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The Case for Hannah Arendt as a Philosopher of Journalism: Newsgathering and World-Building within the Space of Appearance.



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The Case for Hannah Arendt as a Philosopher of Journalism: Newsgathering and World-Building within the Space of Appearance.

By Eva Janet Milne

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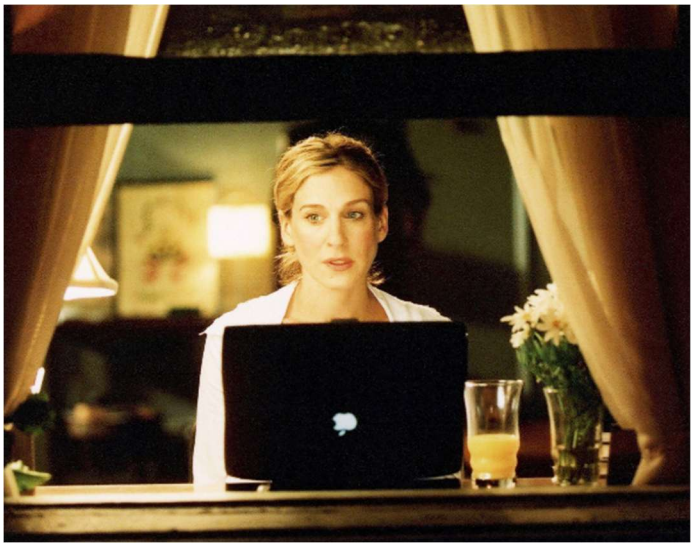


Figure 1: Carrie Bradshaw: a Journalism Legend

And just like that, I began to wonder, who should I acknowledge in my dissertation?

This dissertation is a culmination of my work in Philosophy since 2nd Year Aesthetics, where I was first introduced to the idea of Plato's cave. I thought I was a revolutionary. Thankfully, this resulted in a niche interest in the Philosophy of Technology, guided by the excellent Dr Dominic Smith. My research the past four years has been shaped by Dom, who has provided invaluable guidance on assignments, future academic work, and career direction. Without encountering this incredible thinker, this dissertation would not exist; he has helped me fuse together my two defining passions, journalism and philosophy.

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ABSTRACT:

A journalist's first obligation is to truth; a concept which is increasingly threatened in today's digital condition. *The Human Condition* provides a substantial account of what it means to work, labour, and act in modernity; a framework which will be applied to the life of the journalist. Despite rejecting the title of philosopher, and her renowned journalistic reputation, the case will be made that Hannah Arendt should be understood as a philosopher of journalism, not because she excelled in journalism, but because her philosophical insights illuminate journalism's highest purpose: to build and sustain a common world. This work aims to shed light on key Arendtian concepts and their journalistic translation, to philosophically understand the purpose of journalism, and the digital threats it faces.

This paper argues that journalists operate and sustain Arendt's 'space of appearance' through their active work; then moves to analyse Arendt's ignorance of the ontological power of 'gathering.' Subsequently, Arendt's 'Eichman Report' faces scrutiny against the backdrop of key journalistic principles and a piece of newswriting I place in high regard. After evaluating Arendt's journalistic shortcomings, I will return to her philosophical concepts (world alienation and the common-world) to conclude that the emigration to hollow digital realms (and the mass disinformation in these spaces) has generated an ontological crisis of truth, which threatens not only journalism, but democracy as the common world where truth can be revealed, disintegrates in favour of digital realms.

'The moment we no longer have a free press, anything can happen. What makes it possible for a totalitarian or any other dictatorship to rule is that ***people are not informed****;* ***how can you have an opinion if you are not informed?****'*

'If everybody always lies to you, the consequence is not that you believe the lies, but rather that ***nobody believes anything any longer****[…]It is to be* ***deprived not only of its capacity to act but also[…]to think and to judge****. And with such a people you can then do what you please.'*

Hannah Arendt, 1974.[1]

[1] Hannah Arendt, 'From an Interview,' *The New York Review of Books*, 26 October 1978 <https://www.nybooks.com/articles/1978/10/26/hannah-arendt-from-an-interview\> [accessed 21 April 2026].

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INTRODUCTION: TOWARD A PHILOSOPHY OF JOURNALISM?

In a 1964 interview with German journalist Günter Gaus, Hannah Arendt proclaimed that she didn't belong to the circle of philosophers, 'I've said goodbye to philosophy once and for all.' [2] By 1964 Arendt had studied philosophy under Heidegger and Jaspers, pursued journalism, and political activism, and authored *The Origins of Totalitarianism* and *The Human Condition*, which were layered with references to renowned philosophers. Her portfolio had its anchors in philosophy, yet she rejected to brand herself a philosopher, preferring terms such as essayist or political theorist. Her most celebrated contribution to journalism was her 'reporting' of the 1961 Adolf Eichman trial in Jerusalem for the *New Yorker*.

In this thesis I will argue that Arendt's claim of not being a 'philosopher' and the often-patronising attitude toward her grand contributions to journalism are two errors. Her own journalistic work falters in terms of its dedication to key journalistic principles. The rejection of the 'philosopher' title stems from her advocation for *action*, not contemplation, which is associated with the life of a philosopher. Shai Tubali explains that for Arendt:

> 'Philosophy had failed. It ignored the very heart of human existence: man as an acting being. Its obsession with metaphysical speculation left it unequipped to speak meaningfully to the world of politics, where people meet, judge, and act.'[3]

This ignorance of the real-world sets the backdrop for *The Human Condition* (*THC*) where Arendt describes the necessary adjustments man must make in modernity, which involves a shift from the contemplative to the active life. Negating traditional philosophy, Arendt describes a 'modern reversal' from contemplation to action. Leah Bradshaw discusses this tension, explaining that 'the *vita contemplative* inclines toward the quest for truth, not freedom, closure, not innovation, eternity, not change.' [4]

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[2] Stack Altoids, 'Hannah Arendt "Zur Person" Full Interview (with English subtitles),' *YouTube*, 08 April 2013, [excerpt: 00.55-01:01] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dsoImQfVsO4&t=726s> [accessed 21 January 2026].
[3] Shai Tubali, 'Why Hannah Arendt left Philosophy behind to face the World,' *Big Think,* 24 April 2025 <Why Hannah Arendt left philosophy behind to face the world - Big Think> [accessed 22 January 2026].
[4] Leah Bradshaw, 'Between the Vita Activa and the Vita Contemplativa: Beiner's Arendt,' *The Review of Politics*, [New York, USA], 78. (2016), pp. 287-289, (p.287), doi:10.1017/S003467051600006.

This thesis will argue that Arendt's work is philosophical in its method and ambition, even if she rejected the title, and that what she is *not,* is a journalist in the professional sense. Paradoxically, her philosophy offers one of the most compelling frameworks for understanding journalism's purpose, value, and crisis in the modern age. This work substantiates the claim that Arendt does not give us journalism in practice; she gives us a philosophy of journalism.

The case will be made that *THC* provides an essential conceptual framework for understanding journalism. Arendt's analysis of labour, work, and action offers a unique interpretation of the journalist as the highest manifestation of the *vita activa*. The journalist's task (to gather facts, create a shared world, and sustain a space in which human beings can appear to one another) is deeply aligned with Arendt's understanding of action and worldliness. These two concepts will be bridged through what Arendt calls 'the common world' and it will be argued that journalism's deepest purpose is to build and preserve a common world.

Furthermore, I will investigate Arendt's concerns about the modern age, particularly her fear of world alienation and the loss of a shared reality. Her warning about the emigration of man to space will be reconsidered as a metaphor for the digital displacement of human experience: a retreat from the common world to the virtual sphere where communication is not just altered, but action is transformed into labour, and a space where truth can appear is lost.

This dissertation progresses in four parts:

- Chapter I argues that the journalist embodies the highest manifestation of the *vita activa*, performing labour, work, and action in an interconnected way, which is ultimately underpinned by action.
- Chapter II examines Arendt's 'action' on a deeper level, analysing the concept of the space of appearance (SoA) and arguing that journalists fundamentally operate in and create the SoA.
- Chapter III explores newsgathering as a metaphysical concept and discusses Arendt's ignorance toward the power of gathering. It examines Arendt's own shortcomings as a journalist by comparing her Eichman coverage with David Barstow's investigative reporting on Pentagon

propaganda during the Iraq war. This comparison will be made against Rosenstiel and Kovach's *Elements of Journalism*.

