

## VARIA

### Where Philosophy Begins: The Event of Plurality

ANDREW BENJAMIN

*While there are protocols, not having mastered them brings with it a sense of relief; perhaps a sense of release. What I propose tonight is to offer you - in outline - some of the arguments and positions that have informed the work I have done thus far and which will - in different way - continue to inform the work I propose in the near future. This lecture is simply what I do.<sup>1</sup>*

*Before beginning may I, if only for a moment, speak more personally. As I continue to tell my students once philosophy has you in its grip it will not let go. This is, perhaps, why the cruellest comment that one philosopher can make to another is the claim that what he or she does is not philosophy. To any such assertion the only response must take the form - "by what right, on what basis, do you legislate on the nature of the philosophical?" In other words, the reply has to be the philosophical counter in which denial is met with philosophical affirmation.*

*I have the good fortune to work in a Department whose chair works tirelessly to ensure that we all have a setting in which teaching and research take place in a manner that we would all want. For this reason, amongst others, it gives me great pleasure to salute the leadership of Greg Hunt. On joining the Department, a few years ago now, my initial*

<sup>1</sup> This paper comprises my Inaugural Lecture, given at the University of Warwick on the 26th January 1999. While I have made a number of corrections what is printed here is the lecture, more or less, as given. While the lecture opens up a new research project it builds on work already done. Perhaps the three central texts are: *The Plural Event* (London: Routledge, 1993), *Present Hope* (London: Routledge, 1997), and 'Philosophy's Other: The Plural Event as Literature' in *Paragraph* 20.1, pp. 227-260. The references to Heraclitus, Sophocles, and Kant are to the following editions: H. Diels & W. Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratike* (Zürich: Weidmann, 1951), *Antigone in Sophocles II*, trans. H. Lloyd-Jones, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), *Critique of Judgment*, trans. W. S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987).

*task was to teach Philosophy and Literature. I was welcomed by Martin Warner. I would like to note here that I still depend upon his counsel in matters both philosophical and administrative. He has grown to be a real colleague and friend.*

*Due to the connections that I have with Philosophy and Literature some of my greatest intellectual debts and some of my strongest friendships are with member of the literature and language Departments. On my arrival at Warwick Susan Basnett's kind invitation to give a series of seminars to her graduate students allowed me to develop work that became the basis of my first book. Leslie Hill in the Department of French Studies, Penelope Murray in the Department of Classics, Michael Bell and John Fletcher in the Department of English and until recently Tony Phelan in the Department of German Studies have been and remain an integral part of my intellectual development. Their good natured tolerance of a philosopher has allowed me access to real and important scholars within the literary traditions. I thank then for their kindness and their friendship.*

*Jennifer, Sam, and Lucy know how much they mean to me and how their love and care is central to so much that I do.*

*In this context my greatest debt is to my students. I have always tried to do the right thing by them; mostly I succeed, sometimes not. None the less, their dedication to the task at hand - be it philosophical or literary critical - their relentless questioning and their unending commitment to shared projects continues to inspire me. It is from them that I have learnt more than I can explain and I thank them.*

*I was not brought up in a house in which philosophy figured. And yet, it only ever figured since I lived in a house that championed discussion and argument. I was taught at a young age that the position for which one argued could not be supported merely in virtue of its being believed; sincerity should always yield to content. What mattered was the viability of the belief itself. I learnt the most important philosophical lesson; humility in the face of what one believed.*

*My father for reasons he never quite explained carried with him, in the Western Desert, in pursuit of Rommel a copy of Chekov's Plays and a copy of Nietzsche's Thus Spoke Zarathustra. I still have the volumes containing his war time comments. It was his experience of war that set the measure for a number of real arguments. When I approached him with whatever schoolboy arguments I could muster for pacifism - a position often held by children though in our profession also by members of the aristocracy - I did not receive the standard rebuke of being told to*

*envisage a situation in which pacifism vanishes in the face of the real. The discussion that followed - and its detail still informs my thinking - was based in being able to allow for a distinction between a justified and an unjustified war. Arguments would always be needed. Not only would each case have to be argued on its merits, it was also true that disagreement was inevitable. We could agree the Vietnam War was without justification - we would disagree about others, however I could find no counter to the argument that it was incumbent on a Jew to fight fascism. The justification lay in the nature of what was against and who one was. Pacifism was simply complacency in the face of fascism and thus resignation in the face of evil. A Jew did not have that luxury. Not only therefore did the justification lie in the nature of the belief, it also inhered in the consequences of holding it.*

