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# World at the Border: The Cosmopolitan Ideal between Loss and Multiplication<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

Throughout the history of political thought, cosmopolitanism has been inseparable from the problem of the border. In principle, the subjectivity cosmopolitanism gives rise to is based on an indifference towards – if not the effacement of – borders. A closer look, however, reveals some complications. The border returns both as a condition of possibility and a condition of impossibility of the cosmopolitan ideal. In his writings on cosmopolitanism, Immanuel Kant warned against the establishment of a global political power and claimed that a peaceful cosmopolitan condition can only be attained by an agreement between separated independent states.<sup>2</sup> Due to the dangerous concentration of power within a potential universal monarchy, he considered the existence of borders between states (despite being the cause of endless wars) to be a condition of possibility for any kind of peaceful coexistence between peoples in the future (when reason finally prevails). For Kant, the persistence of borders is compensated for by universal hospitality, i.e. the right to not be treated with hostility upon arrival across a border. A century and a half later, Hannah Arendt declared that the unification of the world, which for Kant was still an ideal, had become an “inescapable fact.”<sup>3</sup> But as humanity comes together in the “One World”, the figure of the stateless migrant or refugee puts the cosmopolitan ideal to a test that it does not pass.<sup>4</sup> Outside of state protection, people are denied their rights and face the

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<sup>2</sup> Immanuel Kant, “Toward Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch”, trans. D. L. Colclasure, in P. Kleingeld (ed.), *Toward Perpetual Peace and Other Writings on Politics, Peace, and History*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2006, pp. 91–92.

<sup>3</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, San Diego, Harcourt Brace & Co., 1979, p. 298.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 297.

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ultimate exclusion of being “deprived of expression within and action upon a common world.”<sup>5</sup> The world as a political ideal is held up at the border.

Another reversal followed in the last couple of decades when cosmopolitanism re-emerged in political theory not as an ideal of peaceful unification, but as an actual condition of marginal subjectivities. After the universal values of the Enlightenment, which constituted the core of modern cosmopolitanism, were subjected to postcolonial critique, new kinds of “cosmopolitics” emerged, based precisely on the struggles of the peoples that modern universalisms have excluded. In the introduction to their volume *Cosmopolitanism*, Sheldon Pollock, Homi K. Bhabha, Carol A. Breckenridge, and Dipesh Chakrabarty write that the “cosmopolitanism of our times does not spring from the capitalized ‘virtues’ of Rationality, Universality, and Progress,” but resides in the experience of refugees, migrants, and peoples of diasporas, who now “represent the spirit of the cosmopolitical community.”<sup>6</sup> In a similar vein, Michel Agier has developed an anthropology of “ordinary cosmopolitanism”, which sees the world no longer as a political ideal but as a problematic non-place inhabited by displaced people:

Persons in displacement may well be in the process of living an experience more universal than it might appear, beyond the categories, classes and nationalities that are involved today. Even if they find themselves “on the margin”, they enable us to anticipate a way of being-in-the-world that globalization is tending to generalize. In this conception, cosmopolitanism is not the monopoly of a globalized elite. On the contrary, it is the experience of the roughness of the world by all those who, by taste, necessity or compulsion, by desire or by habit, are led to live in several places almost simultaneously and, in the absence of ubiquity, to live increasingly in mobility, even in an in-between.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 302.

<sup>6</sup> Sheldon Pollock, Homi K. Bhabha, Carol A. Breckenridge, and Dipesh Chakrabarty, “Cosmopolitanisms”, in C. A. Breckenridge, S. Pollock, H. K. Bhabha, and D. Chakrabarty (eds.), *Cosmopolitanism*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2002, p. 6.

<sup>7</sup> Michel Agier, *Borderland: Towards an Anthropology of the Cosmopolitan Condition*, trans. D. Fernbach, Cambridge, Polity, 2016, pp. xiii–ix.