- Chapter IV interrogates the concepts of world-building and the common world within the context of social networking services (SNS). It analyses consequences of digitalisation and uses Heidegger's fourfold to prove why digital posts fail to gather worlds. This analogy will be used to argue that the current crisis of truth has arisen due to the disintegration of the common world, where truth can appear, in favour of virtual spheres.

Ultimately, I argue that Arendt should be understood as a philosopher of journalism, not because she practiced journalism well, but because her philosophical insights illuminate journalism's deepest purpose: to build and sustain a common world. SNS have created an ontological crisis as they have transformed the very nature of being human, rendering a common-world where truth can appear non-tangible, endangering trusted journalism and democracy.

I. JOURNALISM AS THE ULTIMATE *VITA ACTIVA*?

In the opening of *THC*, Arendt draws from Aristotle and compares two ways of living; the *vita activa* and the *vita contemplativa,* refuting Aristotle and arguing that the *vita activa* is more apt in the modern age. Aristotle considered the contemplative life of the philosopher as the source of the highest happiness, frowning on the life of a politically and socially active person to be less perfect. Contemplation, in contrast to action, consisted of peace, stillness, and involved 'an almost breathless abstention from external physical movement and activity of any kind' wrote Arendt. [5] This still method of truth pursuit is of ancient tradition, whereas the *vita activa* fits better in today's the fast-paced, digital world.[6]

Arendt rejects traditional philosophy and calls for a 'modern reversal' of tradition, where *action* takes supremacy, resonating with the life of a journalist.[7] Although digitalisation did not occur in Arendt's life, her sentiments remain relevant to both modern and traditional journalism, which require an active engagement with the world and a synthesis of all three activities of the *vita activa* (work, labour, action) to reveal truths, which serve as a foundation for an informed democratic society. [8]

Truth cannot be revealed by journalists in stillness. Journalism's first obligation is to truth. Revealing truths (through news-gathering and reporting) requires rigorous research, engagement with men, and composition of a consumable product. It requires active participation, not passive contemplation. [9] I consider the life of a journalist as the highest manifestation of the *vita activa.* Arendt explains that:

> 'Labour assures not only individual survival, but the life of all species. Work and its product, the human artifact, bestow a measure of **permanence and durability** upon the futility of mortal

[5] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), p.15.
[6] Aristotle believed the active life was a weaker method of truth pursuit.
[7] By 'journalist' I am referring to a reporter who news gathers, verifies, and presents factual information in a news article for a newspaper, magazine, broadcast, or online news site. Not someone who posts on SNS.
[8] In THC Arendt is deeply concerned with technological and scientific advancements, drawing upon the invention of the telescope, discovery of the Archimedean point, advancements in space technology, automation, etc.
[9] Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel, *The Elements of Journalism: What Newspeople Should Know and the Public Should Expect* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2014) p.9.

> life and the **fleeting character** of human time. Action, insofar as it engages in founding and preserving political bodies**, creates the conditions for remembrance**, that is, for history.' [10][11]

Each activity comprising the *vita activa* is tied to a condition prescribed by Arendt. Labour's condition is life itself and the ability to sustain the human body in the life process. Work's condition is 'worldliness,' which denotes how the work of our hands produce fabricated artifacts to constitute the human world, not the natural earth. Finally, action's condition is plurality, which refers to the uniqueness of individuals (despite the fact we are all human) and the ability to disclose this uniqueness.[12]

Action is the highest activity of the *vita activa* because it distinguishes us from other animals and what makes us human, and by extension, allows us to convey our unique humanness. We work and labour, so we can engage in higher action. The job of a journalist is to report on this uniqueness and involves active participation (not passive contemplation), synthesising the activities of work, labour, and action.

i. The Labour of a Journalist: Keep the News Alive!

Labour corresponds to the repetitive, necessary activities to sustain human life. There are two aspects of 'labour' for the journalist. The first, which applies to any practice, is the fact that in modernity; to sustain one's body, one must earn money to clothe and feed oneself to survive. Marx calls this 'surplus labour' and it refers to the additional work a worker performs beyond the necessary labour time, to produce the value equivalent to their cost of reproduction. [13] It involves going beyond the necessary labour to generate profit for a company. Any worker must 'surplus labour' to earn a wadge and survive.

Except from the surplus labour necessary to survive and engage in higher work and action, the cyclical labour process is resonant with the news-cycle, which must be 'laboured.' The journalist's work consists of the routine reporting, newsgathering, and meeting deadlines; activities crucial to sustaining the 24-

[10] Arendt, pp.8-9.
[11] 'Political bodies' for Arendt do not simply refer to bureaucratic, stuffy, political organisations, but the fact that all men, in so far as they are engaged in speech and action with other men, are political beings.

[12] Arendt, p.7.
[13] 'Necessary & Surplus Labour Time,' *Encyclopaedia of Marxism: Glossary of Terms -N*. Marxists Internet Archive. <https://www.marxists.org/glossary/terms/n/e.htm>. [accessed 03 May 2026].
Arendt, p.88. 'This productivity does not lie in any of labour's products but in the human "power," whose strength is not exhausted when it has produced the means of its own subsistence and survival but can produce a "surplus," that is, more than is necessary for its own "reproduction."'

hour news cycle. The news cycle involves identifying a story, reporting, and gathering information, distribution of the story in its various mediums (print, online, radio, broadcast) and finally it ends with consumption and feedback from the public. The labouring of the news-cycle is unique since it requires active work, unlike any other profession where the three activities are more separate, journalism entangles all three.

The work of the journalist, to labour the news-cycle, while essential, involves fleeting activities which disappear once news is consumed. The capacity to work, (with work encompassing the physical, emotional, and mental abilities of a person which can be sold as a commodity) is what Marx terms 'labour power.'[14] The journalist uses one's 'labour power' to craft and sell a commodity (news), sustaining the news cycle.

On an individual level, the journalist must 'surplus labour' to survive and use one's 'labour power' to sustain the news cycle. Without these combining forces, the conditions for political debate would be constrained as without reporting of verified facts, citizens would have to rely on hearsay and opinions to develop judgements. Today, the emigration to virtual spaces has created a surge of disinformation and hearsay, as unverified information is sent 'flying across the world through social media accounts at lighting speed' Michiko Kakautani noted. [1516] This transformation will later be diagnosed as the digital displacement of human experience, which has caused a crisis of truth as the active work of the journalist faces digital threats.

ii. The Journalists' 'Active Work.'

Marx, whom Arendt discusses and critiques, distinguished the two activities of work and labour: 'the work of our hands' as distinguished from 'the labour of our bodies.' [17] Our bodies labour for survival. Our hands work to produce durable artifacts which exist beyond their creation, shaping the man-made world of things. The base definition of 'labour' for Marx is the actual activity of working, the process

[14] Karl Marx, 'Labour,' in *Glossary of Terms*, Marxists Internet Archive. <https://www.marxists.org/glossary/terms/l/a.htm> [accessed 01 April 2026].
[15] The Digital Age refers to the current condition/era where digital technologies dominate and alter aspects of our work, labour, and action. This term is also used interchangeably with 'The Information Age' and is characterised by the rapid expansion of information technology and the internet, significantly altering how we share and access information.
[16] Michiko Kakautani, *The Death of Truth*, (London: William Collins, 2019) p.12.
[17] Arendt, p.136.

by which humans transform nature to produce goods or services.[18] The 'work' of the journalist when they go to the office is the labouring of the news-cycle (research, reporting, writing) and the production of an artifact, which sustains the news cycle and common world.