*My father's death just over a year ago while occasioning the enviable burden of memory robbed me of one of my most insistent interlocutors. As such, I would like to dedicate this lecture to his memory.*

### Opening

Rather than start at the beginning it is perhaps more productive to start with a beginning; beginning with “wonder”. As with any history of the origin it is a story that in being retold brings with it an additional range of commentary and philosophical investment. As a story what it recounts is the origin of philosophy as given by “wonder”. As a source “wonder” (θαυμάζειν) is identified by both Plato and Aristotle - then re-identified by, amongst others, Hegel in his *Aesthetics* - as philosophy's point of departure. Without it philosophy would not be. Aristotle's position in the *Metaphysics* (982b12) is well known:

[...] it is owing to their wonder that men both now begin and at first began to philosophize.

Wonder at what there is, wonder at things being the way they are; both generate questions, yield needs, and demand explanations. Wonder, in the Aristotelian sense, is linked to the presence of, and the need to overcome, the aporetic. And yet, while philosophy may have been provoked by the *aporia*, philosophy, for Aristotle, is neither to be of the *aporia*, nor to include it. Aristotle's own move to the universal, in addition to his specific conception of the homonym, result in the attempted elimination of that which generated philosophy. Wonder's own source is effaced in the move

to that which it sets forth. From within this perspective, philosophy occurs after the event. In not being able to include what prompts it, philosophy, thus conceived, can never think this originating event; not the event of wonder *per se* but rather a foundation that while unsettled demands resolution. It is both this founding state and its presence as the ineliminable ground of the singular that, in being developed, has come to be identified as anoriginal difference.

However, and to stay with what has emerged thus far, what if the choice were not as apparently straightforward? What if the choice were not between, on the one hand, the endless spiral of the aporetic and, on the other, the singularity of the definition? What if the demand lay in thinking the inclusive movement from one to the other? What these questions open up is the possibility that the definition - the axiom as the expression of pure singularity - would not delimit the philosophical. While it is always possible to keep telling the story of that which begins with "wonder" and in so doing to keep ignoring the exclusion of what prompts philosophy, it remains the case that it is the very exclusion of "*aporia*" which suggests another beginning. What that means is that rather than taking the *aporia* literally, it must be understood as the name for that which is not properly philosophical. What if, therefore, in contrast to Aristotle - and here it has to be more the Aristotle of the *Organon* than the Aristotle of the *Nicomachean Ethics* - philosophy began with the movement from the *aporia* to the definition such that what had to be thought philosophically - thought as philosophy - was precisely that inclusive movement and with it the event sustaining it.

Two comments need to be made here. The first is that allowing for this possibility - another beginning - would be to locate the origin of philosophy in the movement from an already present plurality to the definition; where the latter is understood as the singular, no longer there in name alone, but a singularity which depends on the necessary and productive presence of a founding plurality. The second point emerges with this re-description of the singular. Once the singular is understood as that which carries with it its already present relation to this founding plurality, then what this entails is that it is this founding plurality that was itself excluded in the excision of what prompted wonder. A plurality which was designated as aporetic, or as metaphor, or myth, or simply as literature. And yet none of these identifications name the plurality as such. All they do is name its presence as what has to be excluded from the project of a certain conception of philosophical thinking. The counter

measure, that which is being suggested here, is that what is excluded from philosophy once philosophy is identified with the definition etc., is the very possibility of the definition itself. It is not just the case therefore that the story of philosophy's other beginning was already there, it is also that opting for the definition as a point of departure was itself a decision that had to remain unthought. It will be essential to return to this point.

Telling this story, allowing philosophy another site, a site as has been intimated, that was inherent in the tales of philosophy's beginning, must have its own cast list and its own texts. Every story has to have its own heroes. Whatever justification this list may have it is one that can only emerge *après coup*. None the less, three specific moments will be staged here. The first concerns Heraclitus. A thinker whose contemporary force lies in the twofold interplay within the fragments between an ontology of becoming and the indissoluble link between justice and conflict which in turn generates what can be tentatively described as the structure of the decision. The second movement occurs with Sophocles' *Antigone*; in this instance what is of importance is not the detail of the play, but the final confrontation between Creon and the chorus. Again, the force of this encounter lies in how it positions the conflict between Antigone and Creon. The final lines uttered by the chorus diminish the pathos of tragedy by severing the link between justice, fate, and the law. Once severed the possibility of maintaining the law as devoid of an immediate connection to justice lapses. Justice emerges as already interarticulated with wisdom and thus with being-in-the-world. Any transcendental guarantee of worldly action cedes its place to the consequences of worldly action. The primacy of conflict, at this stage in the play, is between Creon, on the one hand, maintaining a set up in which fate, the Gods, and a conception of law devoid of any relation to justice play a determining role, and the Chorus's attempt, on the other, to link justice and the decision to both the perceived impossibility of fate and the Gods playing a determining role in human activity. With the chorus, law gives way to justice, and the transcendental yields its place to being-in-the-world. The third and final moment is provided by Kant's argument concerning the resolution of the antinomy of taste in his *Critique of Judgement*. Kant reiterates the possibility of a philosophical thinking that has to work with the ineliminability of the event of plurality and in so doing has to provide a philosophical thinking of the event. Whatever limits each of these positions may have, they are, in this instance, those which emerge because of the insistence of a founding event of plurality. They emerge from the texts under consideration and thus from