In this article, I propose an examination of the concept of world at stake in these transformations of cosmopolitanism.<sup>8</sup> What happens to the concept of world at the core of cosmopolitanism when it collides with the phenomenon of the border as its immanent limit? How to think of the world as a political ideal when it is no longer defined by totality but by marginality? In what sense can the displaced experience at the margins still constitute a being-in-the-world, i.e. a Heideggerian concept describing the authentic horizon of existence used by Agier and (more implicitly but no less crucially, as we will see) by Arendt? I argue that in order to think the cosmopolitics of borders, a different concept of world is needed. I conclude by suggesting that Jacques Rancière's understanding of politics as a conflict of worlds can take us beyond the traps of both cosmopolitan universalism and the phenomenological singularity of being-in-the-world.

### The World Between Loss and Multiplication

In the famous discussion of human rights in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Arendt addresses the unwelcome effects of the realisation of Kant's regulative idea, describing how stateless people are deprived of participation, expression, and action within a common world. Arendt claims that the realised unification of the world of humanity pushes stateless people into a position of radical worldlessness. As Roland Végső recently put it, Arendt presents a historical account of how “two opposing tendencies coincide: the absolute unification of the world and the absolute loss of the world.”<sup>9</sup> The formation of the world as a global socio-economic totality is equated with the loss of what turns human coexistence into a world. Arendt sees the modern process of globalisation not as a condition of possibility of cosmopolitanism, but as a direct threat to any worldly experience.

Arendt's concern over the loss of the world stems from the fact that genuine politics is only possible within the framework of a common world. The problematic totalisation of the world does not result in the need to abandon the notion of

<sup>8</sup> The concept of world in contemporary (political and general) philosophy was a topic of a recent special issue of *Filozofski vestnik*. See Rok Benčin (ed.), “The Concept of World in Contemporary Philosophy”, *Filozofski vestnik*, 42 (2/2021), special issue, <https://ojs.zrc-sazu.si/filozofski-vestnik/issue/view/849>.

<sup>9</sup> Roland Végső, *Worldlessness After Heidegger*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2020, p. 89.

world in political thought, but necessitates its reconceptualisation. Arendt thus rehabilitates the ideal of worldliness beyond global unification. Turning away from cosmopolitan totalisation due to the disastrous consequences of actual globalisation, the world as a political ideal is transformed into a framework of common existential experience that conditions political action. If the world is to remain a political ideal, it must be divorced from any notion of a global totality. This does not, however, necessarily imply a regression to the closed worlds of national communities. It is neither the totality nor the particularity of human co-existence that makes a world, but its singularity: the common world exists as a singular common world, based on specific common experience and joint action.

What in the *Origins of Totalitarianism* might still be understood as a condition of the radically deprived turns out to be a disturbing form of a much more general state of affairs in *The Human Condition*, where Arendt positions the concept of world at the centre of her political thought, which identifies modernity with world alienation. The interconnectedness of humanity across the globe in terms of economy, travel, and communication unites humanity on a global scale but deprives it of a world.<sup>10</sup>

Before returning to the reasons for this loss, we should understand better what makes world a political concept for Arendt, for it is not at first introduced as such. Arendt presents the world as a product of human work, the artificial environment of things humanity surrounds itself with: “The man-made world of things, the human artifice erected by *homo faber*, becomes a home for mortal men, whose stability will endure and outlast the ever-changing movement of their lives and actions.”<sup>11</sup> To the natural cycles of mortal life and its needs, as well as to the perishable character of words and deeds, the world opposes a realm of durability, objectivity, and stability. As the correlate of work, the world is thus opposed to the two other forms of *vita activa* Arendt explores in *The Human Condition*: labour, whose correlate is (the preservation and reproduction of) life, and action, whose correlate is the plurality of human beings as political animals capable of deeds and speech. Even though the fabrication of the world

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<sup>10</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1958, pp. 248–257.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 173.

of things as such is not political *per se* (only action can be political),<sup>12</sup> it soon becomes clear that it is not only the material environment of action, as it also has a much more intimate relation to the political realm. It turns out that work and action condition each other: “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.”<sup>13</sup>