Arendt's activity of work is tied to worldliness, which rests on the creation of durable artifacts to comprise a man-made world of 'things.' A durable artifact created by a journalist (for example, a newspaper) creates an enduring narrative and contributes to public discourse, far beyond the individual. Although news is most popular in its immediacy, the artifact of the newspaper creates permanence and a point of reference in history. Journalistic products structure society's understanding of events and influence citizens' actions beyond the immediate, active work, of the journalist. Matthew Keiran asserts that:

> 'The function of the journalist is to report accurately and in a complete manner, the truth concerning new events or insight […] the media have a duty to inform us about events in the world that significantly affect our lives.' [19]

To fulfil this, their work is inherently active. A healthy democracy needs journalism to maintain transparency, accountability, and informed communities; it needs a watchdog to scrutinise power. Without action, this would be impossible. By fulfilling this role, the news-cycle is 'laboured' and sustained, and a common world is created where truth can appear. The active work of a journalist encompasses all three activities of the *vita activa.* Arendt adheres that:

> 'All human activities are conditioned by the fact that **men live together**, but it is **only action that cannot even be imagined outside the society of men**. The activity of labour does not need the presence of others […] man working and fabricating by himself would still be a fabricator.' [20]

Like action, journalism cannot be imagined outside a society of men, thus work and labour cannot be completed in isolation as they rely on action. The life of a journalist provides a unique instance where

[18] Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* (New York: International Publishers,1964) p.109.
[19] Matthew Kieran, *Media Ethics: A Philosophical Approach* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997) p.21.
[20] Arendt, p.22.

all three activities cannot be separated but are intrinsically linked. The work/labouring of the news cycle to craft a news-story involves interviewing sources, reading large documents etc. If this were to be completed in pure isolation the piece could not be called a news story but an opinion, which is what is seen on SNS and has led to fragmentated discourse and widespread disinformation.

The integration of all three activities, and systematisation of how the journalist embodies the highest manifestation of the *vita activa,* can be seen in fig.2.

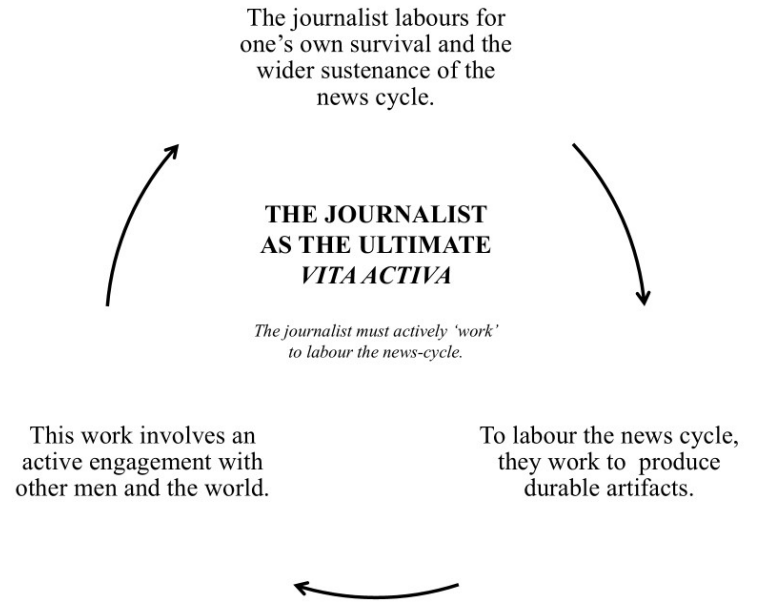


Figure 2: The Journalist as the Ultimate Vita Activa.' [Author-Created Diagram on Microsoft PowerPoint]

Without labouring the news-cycle, the journalist could not work. Similarly, without the action inherent to this work, the news-cycle could not be laboured.

This analogy challenges Arendt's proposal that only action requires the presence of other men; the journalist provides a unique instance where all three activities, despite existing independently of one another, fundamentally rely on each other for the creation of a common world, the sustenance of the individual, and the survival of the news-cycle. Work and labour would be impossible without action, which is fixed in disclosing the plurality of men. This disclosure is achieved by entering the space of appearance (SoA), where men gather to disclose their plurality through speech and action.

This space is a fragile one, which ceases with the dispersal of men. Where men no longer gather and disclose their plurality there would be little activities for journalists to report on and they would be jobless. Their job is to tell a story, to report facts, so citizens can make informed decisions. This cannot be achieved in isolation and requires a fusion of all three activities. Journalists interrogate platitudes, disclose the identities of men, and create the physical conditions of remembrance by providing

chronicles of human affairs, it requires a constant active engagement with the world and its inhabitants. Through this, journalists create and sustain Arendt's SoA, capturing the fleeting reality of humanity.

II. THE DEATH OF THE SoA = THE DEATH OF JOURNALISM:

Action is 'the only activity which goes on directly between men without the intermediary of things or matter' and encompasses the capacity for human beings to engage with others and participate in world affairs.[21] Arendt views action as the highest activity of the *vita activa* since it expresses of the 'who' someone is, not the 'what.' Action distinguishes us from other animals since it is where man breaks from biological necessity (labour) to creates new beginnings and discloses one's uniqueness to the world and fellow men.

Where men gather to disclose their identity through speech and action, the SoA emerges. Journalism is essentially the disclosure of this identity disclosure, since it involves the reporting of men and their plurality. The labour of our bodies (to stay alive) and the work of our hands (to earn money) enable action, allowing men to exercise their freedoms, understand and engage with other men. Since journalists cannot labour their bodies or work with their hands *without* the human capacity for action, the death of the SoA would mean the death of journalism itself.

The SoA encapsulates the very essence of journalism, which 'lies in this ability to unite people through shared stories and experiences' Paul Jenkins noted. [22] The SoA:

> 'Comes into being **wherever** men are together in the manner of speech and action […] it **disappears not only with the dispersal of men […] but with the disappearance or arrest of the activities themselves**.' [23]

The SoA is a *potential* space of collective action, communication, and public discourse. Its indiscriminatory because it emerges when *anyone* engages with another man through speech and action. Its fragile, temporal, and disappears with the arrest of action. Through acting and speaking, Arendt adheres that 'men show who they are, reveal actively their unique personal identities and thus make their appearance in the human world;' that is in contradiction to their body which appears without any

[21] Arendt, p.7.
[22] Paul Jenkins, 'Journalism and Democracy: Why Society Needs It' *Briliantio,* 30 October 2023, <Journalism and Democracy: Why Society Needs It - brilliantio> [Accessed 27 February 2026].
[23] Arendt, p.199.

activity of its own. [24] Notably, Arendt measures 'activity' through the capacity for speech and action, not typical activity like playing a sport and exerting the body. Thus, the 'activity' of a journalist is constituted by their reporting and newsgathering, which requires the use of speech and action, and enables the disclosure of human plurality.

One fault with Arendt's theory of action is her vagueness when it comes to speech. She fails to define whether speech is a sub-category of action, whether the two are interchangeable, or whether one is more important than the other. This elusiveness led to my assumption that speech is merely a mode of action. It seems Arendt regards it as the highest manifestation of action, (as opposed to say waving and moving the body) and language is the medium which reveals one's uniqueness. Jürgen Habermas' speech-act theory is more apt and definitive of what I translated Arendt's understanding of the role of speech to be. A speech-act, Mitchell Green explains 'is a type of act that can be performed by speaker, meaning that one is doing so.'[25] Habermas' theory construes speech as action: 'every speech-act simultaneously makes a claim to truth, to rightness, and to truthfulness.' [26] Thus, to apply the speech-act theory to Arendt's vague concept, would be to understand speech as a mode which allows men to show *who* they are, whilst the body shows *what* we are (humans). Speech is form of action, and the two concepts will henceforth be treated equally.

i. The Journalist as a SoA Creator:

Journalists fundamentally operate within, create, and sustain the SoA since their job requires an active engagement with the world and its inhabitants. Through their active work, journalists 'create' the SoA by interviewing, newsgathering, reporting facts, and amplifying voices. Similarly, the final piece provides an instance for men gather to discuss the story, creating the SoA. The journalist creates the SoA through both the process of reporting and the finished artifact (article). Through this creation and

[24] Arendt, p.179.
[25] Mitchell Green, 'Content, Force, and How Saying Can Make It So' *in* 'Speech Acts,' *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2021) <*https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2021/entries/speech-acts/*>
[26] James Finlayson and Dafydd Rees, 'Habermas's Pragmatic Theory of Meaning' in 'Jürgen Habermas,' *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2026) <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2026/entries/habermas/>

sustenance of the SoA, the active work of journalists provides platforms for men to disclose their plurality, with speech as the key expressive mode.