the projects proper to those texts. For example, the limit may concern, as will be suggested, the difficulty within Kant's metaphysical writings to account for the structure of plurality given by that which is at work within the judgement of taste.

### Heraclitus

Now, pursuing the movement from what was taken to be the *aporia* to the emergence of the definition necessitates another Greek source. In other words, including and thus allowing for a philosophical thinking of what had been the excluded basis for a certain conception of the philosophical necessitates a different history. Not another origin as though there were a correct origin to be recovered, but the existence of another such that the original question - the question of there being origins - will have already been split. Philosophy - in the form of φιλόσοφοι ἄνδρες, men loving wisdom - is named in Heraclitean fragment 35. Explicating that fragment - and it one where philosophy is joined to research or investigation (ἵστορας) - necessitates establishing a connection to what is identified as the "many". (While its detail cannot be pursued it is still essential to note that Heraclitus's concern will be the many - the many as opposed to the one - as that which designates the locus of philosophical activity.) Fragment 35 brings all these considerations into play:

χρὴ εἶ μάλα πολλῶν ἵστορας φιλοσόφους ἄνδρας εἶναι

It is necessary that men of wisdom, must indeed, be inquirers into the many.

The conjoining of philosophy to an activity defines being philosophical; the fragment's formulation is clear. Philosophy is inseparable from activity. The term - ἵστορας - can mean inquirers or judges; it also contains a reference to the world of Ionian science. As a definition of the philosophical, philosophy is won away from any straightforward link to revelation. Moreover, the object of inquiry in being given as the "many", neither precludes nor includes truth. What becomes important is determining what is designated by the many - the All - and therefore how that designation is to be understood.

Activity stands opposed to revelation. This is equally the case with regard to truth. Attaining truth has to be understood as a consequence. Fragment 112 reinforces the centrality of activity and truth's indissoluble link to it:

σωφρονεῖν ἀρετὴ μέγιστη καὶ σοφίη ἀληθέα λέγειν καὶ ποιεῖν  
κατὰ φύσιν ἐπαΐοντας.

Thinking well, the greatest excellence; and wisdom is to speak and  
act what is true (and this is done) by perceiving (listening) to what  
they are (their nature).

What, however, is meant by κατὰ φύσιν (their nature)? How is the nature of things to be understood? While the temptation here would be to pursue the path opened by Fragment 1 in which the “all” is to be explicated κατὰ τὸν λόγον such a move would merely repeat the demand thus engendering a concomitant analysis of λόγος. The fundamental element here is that κατὰ φύσιν delimits that which is proper to what there is; i.e. it identifies there being a sense of propriety at work within things being the way they are. Two interrelated questions arise here. The first concerns what this propriety is, while the second concerns how it is recognised. Heraclitus uses the verb ἐπαΐω: a word that in use stretches between listening to and understanding or as a recent translator has expressed it “paying heed to”. What the range means is that whatever the nature of things may be, what remains fundamental to it is the necessity of its being found via activity. Propriety is linked to work; to philosophy understood as activity. How then is this sense of work to be understood? Answering this question involves paying as much attention to the temporality inherent in work, as it does to the already implicit linkage of propriety and activity and thus ontology and questioning.

