

Master Thesis:

**A Reinterpretation of Hannah Arendt
as a Philosopher of Technology**

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A REINTERPRETATION OF HANNAH ARENDT AS A PHILOSOPHER OF TECHNOLOGY

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FOREWORD

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I. Introduction

“Men, not man, live and inhabit the earth”.

Hannah Arendt

Everything Hannah Arendt writes about, politics, technologies, philosophy, human condition...etc. Everything goes back to her fascination about human plurality. The quote above, refers to the condition of human plurality, emphasizes that we always live with other people. This realization for Arendt, is the basis of politics. Without the existence of other people, who are different than us, without knowing them, appearing in front of them, politics is not possible. Who we are and what we are takes shape through others. But not only we are shaped by others, we also shape them and the environment around us. This is what politics is for Arendt, constant discourse and action, seeing and hearing others, looking at the world from the perspectives of others and even when we are alone, imagining others' existence while thinking, or forming an idea.

Arendt, recognizes a common ground for politics to be the political arena, the polis, or the table that we gather around. Only in these places humans can practice politics because only in these “public realms” humans experience the existence of others. Aside from this human plurality aspect of these public places, in order to be able to practice politics, also a material space is required which is actively involved in the dynamics of how we do politics. In her book *“The Human Condition,”* (1958) she introduces “the table” as an analogy for that space, our shared political world; a table that relates people together with a common cause, but simultaneously separates them by sitting in their own chairs and having their own stances. According to Arendt, being human *is* being political, and we have to go out in public, take place at that table, and speak out.

For Arendt, this speaking out, or political action, is solely a human affair. Political action, she emphasizes, can only take place between people, without the intermediary of things.(Arendt, 1958:7)

I think, however, that Arendt herself, paradoxically, already shows how important technology is by illustrating how it mediates the ways in which we are present for each other. For example, she argues that if the table would suddenly cease to exist, the people gathered around it “would entirely be unrelated to each other by anything tangible” (Arendt, 1958:52-53). The common cause that relates these people together would lose its place to be spoken, and people would lose the possibility to present themselves as distinctive human beings, in their own chairs. It should actually be possible to put things on the table.

This master thesis then, focuses on understanding the significance of materiality and technology in Hannah Arendt’s *Human Condition*. Thesis will be limited to the human condition because that is the work where Hannah Arendt develops her political theory and mainly investigates life devoted to action namely; *vita activa*.

Research Questions

This thesis intends to answer this main question:

To what extent can we materialize Hannah Arendt’s political theory?

The reason for this question is that, with the existing theories on politics of technology, we either do not really grasp what politics is, or we lack an adequate analysis of human-technology relations. Arendt’s account of politics allows us to grasp what this concept is without limiting it to forms of doing politics like democracy, bureaucracy and power arrangements. This question therefore aims to investigate the role played by materiality and technologies in Arendt’s theory of political action.

To be able to answer the main thesis question, every chapter of the thesis will evolve around sub-questions, which are;

- **What is politics according to Hannah Arendt?**

While answering this question, it will be argued that there is an interconnected relationship between what Arendt calls “work” namely, the human artifice and “action” that is the public performance of deeds and public speaking of words.

- **How did theories of Philosophy of Technology analyze the relationship between technology and politics so far?**

This section will mainly analyze prominent philosophers of technology such as Ellul, Heidegger, Winner, Feenberg, Latour, Ihde and Verbeek. The focus in looking at main works of these philosophers will be to understand how did they define the relationship between politics and technology. The main argument of this section while answering the research question will point out to the fact that most of these approaches seek to find their explanation either in human politics, regarding technology merely as an obstacle or tool, or in technology, rendering it either being intrinsically political or having actual political agency. We should, however, look for the political significance of technology in the relation between humans and their world. For that purpose, the thesis will propose to look at the political significance of technologies from the perspective of the mediation theory of Peter Paul Verbeek. However, this proposal has its own challenges because while mediation theory understands very well our mediated individual experience of the world, it has been criticized for leaving the political dimension underexposed (cf. Feenberg, 2009) This section then will leave the further investigation on this matter for later research.

- **Does Hannah Arendt indeed recognize the impact of material things or technologies in formation of her political theory?**

Even though looking at political significance of technologies from the perspective of mediation theory was left for further investigation, in this section, one more step is going to be taken by looking at Arendt's political theory through the lens of mediation theory. This section then will investigate if and how materiality plays a role in Arendt's political theory. The answer to the question will be yes, but it will be pointed out that Arendt's main concern is emphasizing the agent-revealing capacity of politics. This section of the thesis will focus on elaborating on the role played by technologies in Arendt's concept of politics.

II. Vita Activa

2.1 Vita Activa and Vita Contemplativa

In his article “*On Animal Laborans and Homo Politicus in Hannah Arendt*”, Martin Levin makes an important observation claiming that the whole philosophy of Hannah Arendt is based on distinctions. He continues arguing that Hannah Arendt, because of this trait is very vulnerable for misinterpretation and misunderstanding. (Levin, 1979: 521) That is why, to understand what “politics” according to Arendt is, first one has to understand the main distinction Arendt makes related to human life namely the distinction between *vita contemplativa* and *vita activa*.

In her article “*Philosophy and Politics*” Hannah Arendt explains where does her distinction between *vita contemplativa* and *vita activa* comes from. She argues that it is the Platonic appraisal of the philosopher’s way of life caused entanglement with the worldly affairs and politics. This philosopher’s way of life, is a life devoted to contemplation and speechless wonder.

According to Arendt, *vita contemplativa* represents the philosopher’s way of life, a life of wonder. She refers to Plato’s work *Theaetettis*, which is a dialogue about the difference between *episteme* (knowledge) and *doxa* (opinion) and argues that in this dialogue, Plato defines the origin of philosophy as wonder, “as there is no other beginning of philosophy than wonder”. (Arendt, 1990: 97) The wonder Plato believes to be the beginning of philosophy is not experienced for the sake of forming an opinion hence; it is so abstract and so general that it cannot be “related to words”. (Arendt, 1990:97) This wonder according to Arendt, does not relate to anything particular. The moment that this wonder translates itself into something particular, like words, Arendt argues that:

“...it will not begin with statements but will formulate in undending variations what we call the ultimate questions—What is being? Who is man? What meaning has life? What is death? etc. all of which have in common that they cannot be answered scientifically”. (Arendt, 1990:98)

Frederick Dolan in his article “*Arendt on Politics and Philosophy*” argues that, this endless wonder, necessitates a withdrawal from worldly affairs and public life.

Arendt, according to Dolan, perceives this Platonic vision of what philosophy is, to be normative for Western political thought. (Dolan, 2000: 263-264)

While *vita contemplativa* is withdrawal from the world, public and political affairs, *vita activa* is, the life devoted to them. In the Greek polis, citizens with their public speaking of words and public performance of deeds tried to leave a trace behind. Since human life has an end, they sought immortality with their actions, leaving a story behind to be told to later generations. So for Arendt, *vita activa* is the political way of life.

While *vita contemplativa* is concerned with seeking truth, *vita activa* is concerned with opinion. According to Arendt, this opinion or *doxa* as the Greeks would call it, is also one’s positioning in the world. She argues that for Socrates and his fellow citizens, “*doxa* was the formulation in speech of what *dokei\moi*, that is, of what appears to me.” (Arendt, 1990:80) It was speaking of the world as it opens itself to one’s self, it was not something absolute and valid for all, but also not something subjective or arbitrary. So the world as it is, opens itself differently to every human, according to his or her position in the world. It is the same world that opens up to every human, but according to their positioning in it, their opinions differ.

According to Arendt, the word *doxa*, not only means opinion, but also splendor or fame. (Arendt, 1990:80) *Doxa*, here, means the opinions of others. Because humans seek recognition or approval of others, they seek for the opinions of others. So, Arendt argues, *doxa* is related to the political realm. In the public sphere, where the political realm is, one can appear and show who he/she is. She argues that:

“To assert one's own opinion belonged to being able to show oneself, to be seen and heard by others. To the Greeks this was the one great privilege attached to public life and lacking in the privacy of the household, where one is neither seen nor heard by others... In private life one is hidden and can neither appear nor shine, and consequently no *doxai* possible there.” (Arendt, 1990:80-81)

Opinion then, belongs to the public realm. Truth however requires isolation and a withdrawal from the public realm. Hence, the moment truth enters the public realm, it loses its distinguishing quality and becomes an opinion among other opinions.

Truth, according to Arendt, is not relevant to politics. Arendt argues in her book “The Human Condition” (1958) that, after the disappearance of the ancient city-state, the term *vita activa* (life devoted to politics) lost its specifically political meaning and meant all kinds of active engagements with the things of the world. (Arendt, 1958:14)¹. With this change in the meaning, the hierarchical order within *vita activa* also changed. Action before this change in the meaning, had the highest rank among the activities within *vita activa*, but after the loss of the political meaning of the term *vita activa*, action found itself being among the necessities of earthly life where contemplation started being understood as the “only, truly, free way to live”. (Arendt, 1958:14)

Arendt argues that the traditional hierarchy has given an enormous weight to *vita contemplativa*—the philosopher’s way of life, over *vita activa* (active life) and this “has blurred the distinctions and articulations within the *vita activa* itself and that, appearances notwithstanding, this condition has not been changed essentially”. (Arendt, 1958:17) What she means by the “traditional hierarchy” is the hierarchy within the Western tradition of political thought. In the Pre-Socratic city states, *vita activa* was the highest way of living. This hierarchy was reversed and a whole new tradition emerged after the trial of Socrates. According to Arendt, this, Western tradition of political thought is:

“...far from comprehending and conceptualizing all the political experiences of Western mankind, grew out of a specific historical constellation: the trial of Socrates and the conflict between the philosopher and the polis. It eliminated many experiences of an earlier past that were irrelevant to its immediate political purposes and proceeded until its end, in the work of Karl Marx, in a highly selective manner”. (Arendt, 1958:12)

She claims that the way in which she uses the term “*vita activa*” “is in manifest contradiction with the tradition” because she doubts the validity of this hierarchy between

¹In her footnote number 7, on the page 14, Arendt refers to Thomas Aquinas’s *Summa Theologica* ii 2, in order to see how *vita activa* lost its political meaning. She does not elaborate more on how this change happened rather, she focuses on the consequences of this change in the meaning of the term *vita activa*.

vitacontemplativa and vita activa in the first place. (Arendt, 1958:17)

The contemplative way of life for Arendt, seeks to understand the realm of human affairs from a philosophical perspective, what she seeks to establish through her quest is to understand that realm from a political perspective.

Arendthas contended to the distinction between vita activa and vita contemplativa all her life, both are important and complementary of one another for her. What Arendt was focusing on was not looking at how we are thinking, but “thinking what we are doing” namely, bringing thinking into the world of experiences. In her own words, her attempt is “...very simple: it is nothing more than to think what we are doing”. (Arendt, 1958:5)

It is of course important to mention that Arendt was moved and influenced by the events of twentieth century as a Jew from Germany. She saw a rupture in western traditional thinking caused by the emergence of totalitarianism. For her, the events people experienced could not be understood with the existing traditional attitude towards the world. This break in tradition caused Arendt to search for a new and original approach to politics. She stood against the contemplative approach of “being in the world” and defended the idea that people are not only in the world but “of” it. This is where the story of “vita activa” starts for Hannah Arendt. She proposes to look back to the ancient Greek city state, namely the polis, to understand the significance of action and public realm. She is not a romantic longing for going back to the roots; she tries to bring back the lost authentic public realm into life via new interpretations and meanings attained to it. She seeks to restore the past in the modern world and she believes, this cannot be done with the guidance of the anti-political traditional approach that praises withdrawal from the world, but with a guidance of a political approach.

2.2.The Activities Corresponding to the Human Conditions

When Arendt talks about “the human condition” she explicitly points out that she does not refer to “the human nature”.(Arendt, 1958:9) While trying to understand the realm of human affairs with a political perspective, she came to an analysis of “general human capacities” (Arendt, 1958:6) where each of those capacities “points out to its proper

location in the world". (Arendt, 1958:73??)For Arendt, human beings are conditioned by the "conditions under which life was given to man" and by "man made" or "self made" conditions. (Arendt,1958:9)For her, "vita activa" is produced by different activities that have different nature which are; labour, work and action.