The meaning of the common world for human affairs only becomes fully apparent with its loss. But how can it be lost, considering that humanity obviously still (and increasingly so) lives in an artificial world of things? For Arendt, modern world alienation results from the fact that the principles of both labour and action invade the world-making principles of *homo faber*. On the one hand, things are no longer produced to be durable but become themselves objects of consumption, just like the goods necessary for the daily reproduction of life.<sup>14</sup> This erodes the durability of the world and pulls the public sphere of political action down into the field of social issues and reproduction. No longer a free activity of equal men, politics becomes subordinated to the necessities dictated by the mass society of labouring animals and those who exploit them. On the other hand, modern science and advanced technology infect work with characteristics of action, namely unpredictability and irreversibility. Some of the things that *homo faber* now produces no longer offer worldly stability but threaten the very existence of the world. What started with the Scientific Revolution in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Arendt claims, came to a conclusion with the atom bomb.<sup>15</sup> Without the stabilising force of worldliness provided by work, the natural cycles of life and the unpredictability of action reveal their worldless character.

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In Arendt, world thus appears as a political concept not in the sense of a political project or a regulative idea, but in the phenomenological sense as a horizon of authentic existential experience, which is transformed into the existential horizon of political action. Without entering into Arendt’s complicated position

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 208.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 204.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 124.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

towards Martin Heidegger, it is clear – as Végső argues – that “she shares Heidegger’s phenomenological investment in the idea (and the experience) of the world.”<sup>16</sup> The Kantian notion of the world as a totality is replaced by a Heideggerian phenomenological concept of world.

In his study on the notion of worldlessness, Végső claims that the phenomenological concept of world is haunted by worldlessness, not only historically, through the onset of a supposedly worldless modernity, but also structurally, as a precondition for the very emergence of worldliness as the fundamental horizon of existence.<sup>17</sup> In a similar manner, Étienne Tassin notes that for Arendt, even though the existence of a common world is a condition of politics, political action proper “can rise against being-in-the-world.”<sup>18</sup> Even though the world is both the condition (the stability of the man-made world of things) and the object (the public realm of coexistence) of politics, every free political act detaches itself from its conditions and therefore the world, redefining the field of possibilities with unpredictable consequences. Due to its power to separate from the world in which it takes place, action should be understood as existentially (Tassin) or structurally (Végső) worldless – it is a worldless power that precedes any historical epoch of world alienation.<sup>19</sup>

It should not be forgotten, however, that Arendtian action disturbs the world not only with its inherent worldlessness, but also with its power to bifurcate and multiply worlds. Action, for Arendt, is not only the bearer of worldlessness, but also what turns the heap of things humans produce into a world in the first place. Political action “not only has the most intimate relationship to the public part of the world common to us all, but is the one activity which constitutes it.”<sup>20</sup> While it is true that the constitutive capacity for action is also what has the power to dismantle the stability of the world, this is not because of its structural worldlessness, but because every act constitutes the world anew. Rather than being committed within the world, an act has the character of opening up a new world, a new field of possibilities. The multiplicity of acts and therefore

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<sup>16</sup> Végső, *Worldlessness After Heidegger*, p. 81.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 25, 81–82.

<sup>18</sup> Étienne Tassin, *Un monde commun: Pour une cosmo-politique des conflits*, Paris, Seuil, 2003, p. 147.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 146; Végső, *Worldlessness after Heidegger*, p. 86.

<sup>20</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 198.

worlds coincides with human plurality, which is a condition of political life.<sup>21</sup> With every proper act, a bifurcation of worlds takes place. While it is true that an excess of new beginnings threatens the stability of the common world of political action, it is not worldlessness that is at the gates, but a proliferation of a multitude of worlds. Action, therefore, is not a principle of structural worldlessness, but a principle of the radical singularisation of worlds.