By understanding speech through the lens of the speech-act theory, the journalists' role should be understood as an inherently active one, which requires active engagement in worldly affairs. Journalism is a type of public action where the impact of words carry weight beyond the content to the sphere of public engagement. Reporting is not a passive way to provide information, but a force for shaping political life since, as Kakautani noted, 'truth is the cornerstone of democracy.' [27] By reporting truths, the SoA emerges and enables the collective action necessary to sustain a common-world and understand the plurality of fellow men.

ii. Not a Public Sphere!

The SoA must be differentiated from public spheres, which Andrew Graan defines as a 'particular kind of social form that coalesces as discourse circulates among, and thereby creates, audiences of mutual attention.'[28] The key words here are 'social form' and 'mutual attention.' Whilst the SoA has one condition (the gathering of men through speech and action), public spheres are conditioned by common interests and demographics. Public spheres, as Bruns analyses, are 'multiple sociological structures of communication,' whereas the SoA is singular and grounded in action, not a specific agenda.[29] While the journalist can serve different public and virtual spheres, this is only capable through the existence of the SoA. There can be *many* public spheres, but the SoA is singular because it is coextensive of action, which all men have the capacity for: if action stops it disappears.[30] The SoA cannot be restricted to a single location, for example a local town hall or SNS platform because it is singular and tied to plurality.

Within the SoA, which rests on Arendt's activity of action, journalists must news-gather information to comprise their finished article. The activity of newsgathering relies on the existence of the SoA because

[27] Kakautani, p.19.
[28] Andrew Graan, 'Publics and the Public Sphere,' *Oxford Research Encyclopaedia of Anthropology,* (2022) pp.2-58 (p.2), doi:10.1093/acrefore/9780190854584.013.568.
[29] Axel Bruns, 'From "the" Public Sphere to a Network of Publics: Toward an Empirically Founded Model of Contemporary Public Communication Spaces' *Communication Theory,* 33, (2023), pp.70-81 (p.70), doi:10.1093/ct/qtad007.
[30] World Bank, 'The Public Sphere' *Communication for Governance & Accountability Program*, (Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2023), <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/161991468155123204> [accessed 12 January 2026].

if men did not disclose their plurality through speech and action, there would be little to report on. Furthermore, the very activity of newsgathering, for example through interviewing sources, involves entering the SoA. The fact that the SoA is non-discriminatory is essential to the activity of newsgathering as it allows for coverage of all humans, not just specific demographic groups.

III. NEWSGATHERING

i. The Empirical Power of Gathering in the SoA

The journalists' active work (which rests on the existence of the SoA) create a common-world by gathering events, people, and meanings. Arendt explains that 'wherever people gather together, [the SoA] is potentially there, but only potentially, not necessarily and not forever.'[31] As a product of action, this potential emergence of the SoA generates power and 'keeps the potential SoA between acting and speaking men, in existence.'[32] The validity of power is arises from the initial gathering of men. In *The Crises of the Republic*, Arendt notes that:

> 'Power springs up whenever people get together and act in concert, but it derives its legitimacy from the initial getting together rather than from any action that then may follow.'[33]

The gathering of men is what Arendt deems powerful, and what generates the potential for the SoA and communal action. Not the acts themselves. Tatjana Tömmel considers Arendt's understanding of power as (1): 'the capacity to act in concert for a public-political purpose.' Differentiating from strength, it is the property of (2) 'a plurality of actors joining together for some common political purpose' and unlike force it is (3) 'not a natural phenomenon but a human creation, the outcome of collective engagement' (4) and is based 'not on coercion but on consent and rational persuasion.' [34]

Collective engagement, rational persuasion, and a 'plurality of actors' joining for a common purpose are the key markers of the SoA. However, for this power to emerge, the initial gathering of men must occur. The concept of gathering has its origins in Martin Heidegger's 'Das Ding' lecture which interrogates the concept of a thing.[35]

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[31] Arendt, p.199.
[32] Arendt, p.200
[33] Hannah Arendt, *Crises of the Republic*. (New York, 1972) p.151.

[34] Tatjana Tömmel and Maurizio Passerin d'Entreve 'Power and Action' in 'Hannah Arendt,' *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2025) <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2025/entries/arendt/>.
[35] Martin Heidegger, 'The Thing' in *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: Perennial, 2001) pp.163-180. <56015071-Martin-Heidegger-Poetry-Language-Thought-Perennial-Classics.pdf>.

ii. *Versammlung*: A Metaphysical Gathering.

Heidegger, drawing from the Greek *logos*, considers a 'thing' as something which comes into being through a gathering that reveals and holds together meaningful relations. *Versammlung* (German translation of gathering) refers to a gathering which reveals a unity by which beings come into presence. Heidegger schematised this gathering through the 'fourfold' (fig.3) which, like the SoA, is not fixed but an ongoing dynamic of being.[36]

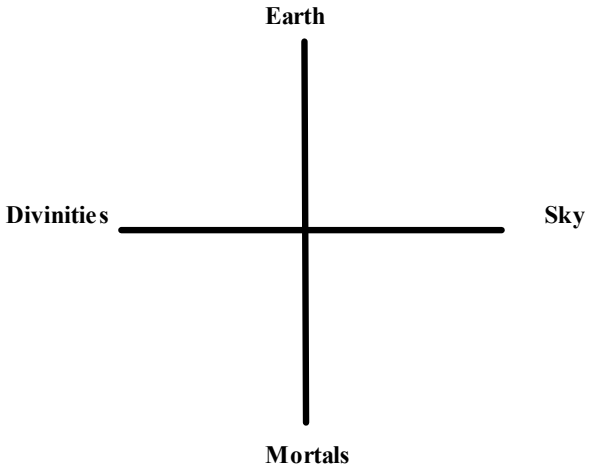


Figure 3: Heidegger's Fourfold. [Author-Created Diagram on Microsoft One Note].

The fourfold posits that a *thing* comes into being through the gathering of the sky, earth, mortals, and divinities. Arendt underestimates this power of gathering. To understand Heidegger's four-fold I have applied a self-authored news story (fig.4).



Uni out again after a vote of no confidence

BY ANDY PHILIP AND EVA MILNE

Dundee University will be hit by two days of strikes next week after union members lost confidence in the interim principal and finance chief.

The Dundee branch of the University and Colleges Union will take action on March 17 and 18, according to details seen by The Courier.

It follows a no confidence vote in the university's executive group last week.

An emergency meeting on February 26 ended with a unanimous decision, particularly focused on the interim principal, Nigel Seaton, and director of finance Lee Hamill.

The union sent its views to the Scottish Funding Council, which oversees public funds for higher education institutions.

"DUCU is still waiting to receive a meaningful response to the issues raised," the union stated.

Union members are unhappy at voluntary severance to cut 180 full-time equivalent posts to save £10 million while advertising for higher salary-banded executive roles, and went on strike in January over redundancy plans.

Last month, the UCU said it had been given no chance for direct input over the plans.

In November, The Courier revealed that more than 500 staff members had left their roles since July 2024.

As of October last year, the university's total staff headcount stood at just under 3,000.

A university spokesman said the institution was focused on returning to a sustainable position where it can thrive, adding: "Our costs are still substantially in excess of our income, and that balance needs to be urgently addressed for the university to recover.

"In doing that, we want to work constructively with the representatives of all three of our campus unions: Unison, Unite and UCU.

"We recognise the right of trade union members to take industrial action and will strive to maintain positive working relationships with the campus unions throughout the dispute.

"We are committed to doing all we can to ensure there is as little disruption to students as possible from DUCU's strike action. We anticipate the majority of classes and student contact time will proceed as normal.

"We have repeatedly acknowledged this has been a difficult time for the whole university community.

"Through the listening exercise conducted last year, through town halls and other forums, through consultation on the objectives for our strategy to recovery, we have heard the views of staff and continue to do what we can to support them through what remains a very challenging period.

"It has also been clear, most recently at the principal's question time held by the staff council, that many of our staff want to see action that takes us closer to the position of stability and sustainability.