Arendt argues that these capacities grow out of the human condition and they are permanent; no human is able to lose these capacities "so long as the human condition itself has not changed." (Arendt,1958:6)

Apart from the conditions that were naturally given to humans, Arendt argues that humans also create their own conditions that are as powerful as the natural conditions. The reason for this is that, "whatever touches or enters into a sustained relationship with human life immediately assumes the character of a condition of human existence". (Arendt, 1958:9) The three human conditions according to Arendt are labour, work and action. Each of these conditions also corresponds to three fundamental human activities that are, life itself, worldliness and human plurality.

Arendt also adds that these conditions and their corresponding activities "are intimately connected with the most general condition of human existence; birth and death, natality and mortality". (Arendt, 1958:8) Natality is the condition of birth, being born into this world as a new comer and mortality is the condition of death, the end of life, which is a universal condition for every human being. (Arendt, 1958: 8-9)

The three given conditions of life help people to overcome mortality. Their works, deeds and words help humans to leave something behind that does not go away with them when they leave this world. In the next section of this chapter I will analyze each of the activities. As mentioned before these activities together produce the "vita active", a life devoted to politics. So each of them are of vital importance to understand Arendt's political theory and political action.

2.3Labour

The activity that corresponds to the condition of life itself is labour. Labour is the manifest of the basic behavior imposed on humans, namely, the necessity to survive.

With laboring, human beings satisfy their needs for survival. The activities that come together with labor serve only to sustain life. (Arendt, 1958:83)

According to Arendt;

“...all human activities which arise out of the necessity to cope with them are bound to the recurring cycles of nature and have in themselves no beginning and no end, properly speaking; unlike *working*, whose end has come when the object is finished, ready to be added to the common world of things, *laboring* always moves in the same circle, which is prescribed by the biological process of the living organism and the end of its "toil and trouble" comes only with the death of this organism” (Arendt, 1958:98)

The activity of labour has neither a beginning nor an end, just like nature itself, it has a cyclical movement also it is controlled by the biological needs. To labour for Arendt is to be enslaved by necessity therefore it is not subject to choice or decision. (Arendt, 1958:66) For Arendt, there are no meaningful distinctions among humans as long as they labor, while doing the activity of laboring, human is an *animal laborans*, an undifferentiated member of the mankind. That is why she claims, for *animal laborans*, the world and the self are not yet real, they only have a potential existence. (Arendt, 1958:96-98) For Arendt, one cannot survive only with the activity of labour since, *animal laborans* always has to defend and protect himself from the natural processes and in order to do that, animal laborans has to take things out of nature's hands and consume them. (Arendt, 1958:103) One then, survive not only with the condition of life itself, it also needs the condition of worldliness.

2.4 Work

The activity corresponding to the human condition of “worldliness” is work. This condition of human beings points out to the unnaturalness of human existence on earth. According to Arendt, work provides an “artificial world of things, distinctly different from all natural surroundings”. (Arendt, 1958:7) It creates borders, and houses each individual life. Aside from the mortal humans, the world, which is the product of work outlasts human life and transcends them all. (Arendt, 1958:7)

Only with the activity of work, the natural earth becomes “the world”. When these human artifices are organized, they are able to “resist the consuming life process of the people

dwelling in it and thus outlast them.”(Arendt, 1977 as cited in Janover, 2011:27) only then, the earth becomes the world. While humans are doing the activity of work, they are the craftsmen namely, *homo faber*. For Arendt, “...*homo faber*... fabricates the sheer unending variety of things whose sum total constitutes the human artifice”. (Arendt, 1958:136) The work of *homo faber* is fabrication according to Arendt. This work however “consists in reification”. (Arendt, 1958:139) *Homo faber*, “destroys” nature and “conducts himself as lord and the master of the whole earth”. (Arendt, 1958:139)

For Arendt, the work of fabrication is realized with a guidance of a model or an image and this image or model does not disappear with the end product, but stays intact for future processes of fabrication. (Arendt, 1958:140-141) Arendt calls these future processes of fabrication from the same model “multiplication”. According to Arendt this multiplication is not mere repetition because it “multiplies something that already possesses a relatively stable and relatively permanent existence in the world”. (Arendt, 1958:142)

The activity of work, different from labour, has both a definite beginning and a predictable end. For Arendt, having a definite beginning and a definite end is the most important feature of fabrication, with this feature she adds, fabrication “distinguishes itself from all other human activities”. (Arendt, 1958:142-143) Because of this predictable end, according to Arendt, work is reliable and it is reversible, “everything produced by human hands can be destroyed by them”. (Arendt, 1958:144)

Homo faber then, creates durable, tangible things that can be destroyed but meant to stay, even when the creator of the things leave the world. For Arendt, this durable character of the things of the world gives them their “relative independence from men who produced and used them, their “objectivity” which makes them withstand, “stand against” and endure...” (Arendt, 1958:137)

As mentioned before, for Arendt, nature has a circular movement, only humans, experience a rectilinear movement throughout their lives which start with birth and moves along to death. For Arendt this rectilinear movement is “mortality”, “moving along a rectilinear line in a universe where everything... moves in a cyclical order”.

(Arendt,1958:19)

With its durability, the human artifice interrupts this cyclical movement of nature. This objective and durable creations of work constitutes the human made world and functions for “stabilizing the human life”.(Arendt, 1958:137) For Arendt, the objectivity of these creations “lies in the fact that...men, their ever-changing nature notwithstanding, can retrieve their sameness, that is their identity, by being related to the same chair and same table”. (Arendt,1958:137) The world’s objectivity, provides a realm for people to express their subjectivity by having a same kind of a bond with the same thing. In other words, adds Arendt:

“...against the subjectivity of men stands the objectivity of the man-made world rather than the sub- lime indifference of an untouched nature, whose overwhelming elementary force, on the contrary, will compel them to swing relentlessly in the circle of their own biological movement, which fits so closely into the over-all cyclical movement of nature's household.” (Arendt, 1958:137)

On the other hand, the world, protects humans from the cyclical movement of nature by being something permanent and allows them to look upon nature as something “objective”. (Arendt, 1958:137) For Arendt, “without a world between man and nature, there is eternal movement, but no objectivity”. (Arendt, 1958:137) If there is no permanent place for humans to express their subjectivity and protected from nature, they would not be able to leave any trace behind, there would be no space for them to create a life story of their own for others to hear after their death. Without a world between humans and nature, humans would just leave the world only as a biological creature, they would have no distinct traits attributed to them and would not be able to leave a trace behind.

2.5 Action

For Arendt, the activity that corresponds to the fact that “men, not Man, live on earth and inhabit the world” is action.(Arendt,1958:7) In other words, action corresponds to the condition of human plurality. Work or labour are activities that can be realized in isolation, but action, requires the existence of others and cannot be realized in solitude. According to Arendt, the human condition of plurality, is the basis of action and speech.

This condition however has a twofold character of equality and distinction. (Arendt, 1958:175) If, Arendt continues, people are not equal then they would not be able to understand each other or the ones before them and they would not be able to plan a future for the next generations. (Arendt, 1958:175) Aside from equality, distinction is also a characteristic of plurality because if people are not distinct, then a person would only be like everyone else, there will be no need for neither speech nor action to manifest him/herself. (Arendt, 1958:175-176) Speech and action then, reveal the distinctness of human beings. (Arendt, 1958:176)

It is however apparent that Arendt, in her understanding of equality, is very much inspired by the Greeks. According to the Ancient Greeks, freedom is the equality of condition of those who form a body of peers. She gives a very interesting twist to this “equality of condition”. For Arendt, this condition of equality is not a given by birth, because according to her as humans, we are *not* born equal, but we have the capacity for speech and action and that is something common equally in every human being. With action and speech, we create the *polis*, the public space and enable equality and distinction to exist. Arendt argues that people need to transcend, via a public sphere, the ontological inequality of humankind.

Equality then for Arendt, is not given by birth but an agreement between fellow citizens. Distinction on the other hand for Arendt, signifies that “only man can...distinguish himself” (Arendt, 1958:176) by communicating, even though this distinctness is shared by everything alive, only man has the capacity to turn it into “uniqueness”. The reason for this capacity to turn distinctness into uniqueness is that again only man has the capacity to act and the capacity to speak. With our deeds and words, we become distinct unique beings. What Arendt tries to point out with her concepts of equality and distinctness is that we, as humans are all the same “in such a way that nobody is ever the same as anyone else who ever lived, lives or will live”. (Arendt, 1958:8)

Human plurality for Arendt is “*the condition-not only the *conditio sine qua non* but the *conditio per quam*- of all political life” (Arendt, 1958:7) because of its two characteristics*

such as equality and uniqueness. These two characteristics form the basis of action and speech. For Arendt, “A life without speech and without action...is literally dead to the world; it has ceased to be a human life because it is no longer lived among men”. (Arendt, 1958:176)

For Arendt, “to act, in its more general sense, means to take an initiative, to begin..., to set something into motion”. (Arendt, 1958:177) Margaret Canovan in her book “*Hannah Arendt, A Reinterpretation of her Political Thought*” (1992) defines Arendt’s “action” as: “a very broad category of human activity that covers interactions with other people that are not matters of routine behavior but require personal initiative”. (Canovan, 1992: 131) To begin something new is very essential in Hannah Arendt’s concept of action. As mentioned before, all human capacities are connected with natality and mortality, however, action, according to Arendt, “has the closest connection with...natality; the new beginning inherent in birth can make itself felt in the world only because the newcomer possesses the capacity of beginning something a new, that is, of acting”. (Arendt, 1958:9) James Bernauer in his article “*On Reading and Mis-reading Hannah Arendt,*” argues that Hannah Arendt perceives action as the highest form of life where a person reveals his/her abilities, “exhibits his equality with others and exercises his freedom”. (Bernauer, 1985:13) For Arendt, natality is “the central category of political” (Arendt, 1958: 9). Arendt perceives action as the “actualization of the human condition of natality” (Arendt, 1958:178). On the other hand, speech is the “actualization of human condition of plurality, that is of living as a distinct and unique being among equals”. (Arendt, 1958:178)

2.5.1 Action and Appearance

Action and speech are not the same according to Hannah Arendt since they actualize different human conditions. However, they are inseparable. She argues that:

“Without the accompaniment of speech, at any rate, action would not only lose its revelatory character, but, by the same token, it would lose its subject, as it were; not acting men but performing robots would achieve what, humanly speaking, would remain incomprehensible.” (Arendt: 178)

For Arendt, an action without speech “would no longer be an action because there would no longer be an actor, and the actor, the doer of deeds, is possible only if he/she is at the same time the speaker of the words”. (Arendt, 1958:178-179)

Arendt argues that, humans show “who” they are and reveal their unique identities through action and speech. (Arendt, 1958:179) This appearance in the human world is a disclosure of “who” a man is instead of “what” he is. By this what Arendt means is, instead of our physical appearance, we show who we are with our deeds and words, with action and speech. Speech and action enable people to distinguish themselves as “the modes in which human beings appear to each other, not indeed as physical objects, but qua men”. (Arendt, 1958:176) For Arendt, “action without a name, a “who” attached to it, is meaningless...” (Arendt, 1958:180-181)

This appearance however, can only be possible “where people are with others...in sheer human togetherness”. (Arendt, 1958:180) That is why action is not possible without others. Humans need to be seen and heard by others, that is the only way for disclosure of our “whoness”. Without this disclosure, action becomes “one form of achievement among others” and speech becomes “mere talk”. (Arendt, 1958:180) For Arendt, since we are conditioned beings, we cannot know our nature, “what” we are, but we experience our second birth, when we act and speak in the world. Instead of what we are, we disclose who we are with our words and deeds. Charles Barbour and Magdalena Zolkos in their article “*Action and Appearance: An Introduction*” claim that for Arendt an individual not only can act by appearing before others with their words and deeds but also an individual can only be an individual before others by revealing “who” they are instead of “what” they are and leaving it to the judgment of an audience. (Barbour&Zolkos, 2011:1)

Arendt argues that one discloses “who” he is in everything he says and does. She continues as;

“It can be hidden only in complete silence and perfect passivity, but its disclosure can almost never be achieved as a willful purpose, as though one possessed and could dispose of this “who” in the same manner he has and can dispose of his qualities. On the contrary, it is more than likely that the “who,” which appears so clearly and unmistakably to others, remains hidden from the person himself”(Arendt, 1958: 179)

It is because of this revealing of one's "who" ness in front of others, we can never willfully control who we are because it is always going to be left to the discretion of someone else who "in lieu of acting or appearing in his or her own right, watches, remembers and later narrates". (Barbour&Zolkos, 2011:1) This also shows that for Arendt, one's identity is not a given but through performance of deeds and speaking of words one reveals his novelty and establishes his identity. In order to be a unique, distinct individual then, one has to appear before others. This appearance however, can only take place in the public realm of life.