The demand for a type of activity, a practice - of linking understanding to an intentional process rather than to a vision of the self-evident, or indeed to a form of recognition linked to the problematic of vision - is already detailed in Fragment 93. Rather than assume that within this fragment the Delphic pronouncement refers uniquely to Apollo, it should be taken as descriptive of a particular setting; one which delimits the mode of apprehension of the All and thus one which sets out the ground of meaning. Of the possibilities for meaning presented in the fragment only one is linked to truth. The fragments runs as follows;

The god whose oracle is in Delphi neither states (οὔτε λέγει) nor  
conceals (οὔτε κρύπτει) but signifies (σημαίνει)

Fundamental, here, is the distancing of mere stating and the hidden, and, the consequent introduction of that which demands interpretation. The

demand is not simply that whatever truth there is, it is neither self-evident nor the subject of ecstatic revelation, but importantly that uncovering it is the consequence of work. What this sets in play is the possibility that the nature of the object - the content of the All - is such that any attribution of content is the consequence of interpretation. As such it is discovered and rediscovered. However the content will not be continuous. Discovery and rediscovery open up the discontinuous continuity of interpretation. Moreover, continuity in this instance brings the temporality of both interpretation and the object into consideration. Temporality figures precisely because the deferral of stating and the centrality of interpretation inscribes a potential endlessness into the activity of meaning attribution. The questions here concerns the status of this endlessness.

If to ascribe meaning is not to exhaust the object, as would be the case if meaning and the ontology of the object were such that the fact that the first could be stated and that the second was defined in terms of what was proper to the axiom or definition, then meaning brings with it, as its condition of possibility, an object which is only explicable in terms of the productive presence of a founding plurality. Within this set up there is the necessity of taking the movement - the movement from object to interpretation - as descriptive of philosophical activity. Detailing what is at work in this movement and the way it may provide the basis of a reformulation of the philosophical is the project inherent in the fragment.

The force of the contrast between stating and signifying goes beyond the hold of the fragment. That force is, perhaps, the silent possibility that the fragment cannot refuse; namely that inherent in signifying is a potential endlessness. It is an endlessness that necessitates a decision - the claim of meaning - but which in being made is both predicated upon this endlessness while at the same time presupposing it. While it is possible to trace the history of the word - *σημείον* - its interest, in this context, lies in what it opposes. Even though the term reappears in Plato - in the *Cratylus* - in which it is automatically linked to questions of meaning, in this and other dialogues by Plato meaning - and with it the direction of the philosophical task - is always going to involve a transcendental turn. The simple point here is that the opposition between stating and signifying - where the latter is always understood as that which demands activity - opens up the necessity for another understanding of the nature and content of stating. It would be one that takes place either after or in relation to the ineliminability of interpretation's necessity. As such it takes the form of the decision and as with any decision it allows for the possibility - and has

to allow for the possibility - of a different decision, other decisions that always could have been taken. It is precisely the structure of the decision that has to be of central importance to the fragment. Interpretation has to work with the decision; neither the decision nor any particular stance within interpretation can eliminate the endlessness that is the prerequisite for both. It is via the already inscribed necessity for the decision, as well as their ground in an ineliminable plurality, that meaning and interpretation can have the ethical and political dimension already at work within them. Again, any fragment's content always has to be located beyond its own stated concerns.

Noting therefore the connection between philosophy, the activity of inquiry, and the ineliminability of the need for interpretation, it is possible to approach the fragment that is most concerned with ethico-political considerations. Again what will emerge is the insistence of a founding plurality; both at work within the fragment as well a guiding its interpretation. The fragment in question is number 80:

It is necessary to recognise that war (τὸν πόλεμον) is shared, conflict (ἔρις) is justice (δίκη) and that the all takes place in accord with conflict (κατ' ἔρις).

What this fragment constructs is a complex set of interconnections between "war", "justice", and "conflict". What demands explication is the nature of the relation(s) between the three claims; "war is common", justice is conflict, and that the All takes place in accord with conflict. Two points need to be made at the outset. The first is that the reiteration within the fragment of the Heraclitean unity of opposites is already present within the attributed centrality of war. The second is that the only way that the first point emerges as that which sets the scene for any interpretation of the fragment is the retained and productive presence of the conception of meaning adumbrated in Fragment 93. Once a move from a literal identification of war (πόλεμος) with battle is made then the commonality of war (πόλεμος) refers to the primordality of process and movement and thus an ontology of becoming. It is worth pursuing this opening up of war (πόλεμος) beyond the literal.

If the literal identification of πόλεμος (war) with one of the word's manifestations or meanings cannot be absolutised such that it provides either the meaning or the structure within which meaning operates - the singularity of the referent or definite description, for example - then it

cannot be assumed that the literal precedes the figural. A further consequence of this break with the literal is that the commonality of πόλεμος (war) also refers to the presence of a network of possibilities which come to be actualised as specific meanings. The commonality of “war” refers therefore to the very process that engenders - after the event - the subsequent identification of “war” (πόλεμος) with battle. It is in terms of the movement to this identification - a movement whose temporality must itself demand philosophical consideration - that it becomes possible to interpret the next element of the fragment. Within that element the words δίκη and ἔρις are juxtaposed. The fragment can be read as positing a type of equivalence: “conflict is justice”. How is this juxtaposition to be understood? How, moreover, could conflict be justice?