Arendt's focus on the loss of the world in modernity, however, prevents her from following this thread and developing the implications of an excess of worlds. In a seemingly paradoxical manner, Arendt claims that the loss of the world coincides with the process of its global unification. The unification of the globe in terms of travel and communication succeeded in "alienating man from his immediate earthly surroundings," uprooting the experience of having one's defined place within a particular and limited world.<sup>22</sup> Expropriation in the context of accelerating capital accumulation is another central factor contributing to modern world alienation for Arendt, which brings her close to Marx (although she claims Marx wrongly emphasised self-alienation over world-alienation).<sup>23</sup> Yet, even economic globalisation is "of minor significance" compared to the "alienation underlying the whole development of natural science in the modern age."<sup>24</sup> Arendt thus comes close to Heidegger and his reflections on the darkening of the world due to the domination of modern science and technology.<sup>25</sup> Science does not connect us to the world, Arendt believes, but alienates us from it, since it introduces an ontological split. With modern science, "being and appearance part ways,"<sup>26</sup> which undermines the very foundations of the phenomenological experience of worldliness. In a true phenomenological fashion, Arendt claims that the reality that science explores has nothing to do with the world as the framework of meaningful experience, in which being (in its plurality) and appearance are one.

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 251.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 253–256.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 265.

<sup>25</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. G. Fried and R. Polt, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2014, p. 29.

<sup>26</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 275.

From this perspective, the narrative of modernity is no longer the narrative of progress towards the realisation of a globally shared world, as it was for Kant and the cosmopolitan tradition. This realisation itself coincides with the process of world alienation, which seems irredeemable. Regaining the possibility of a shared world – as a singular world, constituted by singular beings – in the midst of global worldlessness nevertheless remains the stake of politics, but how this task can be achieved is a difficult question. From an Arendtian perspective, this would entail not only countering the worldless effects of global capitalism – the end of which, as the saying goes, is harder to imagine than the end of the world itself – but also dismantling modern subjectivity, along with its forms of rationality and their ontological implications.

Many political thinkers have since pursued a similar line of thought, with Jean-Luc Nancy perhaps delivering the most philosophically sophisticated version of opposing worldless globalisation with a renewed sense of non-totalisable worldliness. The multiplication of worlds already suggested by Arendt receives in Nancy a more direct conceptualisation. For Nancy, the world is always a multiplicity of worlds: “The unity of a world is nothing other than its diversity, and its diversity is, in turn, a diversity of worlds. A world is a multiplicity of worlds, the world is a multiplicity of worlds, and its unity is the sharing out [*partage*] and the mutual exposure in this world of all its worlds.”<sup>27</sup>

Unity and multiplicity come together through the connection between sharing and mutual exposure. This is essential to Nancy’s conception of being and world, which moves beyond Heidegger’s emphasis on *Dasein* (being-there) as the centre of the phenomenon of worldliness to rather emphasise the dimension of the *mitsein* (being-together).<sup>28</sup> In Nancy, existence is defined by mutual exposure, which constitutes world(s) as plural. Each singular being offers a different access to the world, its own singularisation of the common world. Yet, for Nancy as well as for Arendt and Heidegger, the world-making capacity of human beings is put under threat by the process of globalisation, and global capitalism in particular, which alienates the plurality of world(s) within the uniformity of

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<sup>27</sup> Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Creation of the World or Globalization*, trans. F. Rajfoul and D. Pettigrew, Albany, State University of New York Press, 2007, p. 109.

<sup>28</sup> Jean-Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, trans. R. D. Richardson and A. E. O’Byrne, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2000, p. 93.

general equivalence and commodification.<sup>29</sup> In the face of such alienation, it is necessary to redeem the capacity of creation, “to create a world tirelessly.”<sup>30</sup> Nancy thus seems to further integrate the two paths already opened by Arendt – the loss of the world, on the one hand, and the proliferation of worlds, on the other, but emphasises more directly the pluralisation of world(s) as the means of a potential reversal of the creeping worldlessness of modernity.