2.6 Public/Private Distinction

Arendt starts her chapter on the distinction between the public and the private realm with a question such as; is man a social or a political animal? The answer she proposes to this question as can be imagined is man being a political animal. But why does she propose this question when the answer for her is very clear? The reason for this is the fact that while emphasizing that there should be a distinction between the private and public realms of life, she also observes in her contemporary society that both of the realms do not exist anymore, at least they are not what they should be. Something else emerged after the distinction between the two realms blurred, that is the social realm. She indicates that;

"The distinction between a private and a public sphere of life corresponds to the household and the political realms, which have existed as distinct, separate entities at least since the rise of the ancient city-state; but the emergence of the social realm, which is neither private nor public, strictly speaking, is a relatively new phenomenon whose origin coincided with the emergence of the modern age and which found its political form in the nation-state" (Arendt, 1958:28)

Arendt fears that humans will not be able to grasp what politics is in the contemporary situation that she lived in where the public and the private mingled with one another and none of them portrayed their full potential. It is highly important then, to understand why there should be a distinction and why these two realms are not as they should be.

It is essential for the revelatory character of action and speech to manifest themselves in a space, a worldly "in between", which is the public realm consisting of the web of human

relationships and the human artifice. In the private realm however, we don't need to be recognized or perform deeds, it is the realm where we take care of our necessities. This distinction between the public and private realms is crucial for understanding Arendt's concept of politics. Political life and genuine politics can only take place in the public realm according to Arendt because the public realm is the only space where human condition of plurality, namely action, can take place. On the other hand, it is the private realm that allows public realm to be for only politics. So first, one has to look at the private realm and understand how this realm enables public realm to be genuinely for politics.

2.6.1 The Private Realm

According to Hannah Arendt, the private realm of life is the realm of necessity. This realm is the house of animal laborans, where humans take care of their biological needs. The reason that this private realm corresponds to the household is because, the activities that take place are mainly concerned with sustaining life. In this sphere humans live together but this is only because their own individual maintenance. Humans need the company of others for their individual maintenance and survival as the life of the species. The household activities were only for the survival of the species, such as giving birth or providing food. All of these activities were driven and ruled by necessity. (Arendt, 1958:30)

Following the ancient Greek example, Arendt argues that the economic activities also belonged to the private realm of life. These activities, including production and consumption were carried out in the private realm so the adult male household head can be free from necessities and able to engage in political activities in the public realm. The private realm is of great importance for the public realm because for Arendt; if humans don't own a house, then they cannot participate in the affairs of the world because they would have no location in it which was properly their own. (Arendt, 1958: 29-30) The household head rules over habitants such as women, children and slaves. This private domain then is also the domain of inequality, power and violence.

All of these traits are justified in the household because “they are the only means to master necessity”. (Arendt, 1958:31) For Arendt, one has to master these necessities to become free.

Without being free of necessities that one takes care of in the private realm, the public realm consisting of free man cannot exist. It is apparent that for Arendt, the concept of freedom that she takes from the Greeks has a twofold definition. On the one hand freedom is being free of physical necessities, and getting rid of biological needs, on the other hand, it is being free of the inequality that is inherent in the ruler-ruled dynamics of the household. Arendt perceives the activities that take place in the household to be pre-political. The private realm prepares humans to engage in politics. Everything that goes on in the private realm liberates humans “from the necessities of life, for the freedom of the world”. (Arendt, 1958:31) This freedom is dependent first upon the wealth and the health of the household.

Arendt takes these examples from the ancient Greeks and she of course does not propose having slaves or women being only limited to the household. What should be taken from this distinction Arendt takes up from ancient Greeks and emphasizes is the fact that, the private realm guarantees freedom. In our contemporary society we can take this as being freedom of mind, if one has to pay the bills but have no money, hungry but cannot afford to pay for food, then that person is limited with his/her biological necessities. Of course then, it is hard to expect from that person to be concerned with politics since all the activities that person exercises are driven by necessity. For the public realm to be genuinely for politics, or to exist at all, the private sphere of life should guarantee the freedom of humans.

Arendt indicates that;

“The realm of the polis is...the sphere of freedom, and if there was a relationship between these two spheres, (*between private and public realms*)² it was a matter of course that the mastering of the necessities of life in the household was the condition for freedom of the polis.” (Arendt, 1958:30-31)

²My addition

That is why, the public realm is dependent on the private realm of life.

2.6.2 The Public Realm

The performance of deeds and speaking of words, namely action, can only take place in a realm shared with others. According to Arendt, the realm where speech and action take place is the public realm, which is the space of appearance. Because of the existence of others in our disclosure of who we are, we can not control the identity we are disclosing, it is open to the interpretations and judgments of others.

According to Arendt;

“The disclosure of the "who" through speech, and the setting of a new beginning through action, always fall into an already existing web where their immediate consequences can be felt... It is because of this already existing web of human relationships, with its innumerable, conflicting wills and intentions, that action almost never achieves its purpose; but it is also because of this medium, in which action alone is real, that it "produces" stories with or without intention as naturally as fabrication produces tangible things. These stories may then be recorded in documents and monuments, they may be visible in use objects or art works, they may be told and retold and worked into all kinds of material... Although everybody started his life by inserting himself into the human world through action and speech, nobody is the author or producer of his own life story. In other words, the stories, the results of action and speech, reveal an agent, but this agent is not an author or producer. Somebody began it and is its subject in the twofold sense of the word, namely, its actor and sufferer, but nobody is its author.” (Arendt, 1958:184)

So, according to Arendt, one cannot be the storyteller of his/her own story, who we are, our identity does not appear to us, it appears to others. This appearance however can *only* take place in a realm, or a space *shared* with others.³ Arendt argues that:

“Everything that appears in public can be seen and heard by everybody and has the widest possible publicity. For us, appearance –something that is being seen and heard by others as well as ourselves- constitutes reality. Compared with the reality which comes from being seen and heard, even the greatest forces of intimate life –the passions of hearth, the thoughts of the mind, the delights of the senses- lead an uncertain, shadowy kind of existence unless and until they are transformed, de-privatized and de-individualized, as it were, into a shape to fit them for public appearance ... The presence others who see what we see and hear what we hear assures us of the reality of the world

³Emphasis mine

and ourselves...”(Arendt, 1958: 50).

Arendt’s emphasis on the public realm being a space shared with others comes from her understanding of reality disclosure. Reality discloses itself only in the public realm because it is the only place in which “plural human beings can form among themselves”. (Canovan, 1991:112) Canovan argues Arendt took this concept of reality disclosure from Heidegger but then, Arendt added that, this reality discloses itself for human experience only in the public and political space. (Canovan, 1991:112)

For Arendt then, public realm, is the space where reality discloses itself, where humans appear to one another through their speech and action, where humans are not only plural but also individual. According to Arendt, only humans can form a public space because they are the only creatures that experience plurality. This realm, by being a place for discourse and action, assumes political significance. Arendt explains what a public space may look like through the example of the Greek polis. The Greek polis, according to Arendt was the place where freedom of speech and freedom of thought were enjoyed by its citizens.

Canovan adds here that this “freedom of speech” is not what we would understand today as freedom of expression, it is rather the freedom to “grasp reality by moving about between the different perspectives from which plural men view their common world”. (Canovan, 1991:112) Citizens of the Greek polis then, appear to one another and by this way they gain recognition, they all share common beliefs, ideas but they are also unique in the way in which they interpret them. Public space is the realm of human plurality, where by talking to one another, by performing deeds, humans check reality constantly.

According to Canovan, this is the main reason why Arendt was afraid of losing many sidednesses in societies, that is where her whole criticism of totalitarianism emerges from. (Canovan, 1991:113)

If one loses the perceptions and experiences of others, if we can’t reach to those perceptions and experiences in any way, then we lose our grasp of reality.

Aside from freedom, equality is another essential aspect of the public realm according to

Arendt. Again what Arendt means by equality here is not what we would understand from this concept today. Arendt's idea of equality where she took from the ancient Greeks is the equality of distinction. Every individual is equal in the public realm and free to unfold his/her character through speech and action. They are all equal to distinguish themselves as unique human beings.

There is one other meaning of the public realm for Arendt different than being the space of appearance. The term "public" Arendt indicates, is the world itself. (Arendt, 1958:52) It is a human artifact made by humans and their human affairs. It is a space that is common to all humans and distinguishes each human from their privately owned place in it. Because it is a space between humans and because this space is the result of the work of homo faber, public realm is durable and stable. Where everything can vanish through time, public space by being durable and stable allows humans' stories, deeds and words to be remembered by others through generations. It is the space where these stories are told, exchanged and new stories, new experiences are created.

Every human activity within *vita activa* has a designated space according to Arendt. Action's designated space is the public space. It is this space that allows humans to be unique but also be the same. It is this space that allows humans to gain their identity, disclose who they are and experience reality. Only in this worldly space in between, humans fulfill their human potential by acting and speaking. Public self that portrays itself in the public realm is the only self that has an identity and is free.

2.7 Conclusion

In this chapter the thesis focused on an overview of Arendt's work, *The Human Condition* in order to understand her concept of politics and political action since it is the major work of Hannah Arendt where she investigates "*vita activa*", a life devoted to politics. *Vita activa*, includes three forms of human conditions that are labor, work and action. In the hierarchy within the *vita activa*, action holds the highest rank since only action corresponds to the human condition of plurality. Only through action, we reveal who we are, grasp reality and perceive opinions of others. While work or labor can be exercised in isolation, action requires being with others. That is why, action can only take place in a

public realm, a realm that is shared with other humans.

Public realm is the space that is reserved genuinely for politics since it is the place where freedom, equality and distinctiveness exist. The private realm, is the pre-condition of public realm since, humans should be free of necessities in order to appear in the public realm. Taking the ancient Greek perception of freedom, Arendt argues that this freedom experienced by the citizens of the polis is the status of a free man that enables him to move, “to get away from home, to go out in the world and meet other people in deed and word.” (Arendt, 2006 as cited in Dolan, 2000:148)

What politics is according to Arendt then, is appearing in front of others, revealing who we are, hearing others, listening to their opinions, experiencing reality, understanding the world the same as others but also being different than them in our own position in it. So in other words, politics is *interaction*, doing something about this world and talking about it. Politics can only take place through action that can only take place in a public realm.

According to Arendt, action is the “only activity that goes on directly between man without the intermediary of things or matter...” (Arendt, 1958:7) This categorization of action however, in the last chapter of this thesis, is going to be challenged with the idea that, how action can take place without the intermediary of things or matter? One’s experiences of the world can only be spoken and performed in the public realm. It is this public realm that enables one to express his/her individuality. But those experiences of the world have no significance if it is not checked and bounded by others. Without a public realm then, and the materiality of it neither performance, nor speech has no significance since it cannot be seen or heard by others. This argument presented here is going to be argued for in depth in the last section of the thesis. The next section of the thesis will focus on different approaches within the field of philosophy of technology and their analyses of the relationship between materiality and politics.