A number of recent commentators have noted that embedded in the word δίκη is a reference - and here the major source text is Hesiod's *Works and Days* - to an agreement concerning boundary markers. While agreement brings with it a possible basis for a theory of justice, the claim made in the fragment is more emphatic: “conflict is justice”. The historico-linguistic note is important as it indicates that an integral part of justice (δίκη) is agreement. As such, and in spite of the transcendental turn that will take place in Plato - there is the possibility, even in this early text, that justice cannot be disassociated from praxis and therefore cannot be differentiated from action in the world. Justice - δίκη - is inherently worldly. When in Book VI of the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle argues that “right reason” (ὀρθὸς λόγος) within the realm of ethos was “practical wisdom” (φρόνησις) and not that which would have been furnished either by science (ἐπιστήμη) or a transcendental universal, not only is he reinforcing the presence of a form of calculation that is inseparable from being-in-the-world, he is implicitly arguing against the possibility of subsuming the practical under a generalised and theoretical conception of the universal. The place of the universal is thereby reopened. Not only does this accord with a broader argument against a certain conception of the universal advanced in both the *Eudemian Ethics* as well as the *Metaphysics*, it will be precisely in terms of this retained deferral of the universal that provides a link via Sophocles' *Antigone* to Kant's *Critique of Judgement*.

The formulation “conflict is justice” links justice to the world and with it to the domain of the practical. However it suggests, at the same time, that justice cannot be separated from the effective presence of a differential ontology. The reason for this being the case is the following.

Justice is connected to agreement. Conflict is a description of the impossibility of a once given and thus eternal guarantee of particular just acts. Justice stems from having to take a decision within the infinite set of complex relations. Any description of those relations that is concerned with the mode of being proper to them is constrained to envisage an ontology of continual becoming enjoining the particular. Taking a stance therefore opens up the possibility of equity. It will not be a conception of equity that is guaranteed either by the presence of a that which has transcendental force, or by an abstraction; it will be descriptive of a particular play of forces at a particular time. Emphasising particularity refers as much to the etymological connection between δίκη and the boundary marker as it does to the structure of the decision. A decision in this sense presupposes the presence not simply of a range of possibilities but of a constraint. What is repeated here is the same set up that was at work in the word πόλεμος (and which would be at work within any sustained philosophical theory of translation) namely that particularity (the translation, the identification of meaning, the decision, etc.) depends upon a founding plurality. Not only does this plurality have an insistent quality it is precisely that which precludes finality. If there is a form of undecidability then not only is its source ontological, it is also evidenced by the necessity for the decision.

While its detail cannot be pursued, what this entails is that decision needs to be understood as the interplay of the finite and the infinite. Only by holding to the interplay that the formal possibility of absolutising the decision is precluded. Justice, understood as that which is ineliminably linked to the decision - linked in that it is enacted by it - necessitates continuing negotiation. Formally, that continuity cannot be excluded. Continuity, as the unending negotiation precluding finality, is conflict. Equally, it is the possibility of justice. It is not simply therefore that the “all” takes place κατ’ ἔριν (in accord with conflict), it is this possibility that allows for the fragment’s formulation “conflict is justice”.

In order to conclude this necessarily truncated discussion of Heraclitus it is essential to note the way a founding and thus anoriginal plurality is at work in the position adumbrated thus far. What the fragments considered set in place is a complex relationship between a specific conception of the philosophical, a semantic ontology and a social ontology. It is the conception of the philosophical that is articulated within the particular conceptions of the social and semantic. It goes without saying that they are also articulated within it. What this involves is a particular recognition.

Rather than the search for the univocal, rather than its evocation in either the definition or the axiom, there is another formulation in which the equivocal and the univocal are already interconnected. Particularity emerges as the decision. Philosophical activity demands both this understanding of the particular and the related claim that it emerges in the movement from a founding plurality, and that it is to this founding state that any decision - in virtue of being a decision - is constrained formally to refer.

