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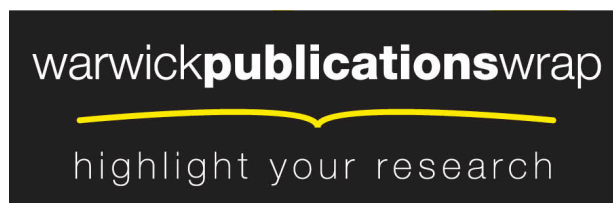
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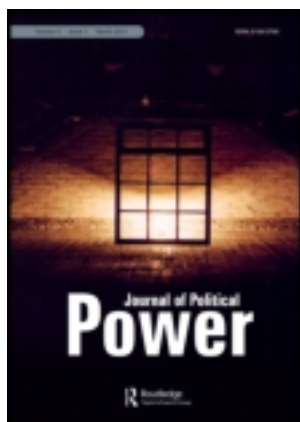
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Biopolitical authority, objectivity and the groundwork of modern citizenship

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Authority is a powerful concept for coming to terms with the diversity of power. This article reframes the concept of ‘authority’ and articulates its continued relevance in a context of radical contingency and biopolitics. It argues that authority is essentially objectivist. Biopolitics is conceived as a historical process of constituting biological life and economic forces as objectivity. The paper addresses the question of whether biological-type relations destroy or foster capacities for politics. Arguing against Arendt’s diagnosis of the fate of authority in modernity, the article maintains that biological knowledges and economism create new groundworks of politics, citizenship and authority. This suggests that politics is instigated not simply through breaking given aesthetic orders (dissensus), but also through aesthetic productions of objectivity.

Keywords: authority; biopolitics; Foucault; Arendt; knowledge; objectivity; aesthetics; experience

There is a clear imperative for political theory to go beyond identifying and denouncing power, to identify and describe *different types of power*; drawing descriptive distinctions between *political* powers, which contribute to the openness of social orders, and powers of *domination*. ‘Authority’ is a long-standing concept that helps to grasp and express the nuances of such distinctions, specifying types of power that are to do with political structure, knowledge, processes of ‘enabling’ and cooperation (Sennet 1980, Haugaard 2010, Pearce 2012). Arendt (1970, 1977) distinguishes between authority and political power on the one hand, and violent domination on the other, arguing that the real opposite and alternative to violent domination is not its disruption or negation, but rather the existence and augmentation of authority and political power. Domination derives, then, from too *little*, not too much, power. This is not to say that authority is necessarily a good thing; that authority is not-domination does not mean that authority is good! Clearly authority is a type of power and, as any form of power, can be used towards abhorrent ends. Moreover, authority is inherently in-egalitarian and is usually built upon exclusions, racisms and unjust distributions of resource. However, it *is* to suggest that there is a lot more to say about power than that it exists; there are different types of power to be analysed. Authority is a type of power that works through the generation of degrees of openness, answerability and trust between participants in authoritative power relationships. The description of authority is crucial for comprehending how (other than through brute force) specific power relationships and institutions persist.

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Analysing authority can also help us to understand the range of possibilities and limitations with respect to transforming or engaging in specific situations of power.

Politics is not only about the ‘political moment’, the overthrow of existing order and the creation of dissensus; it is also about the *conditions* of being, or becoming, political (Isin 2002). Politics takes place within formations, or ‘foyers’, of experience (Foucault 2010), upon a ‘groundwork of the world’ (Arendt 1977), in which solidarity, judgement and world negotiation become conceivable. This suggests that questions concerning the existence and distribution of capacities for politics, should include interrogations of the range of durations, formations or virtual planes of experience that make being political possible. ‘Authority’ is a key concept through which we can approach this durational plane of the conditions of politics. It is a concept that has, however, been relatively neglected in recent debates about power. This neglect might be due in part to the widespread idea that authority pertains more to past traditional structures of stable political systems than it does to the dynamic, deterritorialised, state of contemporary affairs – in which popular political theorists describe *power* in terms of immaterial and dispersed sovereign empires (Hardt and Negri 2000) and *politics* as the moment of dissensus (Rancière 2010). Arendt (1977), amongst others, has argued that authority is impossible within this ‘modern’ processual world (Friedman 1990). This article reframes the concept of ‘authority’ and attempts to articulate its continued utility and relevance for thinking about politics and practices of citizenship in the contemporary biopolitical context of immanent power, vitalist values and transgressive experience.