III. A Framework of Politics of Technology

This chapter will mainly analyze prominent philosophers of technology such as Heidegger, Winner, Feenberg, Latour, Ihde and Verbeek. The focus in looking at main works of these philosophers will be to understand how did they define the relationship between politics and technology. In the first section of this chapter, I will provide an overview of some mainstream perspectives that focuses their analysis on how society takes or changes shape with the introduction of a technology. First one will be the technological determinist approach, which will be presented in the example of Martin Heidegger as a classical philosopher of technology. Then I will continue to contemporary philosophers of technology such as first, Langdon Winner representing the contextual realist approach. The second will be the social shapist approach that will be presented in the example of Andrew Feenberg and finally the hybrid approach that will be presented in the example of Bruno Latour.

In the second section, in the light of the criticisms of the approaches that seek to portray politics and technology relations, I will argue that there should be a different approach to look at technology rather than the ones above. In that context, I will provide an analysis of post-phenomenology of Don Ihde and Peter Paul Verbeek's mediation theory. I will argue that mediation theory gives its right place to technology but it fails to recognize the political aspect of technologies. The concluding section of this chapter then, will ask why and how mediation theory can be incorporated with Hannah Arendt's political theory.

3.1 Classical Approach to Technology

Peter Paul Verbeek, in his book *“What Things Do”* (2005) provides an overview of the “classical approach” maintained by Martin Heidegger, Karl Jaspers, Jacques Ellul and many others. The industrial revolution according to these thinkers, gave rise to a system of mass production and consumption creating an environment that does not allow people to “exist as unique individuals and interfere with their ability to authentically realize their own existence”. (Verbeek, 2005:15)

According to Heidegger, technology determines our “mode of being” of which “only a

god can save us” (Dreyfus, 1997:104) by which he means “the approaching tide of technological revolution in the atomic age could so captivate, bewitch, dazzle and beguile man that calculative thinking may someday come to be accepted and practiced as the only way of thinking”. (Dreyfus, 1997:99)

Heidegger’s main concern is the human distress caused by technological understanding of being rather than the destruction caused by specific technologies. Technology for Heidegger is a mode of being which is coming over us more and more. This technological mode of being is the “greatest danger” because it is restricting our way of thinking or leveling our understanding of being. Dreyfus in his article “Gaining a free relation to technology” quotes Heidegger and writes that “the threat is not a *problem* for which there can be a *solution* but an ontological *condition* from which we can be *saved*” (Dreyfus, 1997, p. 99). We can see that technology is something that is determining how and what we think for Heidegger. This determination is outside of our selves.

Since technology is a mode of being, it not only determines how we think and or how we are it also determines how we act. We experience our relation to nature differently than we did in ancient times. Dreyfus interprets Heidegger’s conception of the essence of modern technology as to seek more and more flexibility and efficiency simply for its own sake. (Dreyfus,1997:100) Modern technology has an internal logic that is independent of human intervention. Dreyfus indicates that we become part of a system that no one directs but which moves toward the total mobilization of all beings, a perfectly ordered society dedicated to the welfare of all. (Dreyfus, 1997:101) Since it is our mode of being, it is outside of our intervention because that is the only way we can think now. We see everything in terms of efficiency, we don’t look at a tree and think how beautiful it is, we think how many tables we can make with that tree. We are seeking for efficiency in all aspects of life, we expect that from ourselves, from the nature and from others too simply for the sake of efficiency. We see everything as a standing reserve, standing and waiting to be used. We see technology as something that will bring solutions to our problems. This instrumental conception of technology indicates Heidegger, conditions every attempt to bring man into the right relation to technology.

This conception enables us to perceive technology as something that we will master. (Heidegger, 1977: 5) This way technology deceives and takes over us. But let's think that we see that technology is taking over us and we want to stop this hegemony of it. Even then, seeing our situation as posing a problem that must be solved by appropriate action turns out to be technological. (Dreyfus, 1997:98) Because again, we see our life as not efficient, or not happy, we want to optimize it by mastering technology. This for Heidegger is nothing but technological because we think in terms of technology. We, humans are not in power at all, and only a god can save us from this desperation. (Dreyfus, 1997:104) According to Heidegger then, technology has the upper hand in determining how society will be shaped and it is autonomous which is outside human intervention. This idea that is portrayed by Heidegger is shared by most of the classical philosophers of technology like Jacques Ellul. Philip Brey in his article "*Philosophy of technology: A time for maturation*" indicates that Ellul defines modern technology as any method that is conditioned by the demand for efficiency. (Brey, 1997:92) Ellul argues in his book "*The Technological System*" that technology depends only on itself, it maps its own route and it should be regarded as an organism tending toward closure and self-determination. (Ellul, 1980: 125)

In this classical approach to technology, it is apparent that humans have too little, even no say in how society is going to be shaped. Like Arendt's *animal laborans* who is driven by necessity, according to this approach, humans are driven by either efficiency or seeking for power over technology. Politics then, is also determined by technologies like the humans themselves. Since for politics to take place, humans have to be free from their necessities. In the gloomy picture portrayed by the classical approach to technology, it is not possible for humans to be free from what technology impose on them. Hence where there is no human impact, we cannot talk about the existence of politics. Human life in this picture of the classical approach, is a technological one not political.

3.2 Contemporary Analyses of the Relation Between Politics and Technology

It is almost understandable why and how philosophers like Heidegger and Ellul perceive technology as something determining all aspects of human life because of the rapid

development of technologies that they are faced in their lifetime. How did contemporary philosophers perceived technology and its relation to politics then? To answer that question, I will start with a very famous article that everybody who studies philosophy of technology have read at least once.

3.2.1 Langdon Winner

Verbeek argues that Langdon Winner is the first philosopher of technology focusing on the active role of artifacts. (Verbeek, 2005:116) In his famous essay "*Do Artifacts Have Politics*" (1986) Winner argues that ideologies can be embedded in artifacts, and this would lead to political and social consequences. With post-phenomenology we already have come to an understanding that things "act" in various ways. Winner's theory however is a bit nuanced. Winner, throughout his essay gives three examples of how technologies can have political or social consequences. The most famous example of him is of course is the Moses bridges in Long Island, New York. He argues that Robert Moses, who is the most influential architect in New York during 1920s till 1970s, built the overpasses on Long Island so low that public transportation vehicles such as busses (which are around 9 feet tall) cannot use those overpasses. Winner argues that this deliberate choice was made in building those overpasses to achieve a certain social impact. Relying on the autobiography of Robert Moses from Robert A. Caro, Winner argues that Moses's ideas on social class and racial prejudice was inscribed in the artifacts he designed. (Winner, 1986: 123) The overpasses were low to allow "automobile" owning white upper or middle class people to go to Long-Island for recreation where black and poor classes of society who used public transportation could not go. Winner argues that one consequence of this specific design of the bridges was the limited access of racial minorities and low-income groups to Jonas Beach, Long Island. (Winner, 1986:124)

For Winner then, technologies at first may be introduced to society with a promise of efficiency but what one should be aware of is that, modern technologies, such as the bridge example above, embody specific forms of ideologies and "specific forms of power and authority". (Winner, 1986:121) By the term politics, Winner indicates, he means

“arrangements of power and authority in human associations as well as the activities that take place within those arrangements”. (Winner, 1986:125) Technology in Winner’s terms corresponds to all forms of modern practical artifice.

What is interesting in Winner’s analysis is that he perceives the impact or the role of technology being intrinsic to it. Philip Brey in his article “*Artifacts As Social Agents*” defines this perception of technology as the “realist perspective” which claims that “artifacts have inherent properties and agency can be attributed to them in a straightforward way”. (Brey, 2005: 62) According to Brey, the bridges example of Winner portrays a more sophisticated version of realism that he calls the “contextual realism”. According to Brey, contextual realism argues that:

“artifacts may impose constraints on their environment that derive from their physical design properties, but also postulates that such constraints will often differ in different environments or settings.” (Brey, 2005:64)

These bridges, Brey continues, constrains of the bridge because of its intended design having the height of 9 feet, is only relevant contextually. Brey argues that in many other different settings of the bridges would not have the social implications Winner claims to have. According to Brey, these bridges may not be discriminatory against the black population if the blacks were not economically disadvantaged and had to use public transportation or if there were busses less than 9 feet tall. So, Brey continues, the “bridges are not intrinsically discriminatory against blacks” but they become discriminatory in relation to the context within which they are placed. (Brey, 2005: 64-65) According to Brey, even though social factors may play a role in contextual realism, they mostly have a background role in the analysis of technologies.

Aside from the technological aspect of Winner’s bridges example, his definition of politics that he attributes to the artifact itself is also problematic. By the term politics, Winner indicates, he means “arrangements of power and authority in human associations as well as the activities that take place within those arrangements”. (Winner, 1986:125) If we take Hannah Arendt’s politics as a point of analysis for this definition, we see that it does not correspond to what politics is. Winner’s perception of politics narrows politics down to institutions or governments and defines the activities within politics as a struggle

for power and authority. Politics may include these when it comes to bureaucracy or governance, but the concept itself is way broader than that. As has been argued before, politics is *interaction*, sharing opinions, being with others, taking an initiative, doing something in this world and talking about it. This definition of politics may lead to an understanding of politics of technology that does not have a pre-determined role in society that is intrinsic to it, but something that has more to do in relation *with* and *to* the interactions of humans.

3.2.2 Andrew Feenberg

Another contemporary theory that the thesis will elaborate on is Andrew Feenberg and his concept of “subversive rationalization.” Feenberg, in his article *“Escaping the Iron Cage, or, Subversive Rationalization and Democratic Theory”* proposes user appropriations as a way to escape from Weber’s famous “iron cage”. He proposes subversive rationalization against Weberian notion of imposed rationalization to society by the institutions of technology that makes us unable to think different than a rationalizing and calculable manner. For Feenberg, “technology opens a space within which action can be functionalized in either one or two types of social systems, a technocratic system based on control from above and a democratic system in which control is increasingly exercised from below”. What he means is that, Weber, in his pessimistic view on technological institutions is right, but there is a way to open up that iron cage, which is by accepting the institutions of technological society but changing the definitions and rules of it from within.

He proposes subversive rationalization to change the rules of the dominant codes within technology while maintaining in the domain of the rules. (Feenberg, 1998: 5) These dominant codes would be what Feenberg calls “the technical codes” which are, “the realization of an interest or ideology in a technically coherent solution to a problem” (Feenberg 2005: 52 as cited in Verbeek: 2013:74). With subversive rationalization individuals or small groups in society can appropriate different technologies. Feenberg calls these user appropriations as “creative appropriations” and focuses on more organized public modifications on existing technologies through innovative applications.

(Feenberg, 1998:3)

These creative appropriations can take place like a public activity such as the AIDS patients who struggled for access to experimental drugs or it can be sum of individual appropriations. Another example to understand Feenberg's user appropriations would be his well-known case study of Minitel. In the early 1980's millions of Minitels were distributed by the French telephone company which were designed to look and feel like an adjunct to the domestic telephone with the intention of the access for information services. (Feenberg, 1995 as cited in Feenberg, 1999:126) Minitels aimed to provide a network for the users to talk to each other on the network. The aim was the distribution of information but soon the Minitel was redefined by its users, it gained a further redefinition at their hands as they employed it for anonymous on-line chatting with other users in the search for amusement, companionship, and sex. The functioning of the network was altered and inserted by its users where they introduced human communication. The engineers of Minitel designed it for improving the flow of information in French society but Minitel invited communications applications and those applications in turn connoted the Minitel as a means of personal encounter, the very opposite of the rationalistic project for which it was originally designed. The problem that Minitel was designed to solve was the distribution of technology, but it was addressed to another problem by its users; which is human communication. Through design changes, the new interpretation of the technology was combined into Minitel's structure and that ultimately caused a change in its very definition. (Feenberg, 1999:126)

Verbeek in his article "*Resistance is Futile: Toward a Non-Modern Democratization of Technology*" (2013) argues that Feenberg, with his subversive rationalization, does not address technology as a broad social or cultural phenomenon, like the classical philosophers of technology did but rather, he focuses on "actual technologies and their political workings". (Verbeek, 2013: 74) By referring to Feenberg's Minitel case study, Verbeek argues that Feenberg portrays human-technology relations in such cases as a struggle. Verbeek goes on arguing that this "model of struggle is not able to cover all politically relevant aspects of the interactions between humans and technologies." (Verbeek, 2013: 85) According to Verbeek:

“The actual impact of the Minitel system remains out of sight in this model of oppression-versus-resistance—after all, it was the ‘reconfigured’ Minitel system that introduced new forms of interaction and communication, and therefore it is this impact that deserves normative reflection in the first place.”(Verbeek, 2013:85)

Verbeek indicates that instead of struggling with the technologies or focusing on breaking the power of the elite, political activities regarding technologies should focus on “shaping our lives-with-technologies”. (Verbeek, 2013:85) For Verbeek, human beings cannot be understood in isolation from technology and vice versa. (Verbeek, 2013:77) That is why, in order to be able to talk about politics of technology, first, the relation between humans and technologies should be understood.