### Sophocles

Perhaps the ancient text that both dramatises the centrality of wisdom and justice by opposing wisdom to fate and justice to the law is Sophocles' *Antigone*. The final section stages the stark contrast of law and wisdom, opening up the need to think the difference between law and justice. Pursuing this point would necessitate a detailed analysis of lines 1255-1353; from the entry of Haemon's body to the chorus's final evocation of wisdom. Here two passages have to suffice. The first is line 1270, and the second lines 1339-1353. In both instances the voice is that of the chorus. The first concern the response by the chorus to Creon's recognition that his actions were responsible for Haemon's death. The beauty of the strophe in which he announces his own blame, and it is a beauty that is reinforced by the hold of the poetry of the ones following it, has to be heard in the context of the dramatic interruption between the first and second strophes in which the chorus identify what Creon lacked or had failed to see. Before introducing the line it is vital to note that Creon's utterance is building to the position in which he will claim that he had been undone by fate. The chorus therefore has to be interpreted as announcing that which will have always been opposed to fate. The line is simple yet its effect is not precisely because of its retroactively interruptive quality;

οἴμ' ὥς ἔοικας ὀψὲ τὴν δίκην ἰδεῖν.

You have come to perceive justice too late.

Creon proceeds as though this line had not been uttered. An analysis of the second strophe would reveal that Creon's response is not to link justice directly to fate but to describe his position as having been dictated by the actions of the Gods. He recognises justice but fails to see the connection between his actions and justice as falling beyond the hold of the Gods; falling that is into the space of justice. In other words it is not that Creon

fails to acknowledge justice, it is rather that he fails to recognise that the place of justice is the public sphere and thus the place of negotiation, wisdom, and thus justice. (It is worth noting that the effect of the juxtaposition of these passages is only grasped by the audience. Creon is deaf to the word ὄψε (too late), the audience hears it only too well.) Given this context, and prior to pursuing the line's evocation of δίκη, it is essential to note the chorus's final utterance. It should be added immediately that it is with these lines that the play ends.

According to his own self-description, Creon leaves having been undone by fate. Self-blame there may be, it arises however because of fate's work. In his final speech he describes himself as a "useless man" (μάταιον ἄνδρας); he is without utility precisely because of a now enforced silence. What was taken to be public has now emerged as an almost private and thus silent existence. His torment, the role of fate, and the diminished space for action, open up what is to occur next. Indeed, it is this context - and again any reading should privilege the ear of the audience - that the chorus's opening evocation of happiness must be situated. And yet there is not happiness *tout court*. The chorus is, on this as on other matters, explicit:

πολλῷ τὸ φρονεῖν εὐδαιμονίας  
 πρῶτον ὑπάρχει [...]  
 Wisdom is the first and  
 foremost part of well being.

*Eudaimonia* is well being. It is not simple jollity, but the measure of successful activity in the world. Integral to *eudaimonia* is wisdom. The next line of this, the chorus's, and with it the play's, summation, reintroduces the Gods. This time, even though they are differentiated from the world of activity, what is expressed is the necessity for humans "not to be impious"; the relationship between the Gods and fate has been severed. In other words, it is only in the separation of the Gods from the world that it becomes possible to make claims about how they should be treated.

The final lines introduce a greater complexity. In sum they state that the misuse of language - initially bombast - brings with it its own punishment. And that in the end the process of ageing is accompanied by wisdom; it is a process which allows for the translation of, "in the passing of time" since the argument is not that age entails wisdom but that wisdom is acquired as a consequence of being-in-the-world. There needs to be a further translation - if not translations - introduced at this point. Bombast - "great

words” (μεγάλοι δὲ λόγοι) - here need to be defined as a discourse that invokes the Gods but which acts in ignorance of justice. Such ignorance is not of the transcendental but of wisdom. Bombast is to act beyond the hold of wisdom and as such to act without accord to well being (εὐδαιμονία). The acquisition of knowledge, of how to act in the world, such that actions involve the possibility of justice by maintaining well being, cannot come from any source other than the continual interplay of activity in the world and a thoughtful response to that activity. It is the necessity of this twofold process - activity and thinking - that is accurately captured by what is often taken to be Hölderlin’s inaccurate translation of the last line:

Sie haben im Alter gelehrt, zu denken.

The verbal aspect of τὸ φρονεῖν is captured by *zu denken*. More than that however is at work here since both necessitate that emphasis be given to activity. As such the question arises; how is this activity to be understood? To emphasise activity is, of course, to recall what emerged with Heraclitus, namely the necessary interarticulation - if not self-definition - of philosophy and work; philosophy understood as activity. (Perhaps, the *vita activa* takes the place of *Seins zum Tode*.)