"That is what we will continue to focus on."

Figure 4: The Courier & Advertiser, Angus and Dundee Edition, 12 March 2026 (p.5)

The printed news-story is a 'thing' because it gathers a world in itself. Its 'thinghood' includes:

1. **Mortals** (human beings capable of death.) [37]

This includes the striking staff, university management, students, journalists who wrote the article, and the readers who interpret and respond to it.

2. **Earth** (earthly materials necessary to create the physical artifact.) [38]

[36] Heidegger, pp.175-177.
[37] Heidegger, p.176.
[38] ibid. p.176.

This encompasses the physical paper and ink which is crafted with wood from trees, the natural and synthetic materials used to create ink, and the metals used in the printing press.

3. **Sky** (that under which mortals' dwell; a realm of openness, possibility, and the broader horizon of meaning.) [39]

The sky incorporates the 'clearing' in which the meaning of the strikes becomes visible, as part of a larger story about governance and values. For example, ideals of higher education and the future concerns of the university.

4. **Divinities** (higher order meanings: 'the beckoning messengers of the godhead.') [40]

Divinities don't refer to literal deities, but dimensions of meaning which point beyond the everyday. It encompasses the higher orders of meaning and morality. For example, the ethical scope which frames the dispute.

By applying Heidegger's four-fold, the printed news-story becomes a 'thing' through the gathering of the mortals (people affected and involved), earth (materials), sky (clearing of meaning), and the divinities (values and ideals at stake). Through this gathering the article appears not merely as reporting of an event, but as revealing a world. It reveals the university as a point of conflict and allows the situation to appear in its significance, becoming a thing which holds a space where meaning can emerge.

This is precisely Arendt's misunderstanding. Where Heidegger speaks of gathering as the condition for the presence of meaning, Arendt turns it into a condition of communal action.

The power of the SoA Arendt is concerned with, is a type of enacted gathering, (i.e. the power lies in the simple congregation of men.) Yet, to apply Heidegger's fourfold, this 'gathering' assumes a deeper meaning, where not only men gather, but the earth, sky, and divinities gather to bring the SoA into existence. The 'purpose' of things are their creation of a shared world. Haitham Abukhadra notes:

[39] ibid. p.177.
[40] ibid. p.176.

> 'The world is made up and made possible by things. Things make up the world in their multiplicity and relatedness, or relationality, to each other. This means that existence in the world is relational. This relationality belongs to, and arises only because of, that into which the gathering of earth, sky, mortals, and divinities occurs, that is, the thing.'[41]

Like Arendt's activity of work, where the world comprises of manmade durable artifacts, Heidegger deems that 'things' create a shared world. However, the process by which 'things' come into being differ for Arendt and Heidegger. Arendt reduces Heidegger's schematism to a social event and treats gathering as something humans *do* instead of an event which grants the presence of a thing. A middle-ground can be found in Bruno Latour's analysis of a 'thing':

> 'There is a strong connection between the words for thing and a quasi-judiciary assembly […] **A thing is, in one sense, an object out there and, in another sense, an issue very much in there,** at any rate, a gathering […] the same word thing **designates matters of fact and matters of concern**.'[42]

A nuanced understanding of 'gathering' is found in Latour's insight, which assembles Arendt's durable world of artifacts and Heidegger's metaphysical conceptualisation. By 'out there,' Latour acknowledges the objectiveness and factuality of a 'thing.' For example, with *The Courier* article, when I hold it, I can visibly see and touch the paper; its 'out there' in the world. Yet, he also acknowledges the fourfold which is 'in there;' i.e. the essence of the news story, which has come into being through the gathering of the fourfold, which I cannot visibly see but only conceptually understand. The 'thinghood' of a 'thing' involves an assembly of the 'out there' and the 'in there.'

To craft *The Courier* article, I had to physically enter the SoA and engage with other men to understand their plurality. This assembly, on the surface, seems to only assemble men, yet involved a gathering of

[41] Haitham Abukhadra, 'Heidegger: The Fourfold' *that-which*, 30 November 2021, <Heidegger: The Fourfold | that-which> [accessed 13 March 2026].
[42] Bruno Latour, 'Why Has Critique Run out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern,' *Critical Inquiry*, 30.2 (2004), pp,225–248 (p.233), <89-CRITICAL-INQUIRY-GB.pdf>.

Heidegger's fourfold, to designate an 'out there' object which contains 'matters of facts and of concern' (in there) in the final article.

The gathering of information to produce a news story involves a joining together of men, things, and higher ideals to create a point of collective engagement. Considering these philosophical investigations into gathering; newsgathering emerges as a vital practice by which people, materials, meanings, and values enter a common-world. Despite its renowned status, Arendt's *Eichman* reports bring into question the accuracy of her newsgathering, which failed to meet basic ethical journalism standards.

iii. Newsgathering: Barstow VS Arendt.

'Eichman in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil' was first published in *The New Yorker* in 1963 and is celebrated for its blend of historical, political, and philosophical analysis.[43] The report focuses on the *why* (not the who, what, where, when, or how) of the atrocities perpetrated by Adolf Eichman. Arendt's report was based on her 'observations of the defendant and of the conduct of the trial,' as opposed to objective, factual information, Georgia Arkell observed. [44] Although titled as a 'report' this piece differs from traditional journalistic news and resembles more of a collum. Catherine Chappell highlighted that the report is 'an exposition of Arendt's ideals and convictions gleaned from decades as an observer and sometime participant in political affairs that related to Zionism and the Holocaust."'[45]

With Arendt's past in political activism, and later future in political philosophy, her journalistic work sits as a bridge between her two career scales. Her coverage the trials does not comply with standard, crucial principles of journalism. [46] Its challenging to understand, lengthy, and resonant of a philosophical piece, not hard news. To be clear, newsgathering is:

[43] The term 'banality of evil' grew out of this report, which became an influential idea of the 20th century.
[44] Georgia Arkell, 'Hannah Arendt & the Banality of Evil' *Philosophy Now,* 58, (2023) < Hannah Arendt & the Banality of Evil | Issue 158 | Philosophy Now> [accessed 03 February 2026].
[45] Catherine Chappell, *Hannah Arendt and Her Turn from Political Journalist to Political Philosopher* (Boston College Electronic Thesis, 2010) <http://hdl.handle.net/2345/1323> [accessed 04 February 20226]. p.9.
[46] These ethics and standards, specifically the inverted pyramid and 10 Principles are frameworks I have used to guide my own journalistic practices over the past three years, and I believe are essential to any good news-story.

> ‘The process by which journalists collect information and facts to report on stories relevant to the public. The goal is to ensure accuracy and in-depth reporting, allowing journalists to inform the public effectively while maintaining ethical standards.’[47]

Although the Age of Information has transformed journalism, the hallmarks of any news piece remain. The assembly involved in newsgathering, active work, and labouring of the news-cycle (which creates the SoA), removes the writer from the narrative. The article’s focus is not on the author, but the facts being reported. Arendt places herself at the centre of the report by blending journalism with political theory, making her voice the organising principle.



Figure 5: The Military Analyst’s enlisted to spread Propaganda.

A piece of journalism I place in high regard, for its rigorous exposure of crucial information, readability, accuracy, and conciseness is David Barstow’s ‘Behind TV Analysts, Pentagon’s Hidden Hand.’ Published in the *New York Times* in 2008, it exposed the propaganda mission of the Pentagon in the lead up and during the Iraq War. Barstow explains early in the piece that the Pentagon enlisted former military officers as ‘military analysts’ to spread ‘favourable news coverage of the administration’s wartime performance.’[48] Barstow reported that:

> ‘The effort, which began with the buildup to the Iraq war and continues to this day, has sought to **exploit ideological and military allegiances**, and a powerful financial dynamic: Most of the analysts have **ties to military contractors** vested in the very war policies they are asked to assess on air.’ [49]

[47] What is News Gathering in Journalism?,’ *Vocab Dictionary* (2021) <https://vocabdictionary.com/explained/what-is-news-gathering-in-journalism/> [accessed 31 February 2026].
[48] David Barstow, Behind TV Analysts, Pentagon’s Hidden Hand,’ *The New York Times*, 20 April 2008 <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/20/us/20generals.html\> [accessed 31 February 2026].
[49] Barstow, ‘Behind TV Analysts.’