The problem that emerges with such political appropriations of the phenomenological concept of world is that the emphasis on the opposition between global worldlessness and a singular worldliness leaves out of sight the question of the relations between singular worlds and potential conflicts between them. When the plurality of worlds is considered as an ideal in itself, it misses potential conflicts cutting through the very field of plurality. Antonia Birnbaum thus claims that Nancy’s ontologisation of plurality equates conflict with “a catastrophic destruction of the frame of compossibility,” which excludes conflict from understanding plurality.<sup>31</sup> While the task of politics is limited to keeping the field of the singular plural open, conflict closes the becoming of plurality. For Birnbaum, this indicates a powerless and inconsequential conception of politics. She claims instead that it is precisely through conflicts that the shared world is actualised. A similar critique, but of Arendt, was proposed by Tassin, according to whom Arendt has not paid sufficient attention to the social conflicts and political struggles that are constitutive of political action. Even though political action indeed presupposes the Arendtian “being-with” and “acting-together”, it also implies “being-in-conflict-with” and “acting-against”.<sup>32</sup> The concept of world as a plural singularity or singular plurality ultimately reduces the question of multiple worlds to the question of ethical and political coexistence within a common world. This deposits any notion of conflict or antagonism on the outside, as an intrusion of worldlessness, to which the ideal of worldliness is opposed.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73.

<sup>30</sup> Nancy, *The Creation of the World*, p. 112.

<sup>31</sup> Antonia Birnbaum, *Trajectoires obliques*, Paris, Sens & Tonka, 2013, p. 86. Compossibility is a term derived from the philosophy of G. W. Leibniz and indicates the logical possibility of coexistence within a world. At the end of the present article, I use the negative term impossibility to indicate a conflictual coexistence of worlds as incompatible transcendental frameworks.

<sup>32</sup> Tassin, *Un monde commun*, pp. 14, 143, 155.

## The Border Between Cosmopolitanism and a Conflict of Worlds

The turn from Kant to Heidegger is also present in some postcolonial reflections on politics. As David Harvey notes regarding Jarava Lal Mehta's and Dipesh Chakrabarty's endorsement of Heidegger as a way of challenging the abstract universalism of liberal cosmopolitanism: "There is, these authors seem to propose, no other way to compensate for liberal or socialist universalism and by extension Kantian failings other than by leaping straight from the Kantian frying pan into the Heideggerian fire."<sup>33</sup> Be that as it may, many postcolonial thinkers remain attached to the idea of cosmopolitanism, although in a radically transformed way. Concepts such as "rooted" (Kwame Anthony Appiah), "vernacular" (Homi K. Bhabha), or "subaltern" (Bonaventura De Sousa Santos) cosmopolitanism, and "afropolitanism" (Taiye Selasi, Achille Mbembe), aim to preserve the world as a political ideal while discarding its normative basis of abstract universality often associated with colonial and imperial practices.<sup>34</sup> According to these approaches to cosmopolitics, which range from humanist and liberal to radically anticapitalist, the universality of the world can only be activated when articulated with some kind of a particularity, singularity, multiplicity, and/or marginality. In more radical versions of this line of thought, the subjectivities emerging in political struggles surrounding these conditions are seen as forming a radical cosmopolitics from below. Cosmopolitanism is thus preserved on account of its singularisation, meaning that its universalist perspective can only be opened up from specific perspectives within social antagonisms and local

<sup>33</sup> David Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2009, pp. 44–45.

<sup>34</sup> See Kwame Anthony Appiah, *The Ethics of Identity*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2005, Chapter 6; Homi K. Bhabha, "Unsatisfied: Notes on Vernacular Cosmopolitanism", in L. Garcia-Morena and P. C. Pfeifer (eds.), *Text and Nation: Cross-Disciplinary Essays on Cultural and National Identities*, London, Camden House, 1996, pp. 191–207; Bonaventura De Sousa Santos, "Beyond Neoliberal Governance: The World Social Forum as Subaltern Cosmopolitan Politics and Legality", in B. De Sousa Santos and C. A. Rodríguez-Garavito (eds.), *Law and Globalization from Below: Towards a Cosmopolitan Legality*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005, pp. 29–63; Taiye Selasi, "Bye-Bye Babar", *Callaloo*, 36, (3/2013), p. 529; Achille Mbembe, "Afropolitanism", in B. Robbins and P. Lemos Horta (eds.), *Cosmopolitanisms*, New York, New York University Press, 2017, pp. 102–107. On the distinction between universal and plural cosmopolitanisms, see also Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism*, p. 79.

political struggles involving the people living a cosmopolitan condition on the margins of society.