What Verbeek points out in his criticism on Feenberg is that instead of opposing technologies and humans to each other and understanding this relation as a struggle, one should try to understand the impact of technologies on our lives. With the Minitel example, we see that Feenberg’s position in analyzing human-technology relations perceives it as opponents of each other, thus oversees the dynamics of the interactions between the two. However, there is one other philosopher that seeks to understand the relation between humans and technology, Bruno Latour. The next section will focus on Latour’s radical resistance to modernist distinctions and his analysis of politics of technology, namely, *The Parliament of Things*.

3.2.3 Bruno Latour

Bruno Latour is an influential figure in analyzing human-technology relations. He tries to overcome the object-subject dichotomy that modernism imposed on us while looking at the world. His famous “Actor-Network Theory”, consists of human and non-human actors without any distinction among them. For example in a laboratory, a machine and the scientist are perceived as actors in a network-building process. Jan Harris in his article “*The ordering of things: Organization in Bruno Latour*” (2005) argues that what Latour points out to the organizational structure of scientific work and shows that is what we see in the development of a scientific work are chains which are associations of humans and non-humans constituting the network. (Harris, 2005: 165-168) Harris argues that for example when a scientific discovery is made, science claims that the nature revealed itself, the nature has spoken in a sense. But, he adds, for Latour, this nature that

science refers to, is just a “sum total of its repository of successfully consolidated facts, each of which could be decomposed into kinds of transactions between actants...” (Latour, 1987 as cited in Harris, 2005:167) So what science claims to be the speech of nature, is actually transactions, relations and interplays between objects and subjects.

Latour argues that we have never been modern. Scott Lash in his book “*Another Modernity, A Different Rationality*” argues that according to Latour, modernity systematically refused to consider the rights of the object because it is reluctant to think in terms of subject/object dualism. (Lash, 1999:269) This dualism entails that objects constitute the world and subjects (observers) perceive them. Modernity then, assumes a sharp division between human subjects and technological/material objects.

According to Scott Lash, Latour argues that modernity is nothing more than a mode of classification. For Latour, we have never been modern, namely we have always been in relation with objects, there had never been a subject, in a sense that “an all powerful human agent imposing his will on shapeless matter”. (Latour, 1994:38 as cited in Harris, 2005: 170) Harris argues that Latour, rather than a society, talks about “collectives” that are evolving with the interplays of humans and non-humans. (Harris, 2005:171) Aside from that, Latour also understands modernity, pre-modernity (predecessor of modernity) and non-modernity (successor of modernity) in terms of constitutions. Lash points out to the significance of Latour’s understanding of this mode of classification as constitutions since, this portrays that “these frameworks are not just about classifications and epistemology, but also about *political* representation”. (Lash, 1999:269)

Latour, instead of modernity’s object-subject dichotomy, takes the “quasi object” term from Michel Serres, which “reveals a mobile realm in which object and subject are moments in an originary aporia”. (Harris, 2005:172) Quasi object then, is determined by the exchanges between objects and subject throughout history. According to Harris, also our social relations revolve around these quasi objects. There is no sovereign among objects or subjects, Harris argues, the importance is the transaction that forms and maintains the relations. (Harris, 2005:172)

Latour, argues that there is a need for a new constitution where there is no distinction between humans and non-humans. Quasi objects should also have their righteous place in the parliament, but a parliament of things. Although Latour's book is called "*We Have Never been Modern*" he says, we have been modern, but we cannot be modern in the same way anymore. (Latour, 1993:142) If we cannot hold these dualisms anymore, if we cannot be modern in the same way we were, how would this parliament of things where there is no separation between things and humans would look like? What does this "parliament of things" correspond to then? Is Latour here talking about a parliament as we know it, or is it a bit more nuanced than that?

What Latour has in mind is, instead of protecting the modernist dualism, bringing the object and the subject closer to the middle. Here Latour makes a very interesting definition of the *Ecce Homo*, namely the human nature as: "delegated, mediated, distributed, mandated and uttered". (Latour, 1993:138) According to Lash, by using these political and epistemological terms and mingling them together, Latour tries to point out to the fact that the subject-object dualism of modernity is "most of all a separation of political practices on the one hand from epistemological activities on the other". (Lash, 1999:277) Here Lash argues that, according to Latour, there are two realms that haven't been fully separated by modernity yet.

These realms, which are science and the state, are still understood on very much the same model. Lash argues that:

"Hobbes' idea of the state was not just based in possessive individualism, but also, as Leo Strauss notably argued, grew from an episteme set by Galilean physics: the notion of things as atoms being generalized to citizens existing in mutual hostility in a force field. Thus for Hobbes the "calculation of human atoms" leads to the "contract" of "authorization granted by all citizens to a single one to speak in their name". (Lash, 1999:277)

According to Lash, here Latour's focus is, understanding how science takes up a political model? For Lash, Latour's assumption here is that, "for people and things to possess agency, they must be represented". (Lash, 1999:277)

According to Lash, Latour here then, perceives scientists to be the:

“translators, intermediaries, for the parliaments of the mutes in the lab, much in the same way that the sovereign translates or represents what citizens would have said on their own”. (Lash, 1999:277-278)

So, Lash continues, Latour here, “uses the political theory to argue for representation for the parliament of things”. (Lash, 1999:278)

The parliament of things then, is a space where decisions are taken in relation to a subject. This decision making process involves interactions among various stakeholders either present or represented in the parliament. However, this “parliament” does not necessarily have to be a formal actual space designed for this purpose but can be anywhere where various stakeholders come together for decision-making.

Coeckelbergh in his article “*The Public Thing*”(2009) takes up Latour’s Kyoto “conclave” example. This conclave consists of facts, concerns, scientists and politicians. The issue at hand that is global warming, brings forth the need of one collective since neither scientists nor politicians alone can resolve the problems at hand. According to Coeckelbergh, Latour proposes, this one collective, the assembly of humans and things “mobilizes, recruits and domesticates new non-humans”. (Latour 2005 as cited in: Coeckelbergh, 2009:178) In this collective, nature is no longer mute, there are spokespersons representing them, speaking is no longer specifically human, things are not just objects but they provide “value, animate actions and give form to humans”.(Latour, 2005 as cited in Coeckelbergh, 2009:178)

In this parliament of things, there are shifts in concepts and properties, change in language and this is a step necessary for us to face the truth, which is we have to learn to live together with non-humans and hear their voices. In this parliament of things, neither truths, nor naked citizens are represented, but hybrids of humans and non-humans, allowing technology to actually take a stance in the political debate.

Of course Latour’s radical challenge to the modernist dualism have its own critics. Winner for example, argues that Latour’s focus on the relations in the network made him blind to see the technological causes for societal or political change for example power games, however, Winner himself has to understand that there is more to politics than

mere power or authority games.

It is highly interesting to think about how our modern constitution influenced the way in which we look at politics and technologies. Latour's parliament of things is very inspiring to redefine politics and technology however, if we look at Latour's politics from Hannah Arendt's point of view, something remains problematic. For Latour, "for people and things to possess agency, they must be represented". (Lash, 1999:277) This points out to a narrow definition of politics that is only limited to representative democracy. If we look at Hannah Arendt's concept of politics, we see that politics is not about being represented, it is about representing one-self. Not being represented, but acting in the public space is the only way to assume agency for humans. But how would things act then? Do they act in the first place? In order to answer this question, now the thesis will turn to Post-phenomenology and Peter Paul Verbeek's Mediation Theory.

3.3 Things Do Things: Phenomenology, Post-phenomenology and Mediation Theory

Verbeek in his book "*What Things Do*" (2005) argues that the rise of phenomenology is an attempt to overcome the tension between idealism and realism where the former advocated that "the knowledge that we have of reality is a product of consciousness" (Verbeek, 2005: 109) and the latter argued that "the knowledge that we have of reality is a mirroring of the world itself." (Verbeek, 2005:109)

The most important concept that phenomenology paid attention to is intentionality. The concept of intentionality according to Husserl, points out that human consciousness is always a "consciousness-of-something", it is always directed to a phenomena (Verbeek, 2005:109). After Husserl, philosophers such as Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty broadened out phenomenology with an analysis of the "relation between humans and their world" and overcame the dichotomy between human and world and "replaced it with a mutual interrelation"(Verbeek, 2005:110) This focus on the relation between humans and their world pointed out Merleau-Ponty shows that humans continually experience their world, they have a constant relation with the world in which they realize themselves. (Verbeek, 2005:110) Phenomenology not only overcame the dichotomy of the human and the world but also established an alliance with existential philosophy providing an understanding of

human existence can only take place in the world because “this existence always takes place somewhere”. (Verbeek, 2005:111)

According to Verbeek, classical phenomenology in stressing the interrelatedness of humans and their world bridged the gap between subject and object but he adds, a new interpretation of this phenomenology can take this relationship further. For example Don-Ihde’s post-phenomenology, focuses on the relational character of human-world relations. Verbeek indicates that Don Ihde in his book “*Postphenomenology*” (1993 as cited in Verbeek 2005:112) uses the term post-phenomenology, “which revolves around the analysis of the perceptual aspects of the relation between human beings and their world”.(Verbeek, 2005:112) According to Verbeek, the relation between humans and their world is mediated through technology. Ihde points out to the fact that while mediating, technology transforms what we perceive and this transformation always happens through amplification and reduction. (Verbeek, 2006: 365) For example, if one looks at a tree with an infrared camera, most of the visible aspects of the tree to the naked eye cannot be seen anymore but another aspect of the tree becomes apparent. This example shows that the mediation of technologies amplify specific aspects of the tree while reducing other aspects of it. (Verbeek, 2006:365)

Verbeek argues that Ihde characterizes this mediating role of artifacts in terms of technological intentionality. (Ihde 1990, 141 quoted in Verbeek, 2005:115) This technological intentionality according to Ihde, have certain directionality. In his article “*Cyborg intentionality: Rethinking the phenomenology of human-technology relations*” Verbeek explains this directionality as;

“Because of the intentional structure of human experience... humans are always directed toward reality. They cannot simply “think” but they always think *something*; they cannot simply see “see”, but they always see “*something*”; they cannot simply “feel” but always feel “*something*”.” (Verbeek, 2008a:388)

So human beings cannot just exist in themselves in the world, they experience the world, and when this experience begins, argues Verbeek, humans have no choice but to be directed to the things that constitute their world. (Verbeek, 2008a: 388)

For example, the way we write takes shape according to the artifact we have around us. If we have a pen, we would write slowly and think about the sentences we compose several times, but if we had a typewriter, we would type faster and the sentences we produce would be closer to spoken language than the written one. (Verbeek, 2005:114-115) This example brings Verbeek to conclude that technologies such as the pen or the typewriter are not neutral tools that take shape in the hands of humans, they rather shape the relation between the text and the author promoting a specific kind of use. (Verbeek, 2005:115) The technologies however, does not claim a determinant role in the process of writing, of course one can write close to spoken language with a pen and also can write slowly and well-thought texts on a typewriter. But, Verbeek continues, these technologies promote a certain way of typing in relation to them. (Verbeek, 2005:115)