This article develops a new theorisation of authority – or ‘the groundwork of citizenship’ – that enables us to describe plural forms of authority (in contrast to Arendt’s singularising vision) and to capture forms of authority that are generated and proliferated in the modern post-foundational, deterritorialised, egalitarian world. The analysis of authority that I am putting forward centres on practices and structures of *knowledge*; powers of knowledge, and their role in the production of that sharedness, boundedness and meaningfulness that we variously call ‘community’, ‘sociality’, ‘the common’, etc. Objectivity understood in broad terms (as a source of judgement beyond subjective perceptions, positions or understanding; as reality beyond individual knowledge; as the outside of both community and thought) is an essential condition of authoritative relationships. ‘Ideas of objectivity’, I will suggest, serve as focus points, anchors, for experience, enabling us to escape our finite singularity and to occupy worlds in common. Authoritative relationships, voices and statements enact connections with those ideas, playing upon inequalities in our closeness to objectivity. Authority is the force of ‘wise’ or ‘in the know’ counsel – the force of ‘advice that cannot safely be ignored’ – deriving from inequalities of access to objectivity. This account of authority enables us to make sense of the more optimistic approach to the existence of politics in modernity that figures in Michel Foucault’s work on biopolitics and governmentality (1978, 2003, 2007, 2008).

Arendt argues that authority is in crisis in the modern world, and that this is not least because of an enormous increase of public concern with issues of biological survival and growth – security and economy – which she called the rise of ‘the social’, of ‘labour’ and of ‘life’ (Arendt 1958). This is the process by which the *oikos* – economy – becomes a public, rather than private, concern, and through which the preservation and growth of biological life attains a new excellence and status as ultimate value. This rise constitutes a radical event in the formation of

experience whereby perception becomes orientated upon the passing away of time, and the pursuit of growth; a change of perception that destroys tradition, duration and the ‘groundwork of the world of citizens’. Foucault’s account of modernity centres upon the same rise of concern for biological life – the invention of political economy, public health and modern science. However, here this ‘rise’ is characterised as a process of objectification, which *adds to* the possible formations of political subjectivity and citizenship (or ‘subjectification’) (Dolan 2005, Foucault 2007, Blencowe 2012). ‘Biology’ and ‘economy’ figure in Foucault’s analysis more as a production, opening and pluralisation of the groundworks of citizenship, than, as they do in Arendt, as a destructive force generating worldlessness. Foucault maintains that the modern attention to collective life processes and population-level phenomenon unblocked the art of government (2007, p. 104–105). Building upon Foucault’s analysis of biological knowledge and biopolitics, I will suggest that biology and economy are bases of authority (and thus groundworks of citizenship) in the biopoliticised world. Biological life, the article will suggest, is a powerful modern ‘idea of objectivity’ which forms one (or many) of the bases of authority for modern political subjectivity – it is the basis of *biopolitical authority*.

Many accounts of modern political culture highlight the significance of ideas of biological life for the legitimisation of power. I am suggesting that this significance can be understood not simply as an ideological disguise for power, or as an idealist-discursive determination, but in terms of the capacity of biological life to *be* objectivity – to be a focus point or anchor of experience, to which we have differentiated connections, and in reference to which authority can emerge. Experience of biological life provides the anchorage, the reference in objectivity, for a whole range of contemporary authoritative voices: from the ‘view of the market’, through ‘medical expertise’ and ‘military intelligence’, to the testimony of ‘the survivor’ or ‘victim’. These different characters augment our linkages to (help us to get in touch with) biological life, and they draw authority from their greater proximity to that life.