Taking the position of the chorus a stage further involves an intrusion; intruding into the text a complex set up that is only ever implicitly present in the play’s words though which is always inherent in it in virtue of its being theatre. As a play the exchanges have to position the audience as the point of address. What this opens up - in the context of the *Antigone* - is a twofold incorporation of the public. The first occurs in the centrality attributed to wisdom as that which occurs as a consequence of being-in-the-world - praxis as opposed to revelation - and thus as interarticulated with claims concerning justice where those claims point of departure and final point of reference, is worldly existence. What this means is that the public sphere already figures in the play. The opening up of the public sphere in its elimination of the work of fate and thus in the refusal of reference to destiny allows for the advent of cosmopolitanism. Within this interpretation the *Antigone* - in its final lines - becomes a modern play; it becomes modern at the precise point at which it shakes of the hold of tragedy. The opening up of the public sphere within the play depends, for a significant part, on its opening up before the public. The role of the audience, and the audience as the site of the play’s address, provide the second sense in which the play demands the presence - the productive

presence - of the public.

The audience is not present as the site of reconciliation, on the contrary it is only the audience that can observe the conflict as existing between Creon and the Chorus. What Creon fails to hear, the audience hears perfectly; the chorus's own ironic stance in terms of the age of its members cannot hide from the audience at least the truth of its own relections.

### Kant

Some of the most sustained arguments within both the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the *Critique of Judgement* concern the resolution of antinomy. Rather than take up the work of the antinomy in the first *Critique*, its presence in the *Critique of Judgement* will form, in the last instance, the focus of analysis. Again, the issue is not straightforwardly textual. What is important is pursuing the detail of what the antinomy brings into play. For Kant, in this text, an antinomy is a conflict concerning principles. And yet, inherent in this conflict is the inscription of a limit condition the thinking of which opens up the Kantian project. In order to note the work of this limit it is essential to trace a particular movement towards it. Again, for reasons of brevity three particular moments in the text will serve to open up what can be identified as the complex interplay of time, the emergence of the public and the ineliminability of conflict. Furthermore, and in maintaining the project that has emerged thus far, it is the sustained retention of both an ineliminable and founding plurality, the temporality of a form of endlessness generating finitude and the retained necessity of the decision that allows a connection to be drawn between the texts addressed thus far and the moments identified as significant within Kant's *Critique of Judgement*.

It is in the Introduction that Kant makes an opening move whose import can be too quickly overlooked. While minor in detail its significance will have, by the end of the text, proved overwhelming. It occurs during the opening attempt to formulate the distinction between a what is identified as a "transcendental judgement" and a "reflective judgement". While the detail proves important, at this stage and for these concerns, it is the formulation of the latter - the reflective judgement - that is central. For this form of judgement only the particular is given. Consequently, judgement "has to find a universal for it". Rather than assuming the presence of the universal, or that the status of the universal is a question that is

qualitatively different from those that pertain to the particular, a different relation has been envisaged. However, it is not even the nature of the universal that is the central interpretive question. What insists, what has to be thought, is what it is that is marked out by the words “has to find”. Allowing these words a determining place in any understanding of the reflective judgement demands that the space in which this finding occur be thought. In other words, what the structure of the reflective judgement thus conceived brings with it is the necessity to think an ineliminable spacing that is inscribed into the very structure of the judgement. How is the opening between the particular and the universal - an opening which is itself constitutive of the reflective judgement - to be thought? Any answer to this question has to work with the necessity to maintain this site. The structure of the judgement demands that maintaining a site of what is necessarily incomplete, be an integral part of philosophical thinking and moreover of any extension of that thinking into concerns more straightforwardly ethical or political. The point of departure however is the incomplete. The project to complete would be to emphasise the teleological impulse in Kant, while the attempt to defer it and thus to highlight the attempt to find the universal - rather than the possibility of its having been found - necessitates linking the philosophical project to a founding complexity that can only ever be sustained as itself.

There are three components to this position that are central here. They are all interconnected. The first is that the ineliminable spacing gives rise to the deferral of ends and thus the inscription of an endlessness. The second is the retained presence of the incomplete, while the third is that their combined presence provides the precondition not just for judgement but for the judgement’s own demand for universal assent.

In § 27, in a difficult passage in which the relationship between reason and the imagination and the sublime is being worked out, Kant address the quality of the sublime in terms of a retained and unmasterable negativity. The ontology and temporality of the incomplete that is at work in the spacing opened by the reflective judgement is repeated here in different terms. Not simply is there the retention of the power of the negative, there has to be a reconciliation both to that position and to maintaining it as such. While the sublime may be taken merely to impose limits in this section something else occurs. It is as though the sublime allows for a description of a subject recognising its place in relation to the law but it is a recognition that only stems from the impossibility of attaining what the law demands. Not attaining is however the correct response. It becomes a

concession to impossibility.