These analysts played a key role in framing Iraq as a success. Barstow exposes how the Bush administration and Pentagon aimed to replace critical journalism with supportive voices, using analysts as 'puppets.'[50] Barstow's article exemplifies journalism's purpose to holds power to account and inform citizens.

Both Arendt and Barstow's pieces represent investigative journalism but differ considerably in their approaches to journalistic principles and the use of the inverted pyramid structure. The inverted pyramid is a structure which is used to write a news story (see fig 5). It places the most critical information at the start, and the rest of the information follows in order of importance. Its a vital framework which makes news accessible. Arendt *obliterates* the inverted pyramid. One must dig through her reports for the crucial information, which *should be* presented first. Her report opens by stating:



Figure 6: Inverted Pyramid of Journalism. Available at: [https://vanseodesign.com/web-design/inverted-pyramid-design/]

> 'Every morning, the words "*Beth Hamishpath*" ("The House of Justice"), shouted by the court usher at the top of his voice, make us jump to our feet as they announce the arrival of the three judges, who, bare-headed and in black robes, walk into the courtroom from a side entrance to take their seats on the highest tier of the raised platform at the front of the long hall.' [51]

All the reader knows is, what the judges look like (irrelevant to the scale of the story), and what is said every morning at court. Barstow's investigative piece however presents all the crucial information within the first three paragraphs. By the end of paragraph six, a reader knows the essential information necessary to understand the story. The inverted pyramid's 'philosophy' is to present all the crucial

[50] ibid.
[51] Hannah Arendt, 'Eichman in Jerusalem I' *The New Yorker,* 9 February 1963,<Eichmann in Jerusalem—I | The New Yorker> [accessed 03 March 2026].

information first, because if someone stops reading after a few minutes, they still learn all the essential information. There is no philosophical unpacking required, no vast descriptions or unnecessary adjectives to describe elements of the story. Just basic but essential news.

Arendt's work, while journalistic, is deeply philosophical and analytical. It goes beyond reporting facts to explore the moral and ethical dimensions of Eichmann's actions. Instead of reporting facts objectively, it frames the event through a theoretical lens and contains bias. Barstow's story doesn't psychoanalyse or place the TV analysts under a specific lens; it presents factual information in a digestible manner; aligning closely with Tom Rosenstiel and Bil Kovach's 10 Principles of Journalism:

1. **Obligation to Truth**
2. Loyalty to Citizens
3. Its essence to the discipline of **verification**
4. Must maintain an **independence** from those they cover.
5. Serve as **an independent monitor** of power.
6. It must provide a forum for public criticism and compromise.
7. It must strive **to make the significant interesting and relevant.**
8. It must keep the news **comprehensive** and proportional.
9. Its practitioners must be allowed to exercise their personal conscience.
10. Citizens, too, have the rights and responsibilities when it comes to the news. [52]

Barstow's piece adheres to journalistic principles by exposing a hidden relationship between the Pentagon and military analysts, revealing conflicts of interest and manipulation of public opinion. It emphasises transparency and accountability; hallmarks of Kovach and Rosenstiel's ethics and is based on extensive newsgathering.

It has a clear service to the most important principle: obligation to truth. Rosenstiel and Kovach adhere that:

[52] Leighton Walter Kille, 'Committee of Concerned Journalists: The Principles of Journalism' *The Journalists Resource*, 26 November 2009 <Committee of Concerned Journalists: The principles of journalism - The Journalist's Resource> [accessed 03 March 2026].

> ‘Democracy depends on **citizens having reliable, accurate facts put in a meaningful context**. Journalism does not pursue truth in **an absolute or philosophical sense**, but it can — and must — pursue it in a **practical sense**.’[53]

Arendt’s account in ‘Eichmann’ offers unsettling, but vital, insights, yet remains an interpretive narrative rather than a strictly objective report. Her observations are grounded in evidence, but they are shaped by her analytical framework. Certain elements of the trial are comedised, and it often reads like a fiction-esque narrative; she calls Eichman ‘the hero of the play’ in an Aristotelian take of the trials, stating that ‘if he suffers, he must suffer for what he has done, not for what he has caused others to suffer.’ [54] A more objective, condensed, inverted pyramid complying account of events is provided by the Holocaust Encyclopaedia, which states:

> ‘Adolf Eichmann was one of the most pivotal actors in the implementation of the “Final Solution.” Charged with managing and facilitating the mass deportation of Jews to ghettos and killing centres in the German-occupied East, he was among the major organizers of the Holocaust. His 1961 trial in Jerusalem, Israel, sparked international interest and heightened public awareness of the crimes of the Holocaust.’[55]

Although not a news-story, this account provides the who, what, where, when, and how of the trial. Arendt’s branding of her account as a ‘report’ is misleading. It fails to meet basic journalistic principles; the marker she meets the most is her attempt to make the significant interesting and relevant. Yet, the screens of pages in her report, which consist of large winding paragraphs, irrelevant information on what judges were wearing and the likes, would instantly turn news readers away. Arendt obliterates two essential journalistic guides (pyramid and principles). Regarding journalism’s first loyalty to citizens, Kovach and Rosenstiel said, ‘[journalists] must strive to put the public interest – and the truth – above their own self-interest or assumptions.’ [56] Arendt disregards this principle by placing her opinions at the

[53] Kille, ‘Committee of Concerned Journalists.’
[54] Arendt, ‘Eichman in Jerusalem I.’
[55] United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, *Eichmann Trial*, Holocaust Encyclopaedia, 16 July 2021 https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/eichmann-trial\> [accessed 03 March 2026].
[56] Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel, ‘Journalism’s First Loyalty Is to Citizens’ *Nieman Reports,* 15 June 2001, < Journalism’s First Loyalty Is to Citizens - Nieman Reports> [accessed 03 March 2026].

centre of the story, creating a challenge when considering her work as ‘maintaining an independence from those they cover’ because Arendt’s ‘truth’ is interpretive not documentary. The ‘report’ offers a theory about the manifestation of evil through thoughtlessness and obedience, its a philosophical argument not a news article.

If journalism’s purpose is to deliver facts to citizens and hold those in power to account, Arendt failed at both.

The court’s task was to hold power to account (which it did), and Arendt’s to chronicle the events and present the facts to citizens. While she powerfully theorises evil and responsibility, Arendt collapses reporting into interpretation. Newsgathering is not merely a predecessor to journalism but a foundational act by which shared worlds, meaning, and accountability can appear. Arendt fails to grasp the practical importance of news-gathering (presenting truths in a consumable manner) and the ontological.

By situating journalism within concept of gathering, (which is integral to the SoA) newsgathering emerges as a vital practice which assembles people, materials, and meanings into intelligible ‘things’ that can enter public life.

Arendt diagnoses this intersection as the ‘common world’ in her philosophy. Journalism should operate at this intersection to transform events and voices comprehensive facts, to which Arendt’s journalism did not and the power of gathering, (in a news and metaphysical capacity) was disregarded.

Its not enough to simply gather alone, one must take this information and manifest it in a medium which is communicable, clear, and with its first loyalty to citizens; making the facts intelligible to reveal a common world.

IV. THE JOURNALIST AS A WORLD-BUILDER

The concept of world-building is closely tied to Arendt's activity of work, which condition is worldliness. For Arendt, the world refers to the man-made structures and 'things' which comprise the human world, not the natural earth. This closing chapter argues that journalism is an inherently world-building practice which sustains what Arendt calls the 'common world' and analyses the threats SNS pose to the existence of the common world.

Traditionally, the journalist world-builds by sustaining and creating the SoA and producing durable artifacts to comprise a world of 'things.' This is achieved through the fact the journalist is the highest manifestation of the *vita activa.*

However, in today's Information Age, the journalist's capacity to world-build, (which relies on the existence of the SoA) is endangered as the common-world in which truth can appear is collapsing in favour of virtual realms. This not only threatens journalism, but democracy itself, which relies on verified facts. Man is increasingly 'escaping to the metaverse,' favouring virtual realms, as Frits Ahledeldt's illustration (fig.6) depicts. In *THC* Arendt expresses concerns that man is becoming increasingly alienated from the earth and world, drawing upon the 1957 Sputnik mission.[57] These concerns take on new urgency within the context of contemporary journalism as human experience is digitally displaced.