According to Verbeek, Ihde, distinguishes several types of intentionality that we can see in human-technology relations. They can be summed up as:

- 1) Embodiment Relation: Technologies that embody their users
- 2) Alterity Relation: Technologies that are terminus of human experience
- 3) Hermeneutic Relation: Technologies that provide representations of reality
- 4) Background Relation: Technologies that are not experienced directly but create a context for human perception. (Verbeek, 2008a:389)

For example, when we use a pair of glasses, they become an extension of our body, this would be the embodiment relation Ihde talks about. When we take cash from an ATM, we have an alterity relation with the technology or when we read how what is the degree outside, we see a representation of the heat we experience on a thermometer, this according to Verbeek constitutes the hermeneutic relation of us with the technology. The background relation that we have with technology can for example turning the Tv on with a remote or turning it off. (Verbeek, 2008a:389) Verbeek argues that when our intentional relation with the world is mediated, this always means that we codetermine how the subjectivity and objectivity is constituted. So, the intentionalities, determine how we can be present in the world and how the world can be present to us. (Verbeek, 2005:116)

According to Verbeek, technology can only be understood as “technology-in-order-to” (Verbeek, 2005:117) because technologies always function in practical, concrete contexts that cannot be separated from. (Verbeek, 2005:117)

Ihde names this context dependence of technologies as “multistability”, which argues that seeing one thing in different ways “produces different figures”.(Verbeek, 2005:118) According to Ihde, argues Verbeek, this being many things at once and being stable in multiple ways is the case when it comes to technologies too, namely, “one and the same artifact can have different identities in different use contexts.” (Verbeek, 2005:118)

However, Don-Ihde’s post-phenomenology focuses more on the technology side of human-world relations. Verbeek with his Mediation Theory, expands Don Ihde’s post-phenomenology which perceives human-world relations only as relations that take place between objects and subjects by adding that both the subjects who experience the world and the objects in the world co-shape one another. In his article “*Obstetric Ultrasound and the Technological Mediation of Morality: A Postphenomenological Analysis*”(2008b) Verbeek argues that post-phenomenology does not close the gap between subject and object only by constructing a bridge between them with intentionality but “by claiming that they constitute each other” (Verbeek:2008b:13)

Verbeek in his book “*Moralizing Technology, Understanding and Designing the Morality of Things*”(2011) argues that things-in-use are not neutral objects but they “actively co-shape people’s being-in-the world; their perceptions and actions, experience and existence”. (Verbeek, 2011:7-8) But then, how to understand these mediations? Verbeek provided a famous example to understand how mediation theory can be seen in simple technologies, like the obstetric ultrasound. In this example, Verbeek analyzes a scene where a pregnant lady goes to doctor for a check on the baby. He argues that there is a hermeneutic relation between the technology, doctor and the mother. Both the doctor and the mother are provided with a visual representation of fetus that is given through the device. Verbeek argues that, this example shows that there is a moral aspect to this certain technology. According to Verbeek:

“...a sonogram does not provide a neutral “window to the womb”—as a well-known pro-life movie is called, which makes intensive use of ultrasound imaging...but actively mediates how the unborn is given in human experience”. (Verbeek, 2008b:15)

With the obstetric ultrasound technology then, the unborn baby becomes an individual entity having various relations with the parents and the doctors.

First of all, the unborn becomes a person, the image that the ultrasound provides is not the exact size of the unborn in the mother’s womb. This representation makes the unborn visible as a newborn and isolates the unborn as a separate being from the mother.

(Verbeek, 2008b:15) For the doctors, the unborn becomes not only a person but also a potential patient. With the image provided by the sonogram, the doctors are able to detect if the unborn is carrying any symptoms of potential diseases.(Verbeek, 2008b:16)

Verbeek continues that, when the unborn is isolated from the mother, she shifts her privilege to know what is going on with the unborn from herself to the doctors, she leaves her special bond with the unborn. Aside from this, mother, rather than being in unity with the unborn is recognized as an environment where the unborn is growing. (Verbeek, 2008b:16-17)

The most important mediating role of this technology according to Verbeek, is the constitution of parents who are expecting a baby as decision-makers. If for example the ultrasound detects an anomaly in the unborn, the family may be encouraged to have abortion but on the other hand, even deciding on “we don’t want to know” is a decision for the parents. So Verbeek concludes, a simple innocent look at the womb of the mother constitutes various relations between the parents and the unborn and ends up in a decision-making process that the couples did not think of before. (Verbeek, 2008b:117)

Various examples of how technologies mediate our existence in the world have been portrayed until now. The world as it is present to us and us as we exist in the world is co-constituted, mediated by technologies. As we have seen especially with Verbeek’s mediation theory that things DO things.

3.5 Conclusion: Towards a new Understanding in Politics of Technology: Hannah Arendt and Mediation Theory

In this chapter, I have provided an overview of major approaches in politics of technology. Heidegger as a classical philosopher of technology and Winner, Feenberg and Latour as contemporary philosophers of technology, differentiated from each other in their analysis of society and technology relations but they either did not give technology its righteous position in society, or they gave it so much power that society loses its significance. If we take Hannah Arendt's political theory as a departure point, we can also understand what politics of technology can be beyond governance, struggle or representation as well.

After portraying the problematic aspects of the classical philosophy of technology and contemporary philosophy of technology in relation to politics, I turned to post-phenomenology and Verbeek's mediation theory in order to provide a righteous understanding of human-technology relations. By emphasizing the co-shaping structure of human-technology relations, Verbeek's theory provides a framework for a better understanding these intertwined relations between humans and technologies. Although this theory of technological mediation very well understands our mediated individual experience of the world, it has been criticized for leaving the political dimension underexposed (cf. Feenberg,2009)

Verbeek's mediation theory fits very well to take one step further in an Arendtian politics of technology. Verbeek's theory argues that "things do things" and according to Arendt, politics can only be realized with doing something, with acting and speaking. However, there is one challenge to the issue at hand. Even though Verbeek's mediation theory, gives technology its righteous place in human-world relations, the theory too individualistic. It does not take into account the fact, like Arendt puts it; "men, not man, live and inhabit the world" in other words, the theory does not take into account that humans that are always in relation to technology, is also, always in relation to other humans.

If, as mediation theory suggests, we cannot understand the human being in isolation to technology, we also cannot understand the human being in isolation to other human beings.

In international relations, the first thing that one learns about politics and freedom is that even in “state” level, you need recognition. So, it is not enough for a state to be free or sovereign just to declare independence but that independence has to be recognized by others. Just like this, human experience by itself alone has no significance if it is not seen or heard by others. I propose here then, an expansion, a new branch in mediation theory inspired by Hannah Arendt to understand the political mediations of technologies. Although providing this framework is not in the scope of this thesis, it may still be regarded as a proposal of a framework for further inspection.

In the context of what has been said above, in the next section, I will investigate *if* and *how* things do things according to Hannah Arendt.

IV. The Technological Mediations in Arendt's Work

In this section of the thesis, I will investigate the role of technology that is already present in Arendt's work. The reason for this search is that, in the previous chapter, I argued that the classical approach to technology perceives it as a danger to society, imposing its own logic to strands of social life, the contemporary approach has a different view on the impact of technology but it is also limited to either understanding politics as ideology and technology neutral, or limiting politics to representative democracy or governance.

I also had the chance to read different approaches on Hannah Arendt's concept of the political, and how it might help to understand the politics-technology relations. I was disappointed however, with the fact that again, politics was limited to governance or representation, which is different than what Hannah Arendt argues.

In her book *The Human Condition*, Arendt investigates the conditions that make politics possible. That is, the human condition of action, which includes human plurality. According to Arendt, action is the only condition that can make politics possible. Below, I will provide an analysis of how this human condition of action is related to technologies or the materiality of the world. This whole analysis is based upon two main arguments; first, I argue that Hannah Arendt's human condition of action and work are interdependent. Without the work of the *homo faber* politics is not possible. Second, by providing the world as it is, *homo faber* also creates the conditions for politics to take place. It might be the *zoon politikon* who acts and speaks, but the realm in which *zoon politikon* expresses him/herself is the realm created by the *homo faber*.

Hannah Arendt already starts talking about the interdependent relation between things and the human condition in the beginning of her book "*The Human Condition*". She indicates that;

"The impact of the world's reality upon human existence is felt and received as a conditioning force. The objectivity of the world-its object or thing character- and the human condition supplement each other because human existence is conditioned existence, it would be impossible without things, and things would be a heap of unrelated articles, a non-world, if they were not the conditioners of human existence. (Arendt, 1958:9)

What Arendt argues in this passage above is that, there is indeed interdependency between the human condition and the world itself. Here it is important to understand that for Arendt, world and earth are not the same. When she talks about a world, she talks about an objective world of man-made objects.

Canovan argues that this world-earth distinction in Arendt points out to the “home that men have made for themselves” to live and “the natural environment which they belong to” as biological creatures. (Canovan, 1995:106) For Arendt, there are two aspects of human beings, on the one hand we are biological creatures with biological needs as a member of animal species, on the other hand, human beings do create the conditions of life that is naturally given to them, by constructing a “world of their own over and above the natural earth”. (Canovan,1995: 106) That is why, world, which humans constructed themselves is not the natural earth. This also relates back to Arendt’s understanding of nature which is not only cyclical evolving around birth, death, growth and decay but also imposing itself on humans. For this reason, human beings build a world of stable things, which would stand, and protect them against this cycle of “biological movement”. (Canovan,1995: 107)

Without the world however, human beings would not be able to know others, only with the stability of the human world, human beings can appear as distinct individuals. (Canovan, 106) Because “men, live and inhabit the world” they need tangible things like houses, artifacts and a stable environment. Canovan argues that, if human beings don’t inhabit a man-made world as well as living on the natural earth, it is unlikely for human beings to be fully human since then, they would not have a space for appearance. (Canovan, 1995:107)

This space however does not exist in nature in itself, it is artificial and durable, created by transforming nature into durable things which can outlast human lives. The world, which humans share with others, not only gives humans a space to express themselves as distinct individuals, but also allows them to perceive others’ positions and “see their world from different points of view” (Canovan,1995: 107)

This “world” which is the work of *homo faber* and its relation to human condition of action is the main concern of this section. It is very interesting to observe in Arendt that, while she makes it very clear that man-made world is the necessary condition for action to take place in her book, she also argues that action is the only activity that takes place between men without the intermediary of things. It is surprising that; she oversees her own argument about this interdependent relationship between the world and human condition of action. In the following sections I will analyze this relation further.

4.1 Arendt and her critique on Modernity

Arendt in her prologue to her book “*The Human Condition*” talks about the first man-made object which challenged the limits of the earth and been sent to the universe, circling the earth according to the physical laws. This man-made object is the satellite Sputnik which was sent to the universe in 1957. For Arendt, this event was one of the most important events of the 20th century since for the first time, mankind was able to look at the “earth from a cosmic perspective.” (Arendt, 1958: XV) This launch of the satellite, also was the first step for human beings for the first time in history to “escape from men’s imprisonment to the earth” as one of Russia’s great scientists said. (Arendt, 1958:1)

Arendt thinks that the reason for this will to escape the earth, is the result of rapid scientific advancement where science accomplished things that humans were not capable of imagining and human beings were not only fast to adjust to those developments, they were also outsped them. (Arendt, 1958:1) This for Arendt, is an important will, since for her the earth, is the “quintessence of human condition”. (Arendt, 1958:2) We create the world of man-made objects to shelter us and separate us from animals but we are always related to other living organisms. (Arendt,1958:2)

These new scientific developments can lead to a destruction of all organic life around us, the question whether we want to do this or not for Arendt is not a scientific but a political question. (Arendt, 1958:3) The reason for these scientific developments to assume a political significance for Arendt is that these scientific developments present a “truth”.

This “truth” does not need speech or thought to demonstrate themselves as truths anymore, they can be proven to be true mathematically or technologically. The loss of speech for Arendt can cause us to be the dwellers in this earth, we can do things, but we would not be able to speak about them. Humanity did not reach this point yet Arendt argues, but it can lead to humans needing machinery to do the thinking and speaking for them.