Can such a perspective still rely on a phenomenological concept of world? In his own reflections on the political charge of the concept of world, Tassin attempts to reconcile the Arendtian conceptual framework with an emphasis on the conflictual dimension emerging within emancipatory politics. For Tassin, a common world in the political sense is not an existential given but made of “the intangible materiality” of human actions and relations “born out of struggles and conflicts.”<sup>35</sup> It is within a common struggle in the midst of concrete social conflicts that a common world emerges. The concrete nature of political struggles gives such worlds a necessarily singular character, as opposed to both the particular nature of exclusive communities and the abstract universal community of cosmopolitanism, which constitutes the “‘transcendental illusion’ of political reason.”<sup>36</sup> According to Tassin, cosmopolitan political projects aiming for the world as a whole in fact serve to distract from actual conflicts and emancipatory struggles.<sup>37</sup> His own version of “cosmopolitics” goes beyond the cultural or communitarian conception of common worlds toward properly political common worlds, in which singularities, irrespective of their identities, are united in a common struggle.<sup>38</sup> The struggles forming in migrant camps at borders are one of Tassin’s primary examples of such emerging common worlds.<sup>39</sup> Tassin succeeds at dialecticising the opposition of political worldliness and worldlessness by understanding social conflicts – the very condensations of modern worldlessness – as the site of the emergence of common worlds.

Looking closely at the way Tassin develops his argument, it becomes clear that what ultimately allows him to reaffirm Arendtian worldliness in terms of emancipatory political struggles is his adoption of Jacques Rancière’s theorisation of political subjectivation.<sup>40</sup> Both Rancière and Tassin also feature as crucial refer-

<sup>35</sup> Tassin, *Un monde commun*, p. 295.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 211.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 177, 297–298.

<sup>39</sup> Étienne Tassin, “Cosmopolitique et xénopolitique”, *Raison présente*, no. 201 (1/2017), pp. 99–107.

<sup>40</sup> Tassin, *Un monde commun*, pp. 241, 277–278, 287–290.

ences in Agier's anthropology of being-in-the-world in border situations.<sup>41</sup> While the concept of world indeed plays an important part in Rancière, who identifies politics as a conflict of worlds, the concept of world he operates with is, I argue, incompatible with the phenomenological one, even in its Arendtian version.<sup>42</sup> Tassin assumes the compatibility between the Arendtian and the Rancièrian frameworks of political thought without engaging with Rancière's own critique of Arendt. What thus remains unaddressed is the tension between two very different political concepts of world, namely world as a phenomenological ideal of meaningful experience and world as a transcendental structure that determines what can appear within it and how.<sup>43</sup>

The problem with Arendt's approach to politics, as Rancière understands it, is that politics can only take place within a sphere constituted by a defined collection of individuals and clearly delimited from the social sphere and domestic life.<sup>44</sup> As Arendt herself admits, not everyone is in a position to lead a public life.<sup>45</sup> Only adult men, freed from the necessities of the private sphere, can be seen as capable of constituting a political world. From this perspective, the stateless are indeed seen as excluded from any such sphere and therefore banished into worldlessness. For Rancière, in contrast, politics is not a sphere but a process, one in which the very limits of what constitutes a world is questioned. From this perspective, rights are not assigned to fixed collections of individuals but verified in acts of political subjectivation, which also challenges the perceived distinction between the public and the private. Rancière gives the exam-

<sup>41</sup> Agier, *Borderlands*, pp. 100, 155–156. The discussion on the politics of a decentred subject in Part II of the book is significantly inspired by Rancière.