The importance of this formulation is that it provides a link between, in the first place, the necessity to hold open the spacing proper to judgement and thus formally not to complete by closing that space, and in the second, to a perceived failure to complete as itself that which forms the basis of a form of aesthetic judgement. Kant makes this point explicitly in his own formulation of the quality of sublime feeling:

The quality of the feeling of the sublime consists in its being a feeling, accompanying an object, of displeasure about our aesthetic power of judging, yet of a displeasure that we present at the same time as purposive. What makes this possible is the subject's own lack of power uncovers in him the consciousness of an unlimited power which is also his, and that the mind can judge this ability aesthetically only by that inability.

Explicating this passage with the care it demands would involve paying particular attention to the reiteration of power and the consequence of its absence or dissipation.

Finally, the positions gestured at in the two earlier sections are brought together in §§ 56-57 in which Kant is concerned to show how it is possible to resolve the antinomy concerning taste. Central to it is the reintroduction of spacing. Here it is in the move from the private in which liking concerns the individual and the presence of an object for that individual to the public realm demanded by the conception of universal assent proper to the aesthetic judgement. And yet, the public is not the realm of agreement. If it were it would have always already been closed down. Kant is clear. The public sphere is the one in which agreement is sought. Moreover, maintaining that sphere is the absence of that which would close it down namely a "determinate, objective principle".

In other words, the site where both the resolution and the absence of a determining principle are at work is the public; not the private world of individuals but the sphere of public judgement. What this means is that if the public sphere is understood as the site in which judgements are given and to which a response is offered, then while on a strategic level certain contradictions and antinomies can be resolved, what is lacking from the public sphere is, as has been mentioned, a determinate concept governing judgement itself. (This lack must not be seen as privation but as integral to public and therefore democratic space.) There is an indeterminate concept

which is the supersensible substrate of humanity - while it will always be essential to return to this conception of universality and in so doing return to the “universal voice” as an “idea” - what arises here is a conception of the public and thus of the ineliminable spacing opened up the the judgement, that is defined by two distinct elements. In the first place the public sphere is one in which judgements are given and in which agreement is sought. Holding to this domain as the site of judgement demands deferring the implicit teleology inherent in Kant’s overall argument. What this means is that to the extent that the seeking is central then the public sphere is defined as the site of that activity. In sum, democratic space is the site of conflict concerning the call for judgement, the response of judgement, and deliberation - resolving antinomies - concerning judgement. The second element defining this site is the absence of any rule that can legislate within it in regard to the content of a judgement. Here this absence entails that what has to be maintained is the continuation of this sphere as the place and site of the interplay of conflicting judgements. The absence is productive insofar as it holds the site in place. Absence is not privation. (Indeed, production, that which is given initially in terms of absence, becomes the interarticulation of ontology and temporality. It is in these terms that social universality reiterates the structure of subjective universality. Delimiting the ways this occurs defines the philosophical project as stemming from this founding state of incomplete. Maintaining the incomplete however has to be thought beyond the sway of privation.

What allows for the public sphere therefore is the complex interplay of particulars thought in terms of the interplay of form and content and the conditions of reception - intuitability in the strict sense - that involves the universality of mental states. The indeterminate concept as that to which the judgement of taste refers is not a ground for sameness nor an inevitable ground for the teleology of agreement. On the contrary, the universal can always be interpreted as the condition for communicability and thus for the community of communicability. What then forms the basis of such a community? Once agreement is no longer taken as a *telos* but as a pragmatic necessity and once the presence of a determinate objective principle is deemed impossible since its presence would close, by definition, the space opened by the judgement of taste, then Kant’s description of the presence of antinomies as “natural and unavoidable” has to be incorporated into the structure of philosophical thinking.

## Coda

Finally, Kant, Sophocles, and Heraclitus bring philosophy's other beginning into play. Inscribing the insistent presence of the plural event within their writings. That inscription is staged in terms of the interplay between finite and the infinite underpinning the decision's necessity; it is there as the ineliminable and thus unmasterable spacing integral to the aesthetic judgement and thus to democratic space; it is present as the affirmed necessity of the incomplete enjoining the responsibility stemming from the need to decide. What this necessitates is neither a retention of the Kantian project; nor the Presocratic hold on the question of Being nor the Sophoclean expression of justice as though each one existed as an end in itself. All of the moments identified in these texts demand philosophical thinking. Each one stages the possibility of founding philosophy. It would be a conception of the philosophical that, while retaining wonder, would allow for the incomplete. Both wonder and that which occasioned it would therefore form part of a philosophical practice that began with the event of plurality.