The possible loss of speech is of political significance for Arendt since it is “speech..what makes man a political being”. (Arendt, 1958:3) The question arises here then is what made Arendt think that these scientific developments would lead to a loss of speech? What is it that made Arendt start her book on Human Condition with a technological advancement? The answer to this question lies in her criticism on modernity.

For Arendt, the invention of the telescope is among the most influential three great events of modernity. The discovery of America, Reformation and the invention of telescope according to Arendt, determined the character of the modern age. This invention, followed by the development of a new science, changed the way we think and act and this change did not reach its final point for Arendt, it still continues. (Arendt, 1958:248) With the telescope, humans started looking at the globe through an instrument, which was adjusted to human senses for them to be able to grasp what is beyond vision, it created a new vision, a new understanding of the earth and the beyond. (Arendt, 1958:257-258) With this invention of Galileo, the unknown, the universe, was made possible to be perceived by humans with their sensory perceptions, “with the certainty of sense-perception” (Arendt, 1958:260) humans, the earth-bound creatures with their body-bound senses have discovered an Archimedean point to look at what was speculation and imagination to them. (Arendt, 1958:261)

Arendt argues that with the telescope, we realized that our senses could indeed betray us and we cannot reach reality with our bodily senses. It also made possible the Archimedean wish for a point outside the earth to solve the mysteries of it. After this discovery of the Archimedean point that was made possible by the telescope, in whatever we do today in physics, Arendt continues, “we always handle nature from a point in the universe outside the earth”. (Arendt, 1958:262)

This technology then, enabled humans to act on earth “within the terrestrial nature as though we dispose of it from outside...” (Arendt, 1958:262) We started thinking and seeing that neither earth nor the sun is the centers of the universe. We are not bound to anything, not even the sun, we move freely in the universe. This, Arendt concludes, caused a shift in the geocentric worldview to a heliocentric worldview. (Arendt, 1958:263)

With the discovery of this Archimedean point, human beings were able to map the earth’s lands, where every river, every mountain lies became known. This mapping of the whole earth, for Arendt, made it possible for humans to know where what is, and this caused shrinkage in the world. (Arendt, 1958:250) She continues:

“...effective shrinkage which comes about through the surveying capacity of the human mind, whose use of numbers, symbols, and models can condense and scale earthly physical distance down to the size of the human body's natural sense and understanding. Before we knew how to circle the earth, how to circumscribe the sphere of human habitation in days and hours, we had brought the globe into our living rooms to be touched by our hands and swirled before our eyes.” (Arendt, 1958:251)

This modern scientific change in the worldview, and the earth becoming smaller for us in terms of distance also caused a change in human’s perception of the world. Only with these new developments human beings were able to establish themselves not as earthly beings but “universal” beings. This perception, that recognizes humans as universal beings, transformed humans from an inhabitant of a country, of a city, of a land to an inhabitant of the world. This has a very negative meaning for Arendt in contrary to what we would think as a positive change. The reason for Arendt’s discontent lies in her conviction that if humans disentangle themselves from the close at hand, if they are not involved and not concerned with their surroundings, they would withdraw themselves from everything near them. (Arendt, 1958: 251)

Aside from the telescope, there was another technology that caused the shrinkage of the earth according to Arendt. That technology is the airplane. For Arendt, airplane allowed people to travel far distances in a short time and this was done for the price of “putting a decisive distance between man and earth” (Arendt, 1958:251). This advancement caused humans to be alienated from their “immediate surroundings”. (Arendt, 1958:251)

Against Marx's famous self-alienation thesis, Arendt argues that the hallmark of the modern age is the world alienation of human not self alienation. According to Arendt, this world alienation happens from the earth into the universe and from the world into the self. (Arendt, 1958:6) World alienation occurred because, humans started concerning themselves with the unknown, the places that they did not see and been on instead of concerning about their neighborhood and their own community.

Galileo's telescope not only was the pioneer of the world alienation but also "the earth alienation". This second type of alienation is the emergence of a new science and the rise of Cartesian doubt in philosophy.

Earth alienation, according to Arendt is not just looking at the world but also acting on it, dominating it, reducing the world into mathematical calculations, not waiting for the nature to reveal itself but manipulating it with experiments. Here, Arendt shows a very Heideggerian approach to the impact of technology. Heidegger also believes that nature, brings itself forth, reveals itself and humans by manipulating it, reduces it to something like a standing reserve, something ready-at-hand to be used when it is necessary. With this new world-view human beings started instrumentalizing nature and Arendt seems to base her earth alienation thesis on this idea of Heidegger.

Arendt argues that while world alienation became the hallmark of modern society, earth alienation became the hallmark of modern science that we continue to observe even today. (Arendt, 1958:264) Arendt indicates that:

"Only we, and we only for hardly more than a few decades, have come to live in a world thoroughly determined by a science and a technology whose objective truth and practical know-how are derived from cosmic and universal, as distinguished from terrestrial and "natural," laws, and in which a knowledge acquired by selecting a point of reference outside the earth is applied to earthly nature and the human artifice." (Arendt, 1958:268)

This discovery of the Archimedean point enabled humans to create their own stars Arendt says referring to the satellites, humans created their own heavenly bodies where they constantly examine and look beyond their imagination.

According to Arendt, these developments caused a change in the word “universal”, in this new world, this word according to Arendt, gained a meaning as “valid beyond our solar system”. For Arendt, the word “universal” is not the only word that had a change in meaning in light of the new developments in sciences. The word “absolute” also gained a new meaning with its use next to time, speed or motion. This word now, began to indicate relative, since “everything happening on earth has become relative since the earth's relatedness to the universe became the point of reference for all measurements.” (Arendt, 1958: 270)

With this new science Arendt indicates, for the first time in history, science and philosophy are separated from each other radically. (Arendt, 1958:272) This separation started with Descartes’s philosophy, a philosophy that its emergence was almost inescapable if one understands the implications of the modern world. (Arendt, 1958:277) The Cartesian doubt, emerged as a result of this modern world-view. Cartesian doubt, doubts the reality itself, it does not trust neither the human senses nor the reason. Nothing can be trusted to be the truth, we cannot be certain of anything. Arendt argues that Descartes was convinced that “though our mind is not the measure of things or of truth, it must assuredly be the measure of things that we affirm or deny” (Arendt, 1958:279) This idea of Descartes influenced modern scientists and enabled them to understand man as the measure of all things, even though there is not truth or certainty, man can be truthful and reliable. (Arendt, 1958:279)

This new man, the measure of all things, is involved only with himself, the objective reality of the world, dissolves into a subjective state of mind. Arendt indicates that this Cartesian doubt caused humans “as an *animal rationale*” to acquire “a terrible precision: deprived of the sense through which man's five animal senses are fitted into a world common to all men, human beings are indeed no more than animals who are able to reason”. (Arendt, 1958:284) The truth demonstrated by the technologies is not more than a demonstration that the results of man’s mind can be applied to real world objects. (Arendt, 1958:287)

It is important to ask the question why are these new scientific and philosophical worldviews are so important for Arendt? What is the significance of this technological advancement in modern times in relation to politics itself?

The answer is very clear for Arendt. These scientific developments caused a reversal within the hierarchy of Vita Activa. This new science undermined the status of contemplation, truth became something that cannot be found in engaging with deep thought, it became something that can only be found by doing things. Canovan argues that one might expect that an active life to have more value in light of this new worldview caused by the new sciences.(Canovan, 1992: 152) But the opposite happened. The value attained to an active life by the new sciences was not referring to what Arendt calls action, but was referring to the lowest human condition within the hierarchy of Vita Activa, that is labour.

Arendt starts to unravel this reversal within Vita Activa with explaining the victory of *homo faber* since for her, *homo faber* was the first triumphant of this reversal. The work of *homo faber* was valuable since with this creativity and talent to turn what is natural into objects, was essential to trap nature and make experiments. (Canovan, 1992: 152) The problem here according to Arendt is not the fact that *homo faber*'s creation of worldly objects, since that is what *homo faber* does to provide a stable and durable environment for humans, the problem is, *homo faber* with the new world view, repeats endlessly what he creates where there is no use for it. Not the ideas, models or shapes to come were the concern but the process in which these artifacts are realized. (Arendt, 1958:300) *Homo faber* according to Arendt is utilitarian and manipulates nature, produces and creates materials from it, and the value of these products could only be measured with their utility. The problem here is, with the new world view, this concept of valuing things according to their utility was transferred to valuing the process that brings these objects into being. If, Arendt continues, these worldly objects are not valued in terms of their usefulness but unintended results of a production process, then the end result of the production process that is the product itself loses its all meaning. (Arendt, 1958:308)

This leads to a new definition of *homo faber* and turns him/her into the builder of human artifice who accidentally invents tools rather than being *homo faber*, the maker of objects. If this principle of utility of *homo faber* is applied not the worldly objects but to the production process, it turns the definition of what useful is towards things that stimulate productivity and lessens pain and effort. So the standard measurement shifts from utility or usage to happiness, “that is, the amount of pain and pleasure experienced in the production or consumption of things”. (Arendt, 1958:309)

This leads to a translation of *homo faber*’s values into the values of *animal laborans*, the subjective experiences, the pain and pleasure of humans, in other words, the “sheer biological life, becomes the highest good”. (Canovan, 1992:153)

The victory of *animal laborans* according to Hannah Arendt, was not only a result caused by the new scientific developments or the Cartesian doubt but also by the influence of Christianity. Cartesian doubt, caused humans to doubt even their own existence, humans were withdrawn from the world itself, when this is combined with the appropriation of the eternal life, the life beyond the world, then the immortality that humans seek with their public performance of deeds and public speaking of words loses all of its value. So action, loses its high rank within the hierarchy of *vita activa*, and *animal laborans*, declares its victory. (Canovan, 1992:153)

But then, what does it bring us to? The victory of *animal laborans*, brought the rise of the social, that is the last stage of the laboring society, the society of jobholders. (Canovan, 1992:153) The problem with the victory of *animal laborans* according to Arendt is that, labor, is an anti-political activity. While laboring, humans are neither with the world, nor with one another but alone with their body, taking care of necessities. *Animal laborans*, of course is living in a world where others are present, but one cannot call this human plurality, it is rather like eating and drinking in company of others. (Arendt, 1958: 212-213) Laboring, is same to all, a society, where everybody labors and consumes leads to an experience of laboring together, “where the biological rhythm of labor unites the group of laborers to the point that each may feel that he is no longer an individual but actually one with all others.” (Arendt, 1958:214)

In the society of *animal laborans*, all individuality is submerged in the “over-all life process of the species.” (Canovan, 1992:153) With the victory of *animal laborans*, where there is no plurality but sameness, Arendt’s biggest fear, mass society comes to existence.

The new scientific developments, the rise of Cartesian doubt and Christianity led to the marginalization human beings, they ended up turning into a species of animal. Canovan argues that whole modernity critique of Arendt, is related to her reading of totalitarianism. Totalitarianism for Arendt, was “an entirely characteristic product of modernity”. (Canovan, 1992:154) What Arendt calls for in her entire book, repeatedly is to realize the human condition of plurality instead of modernity’s homogeneity. It is plurality that enables humans to appear as a unique individual instead of a species of animals. Humans escape their lonely imagination and experience reality in a world that is shared with others and even build the world among each other. When humans are with one another, they are not doomed to mortality but there is always someone remembering and passing on their story. (Canovan, 1992:154) That is why, for Arendt, the Greek Polis is of great importance because it is the world, where human plurality is actualized.