Figure 6: Frits Ahlefeldt, Escaping to the Metaverse, 2022.

[57] Arendt believed the 1957 Sputnik mission symbolised man's potential to escape earth-bound existence and create a world beyond physical limitations. (See T*HC* pp.1-6).

i. Reporting as the Construction of the Common World.

World-building is the creation of artifacts and the subsequent human engagement with and around them to form the man-made world. The journalist world-builds by providing sites to understand fellow men's plurality and by chronicling the human world. The unique fusion of the labour, work, and action of a journalist allow for personal active engagement (through newsgathering) and external creation of points of engagement for citizens. Reporting sustains the common world and allows citizens to actively engagement with worldly affairs.

By entering the SoA and engaging with other men, the journalist can news-gather and report. The artifacts produced through work create the man-made structures, civilisations, and 'things' which comprise the human world. [58] The 'things of the world have a function of stabilising human life,' according to Arendt. The loss of the world, what Arendt characterises as world alienation, means 'the loss of shared experience and action' Siobhan Kattago explained. [59]

The mere 'world' refers to the manmade structures/things around us. The common world is constituted by the human interactions with, in, and around, these 'things;' which Kattago describes as 'what happens in-between people.' [60] The common world is shared among people, not just random structures produced through work, but engaged with in action.

Traditionally, the journalist builds worlds through their creation of durable artifacts, such as newspapers, providing a framework and point of engagement with the human world. Artifacts are not simply objects but generate world-building power through human engagement with them. The 'in-between' space Kattago cited is defined by relations among people, i.e man's capacity for action and to interact with 'things.' In journalism, the 'world' is manifested when readers encounter the newspaper, spread debate, and action unfolds in response to it. Its through these interactions by which journalistic artifacts

[58] Arendt, p.137.

[59] Siobhan Kattago, 'Hannah Arendt on The World' in *Hannah Arendt: Key Concepts,* ed. By Patrick Hayden (Durham: Acumen, 2014) pp.52-65, (p.57) <https://grattoncourses.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/siobhan-kattago-hannah-arendt-on-the-world-hannah-arendt-key-concepts.pdf > [Accessed 16 March 2026].

[60] Kattago, p.58.

transcends material form and become a site of appearance where a common world is continually produced and sustained.

ii. The Paradox of Social Alienation: From Action to Labour.

The common-world which journalism builds, sustains, and is dependent upon, is collapsing in favour of curated virtual spaces. Zizi Papacharissi posits that the public sphere has assumed a new form, the virtual sphere. In a very Heideggerian manner, they notes that:

> 'The internet and related technologies have created a new public space for politically oriented conversation; whether this public space transcends to a public sphere is not up to the technology itself.' [61]

Similar to Heidegger's *gestell,* Papacharissi adheres that technologies are defined by the human relations to them, suggesting that its man's choice whether the virtual sphere becomes the predominant site of gathering men and things.[62] The smartphone, which allows men to access SNS, is not inherently evil, however the way it has been deployed to infiltrate almost every part of man's existence is deeply concerning as it blurs the boundaries of Arendt's *vita activa* framework and threatens trusted journalism. As Heidegger's *gestell* theory posits, man is now ordered by technology and spends a vast amount of time in the virtual sphere, accessed through the smartphone. This is not the technology's fault, but man's organisation of it. SNS is a prime example of man's exploitation of technology for profit.

While journalism is the highest manifestation of the *vita activa* (with action as the unifying activity) on SNS so-called action often dissolves into labour. This is characteristic of what Byung-Chul Han calls *infocracy,* which distinctive of contemporary information capitalism, exploits information and data. Han argues that the smartphone is 'a surveillance and subjugation apparatus that exploits freedom and

[61] Zizi Papacharissi, 'The Virtual Sphere: The Internet as a Public Sphere' *New Media and Society*, 4.9 (2002) pp.9-27 (p.9) doi: 10.1177/14614440222226244.

[62] Heidegger defines *Gestell* (enframing) as 'the gathering together of that setting-upon which sets upon man, i.e., challenges him forth, to reveal the real, in the mode of ordering, as standing-reserve.' His theory posits that reality, and men are enframed by technology and that technology orders man and nature as 'standing reserves.'

Heidegger, Martin, 'The Question Concerning Technology,' in *Philosophy of Technology: The Technological Condition: An Anthology*, 2nd edn, ed. by Robert C. Scharff and Val Dusek (Chichester: Wiley, 2014), pp. 305–317. (p.311).

communication.' [63] This a product of the addictive, profit-driven algorithms on SNS,' which Han says has created an illusion of freedom where 'digital information technology turns communication into surveillance.' [64] On SNS, Shoshana Zuboff argues, that 'surveillance capitalists [...] know everything about us**,** while their operations are designed to be unknowable to us.' [65] This is the very illusion of freedom Han discussed. Whilst users *feel* free, they are not, because they are not disclosing a unique 'who' through action but are performing repetitive tasks (scrolling, clicking, liking etc) that feed the surveillance capitalist profit cycle, essentially labouring for the platform. Just as the journalist must report to labour the news-cycle, the user must engage with content to labour SNS.' The illusion of freedom arises as a result of the pseudo-action inherent to the repetitive tasks on SNS. To 'like' a Twitter post is resonant with engaging with another human in the SoA. Yet it doesn't constitute real action due to the anonymity inherent to SNS.

Despite its name, SNS facilitates world alienation because it lacks the durability and cohesion of men fundamental to sustaining the common world. Men are not social with each other through action and plurality disclosure, but passively communicate through memes and texts, labouring the platforms.

Michiko, bridging Han and Zuboff, said 'people, locked in their […] filter bubbles, are losing a sense of shared reality and the ability to communicate across social and sectarian lines.' [66] Despite branding itself as social, SNS' lack the durability and shared facts necessary for a common world, leaving users in 'windowless silos' where they can consume 'customised news feeds that reinforce their preconceptions.' [67] Since users are no longer disclosing a unique 'who' through action, but labouring for the platform, communication is reduced to a mindless act, which is under surveillance, and the virtual sphere can't transcend into a site of genuine gathering.

[63] Han, p.4.
[64] ibid.
[65] Shoshana Zuboff, 'Facebook, Google and a Dark Age of Surveillance Capitalism', *Financial Times* (25 January 2019) https://www.ft.com/content/7fafec06-1ea2-11e9-b126-46fc3ad87c65 [accessed 18 December 2025].
[66] Michiko, p.12.
[67] Michiko, p.18.

iii. A Negative Fourfold: The 'Thinghood' of the Instagram Post

Whilst *The Courier* article provided a positive analogy of Heidegger's *Versammlung*, an Instagram post fails to gather in such a manner. When a user sees a post on their feed, it doesn't constitute a 'thing' which comes into being through a gathering of the mortals, earth, sky, and divinities to reveal a common world. The only element of the four-fold a meme fulfils in any meaningful sense is the mortals. Yet not in the way Heidegger envisioned since a user's brief act of scrolling, liking, or sharing, doesn't amount to the kind of world-disclosing engagement the fourfold requires.



Figure 8: Instagram Meme [Author-Created on Instagram].

Instead of gathering mortals into a shared horizon of meaning the Instagram post disregards them, as each user interacts with the post in isolation, which is mediated by an algorithmically curated feed, not communal experience. There is no gathering of the 'earth' as there is no durable grounding through which the meme is revealed. There is no sky, or 'clearing' into a broader significance, only a clearing to the next post. There are certainly no divinities or gestures toward the sacred and transcendent.

The meme fails to 'thing.' Instead of gathering the fourfold it instead presents a hollow digital 'artifact' whose 'being' (if memes can even have a being) is defined by fleetingness and circulation, rather than durability and disclosure of a common-world.