<sup>42</sup> Regarding distinctions between Arendt and Rancière, see Jean-Philippe Deranty and Emmanuel Renault, "Democratic Agon: Striving for Distinction or Struggle against Domination and Injustice?", in A. Schaap (ed.), *Law and Agonistic Politics*, Farnham, Ashgate, 2009, pp. 43–56, and Andrew Schaap, "Enacting the Right to Have Rights: Jacques Rancière's Critique of Hannah Arendt", *European Journal of Political Theory*, 10 (1/2011), pp. 22–45.

<sup>43</sup> For a more detailed discussion on the transcendental concept of world I have in mind here, see Rok Benčín, "Worlds as Transcendental and Political Fictions", *Filozofski vestnik*, 42 (2/2021), pp. 221–243. This is also the topic of my book with the working title *Rethinking the Concept of World: Toward Transcendental Multiplicity*, forthcoming from Edinburgh University Press.

<sup>44</sup> Jacques Rancière, "Who Is the Subject of the Rights of Man?", in *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, trans. and ed. S. Corcoran, London, Continuum, 2010, pp. 62–75.

<sup>45</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, pp. 32–33.

ple of women in the French Revolution, who – in relation to the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen – had the rights of men in principle, but were excluded from many of the rights belonging to citizens and therefore reduced to their private domestic existence. Their political subjectivation, which resulted in Olympe de Gouges’s Declaration of the Rights of Woman and of the Female Citizen, consists of a double demonstration: “Women, as political subjects, set out to make a twofold statement. They demonstrated that they were deprived of the rights that they had thanks to the Declaration of Rights and that through their public action that they *had* the rights denied to them by the constitution, that they could *enact* those rights.”<sup>46</sup> For Rancière, politics takes place in such a verification of rights in which political subjects show that they do not have the rights that are supposed to belong to them, but also exercise the rights that are denied to them.

Rancière does indeed articulate politics with a concept of world, but of a very different kind. This can be clearly seen in his critique of Arendt’s notion the rights of man. For Rancière, as we have seen, politics is not defined as a sphere which emerges as a given among a stable collection of individuals and the environment they create for themselves. In fact, “it is a division inserted in ‘common sense’: a dispute over what is given and about the frame within which we see something as given. [...] This is what I call a dissensus: the putting of two worlds in one and the same world.”<sup>47</sup> Political dissensus therefore puts two worlds in conflict: the world in which certain people have rights and the world in which they do not. This conflictual coexistence of worlds involves the same people and the same ontological reality, but transcendently given in two very different, incompatible ways. This also implies that the problem cannot be solved by opposing globalisation with a more meaningful experience of singular common worlds, as plural as they may be. The problem is that any sense of worldliness is predefined by the question of who can take part in such a world and in what sense. If Rancière does not share the ideal of worldliness as developed by Arendt or Nancy, it is because he views political action not only as world-building, but also as a bifurcation of worlds. When Rancière defines politics as a conflict of worlds, the concept of world at play is no longer the phenomenological horizon of authentic existential experience transformed into a political ideal. It is a pro-

<sup>46</sup> Rancière, “Who Is the Subject of the Rights of Man?”, p. 69.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

saic conflict between incompatible transcendental frameworks of how the given is supposed to be constituted as a common world.

What happens, then, to the political concept of world when it is faced with the problems imposed on it by contemporary border situations? A comprehensive answer to this question would demand a wider examination, but from what I have attempted to show here, it seems that neither the universality of cosmopolitanism nor the singularity of worlds as spheres of meaningful coexistence can address the being-in-the-world of a stateless refugee or a migrant deemed to be illegal. The border is not a site of the affirmation of the world as a political ideal, nor a site of worldlessness. It is the stage of a conflict of worlds – not the cultural worlds of those who come across the border and those who are already there, but political worlds as “impossible” framings of the common.

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