4.2 Arendt and The Greek Polis

Throughout the *Human Condition*, Arendt goes back and forth to the ancient Greek Polis, which is also interpreted as a nostalgia for a better world. For the sake of this thesis, the focus will be given to the material aspect of Greek Polis in Arendt’s thought and how it is related to politics itself. The Greek polis Arendt provides examples from is a Pre-Socratic city-state, before Plato and Aristotle. In the Greek polis, citizens are enjoying their freedoms such as freedom of speech and thought. Canovan, argues that this freedom of speech is not freedom expression as we would understand today but, freedom to “grasp reality by moving about between the different perspectives from which plural men view their common world”. (Canovan, 1992:112-113)

For Arendt, plurality is the condition where reality can be experienced, where there is plurality, there is different, various standpoints, if this many sidedness is lost according to Arendt, reality is lost. (Canovan, 1992:113) Reality, can only be disclosed, in the space, formed by discourse between plural men. (Canovan, 1992:116)

The political realm then, arises directly out of public performance of deeds and public speaking of words, in other words, from acting together.

Arendt indicates that action, is the only activity that constitutes the public part of the world. However, I would like to draw attention to this passage from the Human Condition below:

“Action...is as though the wall of the *polis* and the boundaries of the law were drawn around an already existing public space which, however, without such stabilizing protection could not endure, could not survive the moment of action and speech itself.”(Arendt, 1958:198)

Here Arendt makes one of her controversial analogies and she argues that with action, one defines a place to be public. It seems that, for a space to be public, one does not need the signs, don't need the walls, but the content of that space, if it is action, if men gather together for public performance of deeds and public speaking of words, that space becomes public. She continues as:

“The *polis*, properly speaking, is not the city-state in its physical location; it is the organization of the people as it arises out of acting and speaking together, and its true space lies between people living together for this purpose, no matter where they happen to be...that action and speech create a space between the participants which can find its proper location almost any time and anywhere. It is the space of appearance in the widest sense of the word, namely, the space where I appear to others as others appear to me, where men exist not merely like other living or inanimate things but make their appearance explicitly.” (Arendt, 1958:198-199)

This account of polis or the public space provides room for understanding the public space as a space of appearance where men gather and discourse. But, Arendt also makes it explicit that there should be a physical divide to the polis as well. She even argues that: “the organization of polis is secured by the wall around the city....” (Arendt, 1958:198). So there should be a physical demarcation between the public and the private sphere. It is not that where everyman gather and discourse is a public space, there is a physical, material aspect to it. Without the materiality, a world of stable durable things, action, or public space would not be possible in the first place. Arendt describes the work of *homo faber* and action separately, but actually they are intertwined.

She even mentions the importance of these human activities for each other in a passage herself as:

“Without being talked about by men and without housing them, the world would not be a human artifice but a heap of unrelated things to which each isolated individual was at liberty to add one more object; without the human artifice to house them, human affairs would be as floating, as futile and vain, as the wanderings of nomad tribes.” (Arendt, 1958: 204)

Without the humans to inhabit or be spoken about by humans, world is not a world and without the human artifice, humans are not citizens, not plural since they would not have a place in common to relate them. This passage and the significance of it will become clear in the next section of the thesis that will try to unravel Arendt’s table analogy.

4.3 Arendt and The Table

As mentioned before, it is very important for Arendt to make a distinction between the private and the public realms of the world. In “The Human Condition” Arendt argues that “the term public signifies the world itself...it is common to us all and distinguished from our privately owned place in it”. (Arendt, 1958:52)

The public realm then, is a space that we share with others, where we live with others. Arendt argues that this living together in the world means that there is a world of things between men who have the world in common, “like a table” she continues, “those who sit around it, the world like every in-between relates and separates men at the same time”. (Arendt, 1958:52)

So the world, with its materiality, like a table, or a building, is the space that relates us to each other. The significance of this analogy becomes apparent when Arendt continues;

“...where a number of people gathered around a table might suddenly, through some magic trick, see the table vanish from their midst, so that two persons sitting opposite each other were no longer separated but also would be entirely unrelated to each other by anything tangible.” (Arendt, 1958:53)

If there is nothing tangible between separate human beings, which is not changing, the relations that we set to each other to make action possible would vanish, there would be no relation therefore no action.

I find this analogy highly interesting to understand why and how materiality is so important for action to take place. If we look at “the table”, the material artificial square, rectangular or round shaped thing, we see that, the thing assigns certain roles to each individual who sit around it. The content of action and speech is directed toward the person who sits across one around the table, but the table mediates the way in which you present yourself, do your deeds and say your words. Arendt indicates in another passage in “The Human Condition” that;

“Action and speech go on between men, as they are directed toward them, and they retain their agent-revealing capacity even if their content is exclusively "objective," concerned with the matters of the world of things in which men move, which physically lies between them and out of which arise their specific, objective, worldly interests. These interests constitute, in the word's most literal significance, something which *interest*, which lies between people and therefore can relate and bind them together. Most action and speech is concerned with this in-between, which varies with each group of people, so that most words and deeds are *about* some worldly objective reality in addition to being a disclosure of the acting and speaking agent.” (Arendt, 1958:182)

The worldly things like the table or a chair or a mug can influence or even determine the content of the action and speech because it relates human beings to one another. Even though Arendt here tries to emphasize the agent-revealing capacity of action, she also- maybe without intention- points out to the fact that content of action can also be determined by the material things. However, in Arendt’s understanding of politics, this aspect of action is not the main concern, it is the second aspect of action. The other aspect of action Arendt is mainly concerned with is speech and action that goes directly between men. It is the words or the deeds only, without relating back to anything tangible. This type of action was defined before in the section of public realm of the thesis, relies on remembrance and story telling. The process of acting and speaking does not produce tangible, durable things like the work of *homo faber* does, but it produces stories, rising from the public space itself.

It may seem that Arendt oversees the significance and mediating role of materiality, she does not, but she did not elaborate on it. She was more concerned with emphasizing the importance of human plurality as an anti-thesis to totalitarianism.

4.4 Conclusion

According to Margaret Canovan, Arendt's *Human Condition* should be read as an anti-thesis for Totalitarianism. It is apparent throughout her work, everything she talks about refers back to the importance and necessity of human plurality. It is essential to understand this aspect of action and politics that is without plurality, none of them is possible.

Human plurality is the pre-condition for politics according to Arendt. There is also another pre-condition, which Arendt gives hints about, but does not elaborate on, that is technology or world consisting of man-made objects.

The relation between politics or action and man made objects is stronger than she portrays in her whole work. If one looks careful enough, it is apparent in her work how important technology is. It is technology, the telescope that changed our world-view, through these technologies we opened up the mysteries of nature and the unknown. She presents a gloomy picture painted by technologies in her world and earth alienation theses but still, it is nothing, but the technologies, mediated and transformed the way in which we perceive reality and the world.

Aside from this alienating aspect of technology or man-made objects, they constitute the tangible, durable human world. Without a durable human world, there would be no place for humans to speak and act. Like the walls of the Greek Polis, or the table we sit around, we need these material aspects to provide at least a demarcation between the private and public realms of the world. It is the public space, the polis itself, is the place that gathers humans, relates them around a common cause, and separates them, gives them their own place with their unique identities in this common place. So, according to Arendt, technologies *do* something.

V. Conclusion

In this thesis, I looked at what politics is from Hannah Arendt's perspective and in order to be able to give technologies their righteous place in relation to politics. I asked the question: *To what extent can we materialize Hannah Arendt's political theory?*

In order to be able to answer that question, first I unraveled what politics is according to Arendt. However, it was a challenging task. Hannah Arendt's radical categories such as labor, work and action that corresponds to three main activities of the human condition, or her insistence on the public/private distinction is all point out to one exercise she carries through her work, namely *thinking what we are doing*. (Arendt, 1958:5) In this sense, *The Human Condition* is not a book that guides us towards an understanding what a life devoted to politics, namely *vita activa* should be, but a manifestation of a challenge directed towards all the mainstream definitions of human, labor, work, action...etc.

For Arendt, *vita activa*, includes three forms of human conditions that are labor, work and action. In the hierarchy within the *vita activa*, action holds the highest rank since only action corresponds to the human condition of plurality. Only through action, we reveal who we are, grasp reality and perceive opinions of others. While work or labor can be exercised in isolation, action requires being with others. That is why, action can only take place in a public realm, a realm that is shared with other humans. What politics is according to Arendt then, is appearing in front of others, revealing who we are, hearing others, listening to their opinions, experiencing reality, understanding the world the same as others but also being different than them in our own position in it. So in other words, politics is *interaction*, doing something about this world and talking about it.

On the other hand, in order to understand the significance of technology in relation to politics I looked at major philosophers of technology who focused on unraveling this relation. Feenberg (1992) for example, shows how small groups or individuals can appropriate technologies through subversive rationalization; the conditions of agency attributed to technology are determined by public interventions. Langdon Winner on the other hand, in his article "Do Artifacts have politics?" (1986), argues that political ideologies are embedded or inscribed in technologies, allowing them to be inherently

political. And Bruno Latour writes of a *Parliament of Things* (1993) in which neither truths, nor naked citizens are represented, but hybrids of humans and non-humans, allowing technology to actually take a stance in the political debate. Most of these approaches seek to find their explanation either in human politics, regarding technology merely as an obstacle or tool, or in technology, rendering it either being intrinsically political or having actual political agency. Aside from that, the definition of what politics is according to these thinkers is either limited to representation and power games or a struggle for agency. We should, however, look for the political significance of technology in the relation between humans and their world.

That is why I turned to mediation theory since, mediation theory understands very well humans mediated experience of the world. By arguing that, “things do things” Verbeek’s theory unravels the complex intertwined relationship between humans and technologies. However, mediation theory in analyzing human-technology relations focuses only on human not humans. The theory does not take into account the fact, like Arendt puts it; “men, not man, live and inhabit the world” in other words, humans that are always in relation to technology, is also, always in relation to other humans. If, as mediation theory suggests, we cannot understand the human being in isolation to technology, we also cannot understand the human being in isolation to other human beings.

In the last section of the thesis then, I asked if we can find technological mediations in Arendt’s work? Does she indeed recognize the significance of materiality in her political theory? If she does, how does she understand that relationship between materiality and politics?

The relation between politics or action and man made objects is stronger than she portrays in her whole work. It is technology, the telescope that changed our world-view, through these technologies we opened up the mysteries of nature and the unknown. The technologies she presents and even argues for, mediated and transformed the way in which we perceive reality and the world. Arendt perceives the role of technologies in the sense of the telescope alienating. According to Arendt, these new technological advancements alienated humans from their immediate surroundings.

But aside from this alienating aspect, according to Arendt, technologies or man-made objects, constitute the tangible, durable human world. Without a durable human world, there would be no place for humans to speak and act. Like the walls of the Greek Polis, or the table we sit around, we need this materiality to provide at least a demarcation between the private and public realms of the world. It is the public space, the polis itself, is the place that gathers humans, relates them around a common cause, and separates them, gives them their own place with their unique identities in this common place.

Arendt, with her example of the table or the Greek polis points out to this role and importance of materiality but then she does not elaborate on it. There has to be a wall, around the Greek polis, to make a difference, to allow men to gather in a specific place for their performances of their deeds and speaking of their words. So the walls of the Greek polis, *does* something, it separates the public from the private.

It is the table, that relates people who sit around them, they put something on the table metaphorically, a discussion topic, that brings them together around that table, and because they are seated in different seats, as different individuals, the table also separates them. So the table also *does* something, it gathers people around it, it relates them and separates them.

To conclude, materiality and technologies play a significant role in Hannah Arendt's concept of politics. The interdependence of action and work stems from the fact that, without the work of the *homo faber* that creates the world, action is not possible. Action presupposes a public realm to take place. There has to be a physical demarcation in the world that signifies that a place is a public space. That is why, without the "walls of the Greek polis", a space cannot be a public space. However, a space does not become a public space because it has walls, it becomes a public space, if it gathers people, relates and separates them, like Arendt explains with her table analogy.

It would be fair then, to argue that according to Arendt, things DO things. The wall around the Greek polis separates it from the private space, the table relates and separates people who gather around it.

Arendt perceives human plurality to be the pre-condition of politics. I argue that, Arendt's theory of politics, also needs to recognize that, *materiality* is also the *pre-condition of politics*. Maybe Arendt did not elaborate on this matter herself but it is important for further research on Arendt to understand that Arendt's political action is dependent on and always takes shape through materiality.

This approach then, might be helpful for further research to understand the political significance of contemporary technologies.

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