This negative four-fold epitomises the lack of meaning in virtual spheres, and the hollow essence of the virtual realm where human experience is digitally displaced. This is what journalism is competing with:

nonsensical, unverified chatter.[68] With human experience being digitally displaced, men no longer gather in a common world, but users in a virtual one, thus the common world disintegrates.

This ontological failure is the root of the modern crisis of truth. Since the Instagram post fails to 'thing,' journalism loses its world-building power. Traditionally journalistic artifacts were a stabilising force which informed citizens by providing a point of engagement. When journalism is forced to compete with unverified chatter which lacks durability, it doesn't emerge as a site of appearance or understanding but is lumped in with the mass information flow on SNS, prioritised for profit rather than truth.

iv. The Crisis of Truth

On SNS, men create their own persona, termed the 'user.' Papacharissi observed that the 'anonymity and absence of face-to-face interaction expands our freedom of expression online [and] keeps us from assessing the impact and social value of our words.'[69] As a result, there is no guarantee for accuracy on SNS, since, as Hubert Dreyfus put it, 'information [online] has become so anonymous, no one really cares if its reliable.'[70]

Accountability is crucial to the SoA. On SNS, this is void. Users are free to spread unverified information as they please. *Infocracy* exploits this lack of accountability through filter bubbles which marginalise verified information in favour of agreeable content, meaning trusted journalism no longer enters a singular SoA, but an isolated market of users.

However, there is potential for a positive user experience on SNS, through the Digital SoA (where users gather on platforms to understand fellow plurality) as, although often alienating, these platforms do connect people in isolation, for example during the pandemic. Users can engage in common-ground

[68] Kierkegaard's concept of 'chatter' refers to 'a continuous flow of superficial conversations that barely touch on personal or profound topics, thus neglecting the uniqueness of each individual, reflected for Kierkegaard the alienation and loss of identity in an increasingly mass-influenced society.' This is what is seen on SNS.
Marc- Anthony Widmann, 'Inauthentic Communication: Kierkegaard and the "Chatter,"' *Medium,* 29 April 2024, < Inauthentic Communication: Kierkegaard and the "Chatter" | by Marc-Anthony Widmann | Medium> [Accessed 14 April 2026].

[69] Papacharissi p,16.
[70] Hubert Dreyfus, 'Anonymity versus Commitment: The Dangers of Education on the Internet,' in *Philosophy of Technology: The Technological Condition: An Anthology,* ed. by Robert C. Scharff and Val Dusek (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell, 2013) pp.641-647. (p.641).

and communicate with one another. Yet, this is incomparable to the communal action of the common-world, which traditional journalism mobilises (for citizens) and requires (to report facts).

The crisis of truth, where the common world collapses, is symptomatic of a loss of the SoA. Its called a *space* of *appearance*; denoting a physical space where men can appear to one another and disclose their plurality. The crisis of truth arises because:

1. Men no longer enter a physical space, but a virtual sphere on SNS.
2. They no longer appear to each other as humans, but users.
3. They no longer disclose their uniqueness, but a curated version of themselves, which relies on anonymity and a lack of accountability.
4. This lack of accountability leads to mass disinformation spread due to algorithmic governance; the algorithm is designed to be addictive, and to pull men away from the SoA where they can fully engage with and understand each other.

The disinformation epidemic, although threatening, is alluring to users. Why engage in real-world affairs when you can escape to the meta-verse? Thus, the emergence of the SoA lowers, and the journalist must work harder than ever to pull *users* out of the metaverse to the common-world as *humans*.

The anonymity and lack of accountability has a direct correlation to the erosion of democratic accountability, i.e. journalism's capacity to be a watchdog because, as Arendt said:

> 'What makes it possible for a totalitarian or any other dictatorship to rule is that **people are not informed**; **how can you have an opinion if you are not informed?**'[71]

Arendt's warning is stark and resonant. A community previously *served* by truth becomes *governable* by falsehoods. In this digitally displaced age, the journalist's struggle is no longer to just report the world, but to defend the very conditions which allow the common-world, and truth, to appear.

[71] Hannah, Arendt, 'From an Interview,' *The New York Review of Books*, 26 October 1978 \<https://www.nybooks.com/articles/1978/10/26/hannah-arendt-from-an-interview\> [accessed 21 April 2026].

Taken together, the digital displacement of human experience reveals the crisis journalist's face is not merely technological but *ontological.* The very nature of being human is transformed by SNS' and the departure from the common-world. With this, the virtual sphere becomes a key site of gathering and the conditions which allow truth to appear through action (primarily the SoA) disintegrate.

CONCLUSION: DEFENDING JOURNALISM, DEFENDING HUMANITY.

The notion of a philosophy of journalism is found largely within the discipline of media studies. Yet since the advent of the printing press (an innovation comparable in its disruptive force to the Information Age) journalism has been fundamental to the constitution of the modern world. Human beings require a common world of shared realities. Journalism fulfils this need by holding power to account and enabling citizens to make informed judgments based on facts. Considering this, the relative underdevelopment of journalism as a philosophical subject is alarming.

Arendt's *THC* provides one of the most fitting accounts for interpreting journalistic practice through a philosophical lens. When read as a philosopher of journalism, Arendt's *vita activa* is realised as a key framework for understanding the interconnectedness of the labour, work, and action of a reporter. Journalism, on this account, is not merely an informational practice but a form of world-building that sustains the conditions for action.

Drawing on Arendt's insights, this dissertation has maintained that journalism's deepest purpose lies in the building and preservation of a common-world, which is created through a fusion of the SoA and world of 'things.' Journalists' world-build and creates spaces where truths can be revealed. This duty is increasingly threatened by what Han diagnoses as *infocracy*, where disinformation and chatter dominate facts.

While Arendt's concepts are vital for understanding journalism and the current crisis of truth, I have also identified a significant limitation in her thought; her lack of engagement with ontological frameworks, particularly Heidegger's concept of *Versammlung*. Accounting for the gathering quality of things is essential to understand how the common world is disclosed and sustained, and how journalism participates in this disclosure.

The Courier concrete analogy was later contrasted with an Instagram meme, which functions as an example of a negative fourfold, proving the loss of thinghood in digital spaces has caused the disintegration of the common world, and the current crisis of truth.

Engagement with ‘gathering’ was extended to the practice of newsgathering in an analysis of Arendt’s own journalistic practices. These were argued to fall short of core ethical principles in contrast with Barstow’s exposure of Pentagon propaganda during the Iraq War, which demonstrated journalism’s responsibility to hold power to account. This comparison highlighted the distinction between philosophical insight and journalistic practice, while reinforcing the ethical standards essential for journalism to fulfil its world-building function.

Furthermore, the concept of world-building was developed and situated in terms of Arendt’s common world. While Arendt feared the loss of this world through humanity’s emigration into space, I translated this fear to explain the more immediate threat of the digital displacement of human experience into virtual spheres. Han’s concept of *infocracy* was situated in terms of Arendt’s ‘world alienation’ and it was argued that when men no longer appear to one another physically, but virtually, accountability is lost and truth becomes construed with anonymous chatter. As demonstrated in the negative fourfold application of the Instagram meme, the virtual sphere fails to ‘thing’ and leads to a state of *infocracy* where communication is reduced to surveillance. The shift from being human to being a SNS user has alienated man from the common world. The loss of a common world means the SoA ceases, truth loses appearance, action loses meaning, and journalism lacks purpose.

The fate of the common world cannot, and should not, be separated from journalism because without the conditions of the *vita activa*, journalism not only fails but becomes impossible. Thus, the current crisis of truth is not as merely technological, but *ontological*, as SNS continues to transform man’s capacity to work, act, and labour. This aspect, which Arendt failed to consult, is essential to understanding journalistic practice since its essential to understanding what it means to be human. Journalism is simply the reporting of being human. To defend journalism is not merely to defend a profession but to defend the very conditions which allow a shared human world, reliant on truth, to appear.

Further research should investigate the reshaping of journalism through the blurring of work, action, and labour in virtual spaces. This blurring of the *vita activa* has complicated traditional notions of truth disclosure and accountability due to the shift from the physical realm to the digital. Understanding these

transformations is crucial not only for individual journalists and news-consumers, but for the future of democratic life, since the current crisis of truth is an *ontological* threat, not just technological.

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