally a struggle for excellence among equals. For Rancière (2001, 25, 21), in contrast, this struggle always entails a 'clash between two partitions of the sensible' and, as such, is first and foremost an 'intervention on the visible and the sayable'. Returning to Aristotle, Rancière agrees that humans are political by virtue of their possession of the capacity for speech, according to which they can distinguish the just from the unjust. Arendt similarly makes the Aristotelian point that if politics existed for nothing higher than the collective satisfaction of common needs, then we would have no need for speech since animal sounds would be sufficient to 'communicate immediate identical needs' (HC, 176).

The problem, however, as Rancière (2001, 23) goes on to note is 'how one can be sure that the human animal mouthing a noise in front of you is actually voicing an utterance rather than merely expressing a state of being?' Rancière's point here is fundamental. Namely, that how the political is distinguished from the non-political is always a political question. Domination is often exercised by refusing the title of political subject to a category of persons by asserting that they belong to a private space from which only 'groans or cries expressing suffering,

hunger or anger could emerge, but not actual speeches demonstrating a shared aesthesis' (Rancière 2001, 23).

Politicization has always involved members of such groups making themselves heard as speaking subjects by 'demonstrating to be a shared feeling or shared "good" or "evil" what had appeared merely as an expression of pleasure or pain' (Rancière 2001, 23). World-disclosure comes about through the manifestation of dissensus, the demonstration of the wrong of a social order by lodging one world in another (see Deranty 2003). For example, by lodging the 'political' world in which the radical need for free time would be satisfied in the 'social' world in which the human needs of workers are reduced to the basic need for survival.

Following Rancière, a politics of need would be one in which the needs of a socially subordinated group of people would be articulated in a way that makes visible what was previously invisible within the social order. A properly political argument about need would at the same time be:

> …the demonstration of a possible world where the argument [that a need *ought* to be satisfied] could count as argument, addressed by a subject [in need] qualified to argue, upon an identified [need], to an addressee who is required to see the [need] and to hear the argument [for its satisfaction] that he or she 'normally' has no reason to either see or hear. (Rancière 2001, 24)

In terms of the five aspects of Arendt's conception of the political, such a politics would be *initiatory* in that the articulation of needs would at the same bring about a new sensibility within the public realm. It would be *constitutive* in that it would reconfigure the context in terms of which social conflict would be represented. It would be *inclusive* in that the demonstration of the wrong of the existing social order would at the same time amount to the demonstration of the equality of those subordinated within that order with their social superiors. It would be *performative* in that the articulation of a need through praxis would at the same time entail the self-constitution of a collective agent claiming the right to its satisfaction on behalf of all. It would be *disclosive* since the articulation of the need would reveal the commonness of the world between the parties to the conflict over the existence, interpretation and satisfaction of needs.

Acknowledgement

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