This is not to endorse or agree with the claims of biological determinism, or economism. Rather it is to make an empirical claim about the historical role of biologism and biological knowledges in the construction of modern experience. Foucault’s perspective on biology (and indeed, objectivity in general) is radically constructivist. He argued that ‘life’ as we understand it – as a clearly discreet mode of existence, as a centre of functionalist reasoning, as a self-transcendent process being prior, and subsequent, to experience or individual lives – did not even *exist* before the development of techniques of statistical observation and the knowing practices of biological science at the end of the eighteenth century (Foucault 1970, p. 160). But his is also an ‘objectivist’ and materialist approach in that he argues that life really *is* objectified through the practices of modern science; life has become the real objective basis of truth games and experience. Moreover, in his later ‘biopolitics’ work, he identifies that process of objectification with techniques and transformations of collective embodiment (Foucault 2007, p. 78). This radical constructivism about objectivity (which is not the same as scepticism) is the starting point of the analysis of authority and objectivity in this paper. My claims concerning the capacity of life, biology and economy, to constitute objectivity are made on the assumption that this, and indeed any, idea of objectivity is an outcome of historical processes of objectification; of innovations in knowing and performing, which reorganise connections of capacities (embodiment). Biological life is not a stark

material or metaphysical reality lying now exposed after a modern stripping away of culture, fantasy or imagination – as modernists of various hues have maintained – which we have to either affirm or rail against. Rather, biological life, in its full status *as* objectivity, as reality, is an outcome of historical imagining and material knowledge practices; it is historically constructed, contested and *multiple* (see Parisi 2009). This suggests that the open, plural and contestable nature of citizenship might reside, in part, in the (virtual) multiplicity of biologies and economies (organisations or visibilisations of embodiment) that constitute the domain of *objectivity*.

What is authority?

For Arendt, politics is not only about the moment of action and participation in starting something new; it is also about the *conditions* that make politics possible. One such condition – a condition that she thinks is in question in the modern, life valorising, egalitarian, world – is authority. Arendt is seen by many as a great counter-thinker of ‘the political’, challenging the dominant traditions of European political philosophy and striving towards pluralism. She is associated with the thinking of politics as participation, as the creativity of beginning something new, as free speech and action in public (Arendt 1958, Bonner 2008). In this she is widely thought of as a celebrant of ancient Greek democracy.¹ However, when Arendt (1977) turned her attention to the *duration*² of citizenship it is the political experience of *Rome*, not Athens, upon which she drew. The Romans, Arendt argued, invented the possibility and experience of *authority*, which is the groundwork (the durability) of the world of citizens. Authority is created in and as a structure of experience that is orientated towards the past and which holds the foundation of the city to be sacred. This political experience, she stated, was simply not available to the Greeks.³ Arendt claimed that this Roman authority is fundamental to the tradition of political philosophy that ‘we’⁴ inhabit. It is an experience, however, that has become impossible in the modern world. Something like a crisis of authority defines the political desires of the modern era. In particular, the revolutionary tradition should, she argued, be seen as so many failed attempts to create new foundations for authority. This loss of authority is ‘politically identical’ with the loss of worldly permanence and reliability: the loss of a common world (1977, p. 95).⁵ The ‘most serious problem’ of all modern politics, she writes, is not that of ‘how to reconcile freedom and equality but how to reconcile *equality and authority*’ (1963, p. 278 italics added).

‘Authority’ is a rightly ambiguous concept for normative political theory. On the one hand, ‘authority’ refers to things anti-democratic, unequalitarian and cruel. ‘Authority’ names the normative weight of inherited hierarchical tradition. It also evokes the power of those unreasonable, unthinking ‘authorities’ that form judgments and orders in apparent detachment from the lives of the people they govern, or indeed from rationality per se. ‘Authoritarianism’ suggests political regimes that are rigidly hierarchical and conjures images of unjustified or abusive power. Authority is necessarily a matter of hierarchy and inequality. But ‘authority’ can also be a very positive term. Authority is a form of power that does not require physical force or violence. Arendt defines authoritative power as the very opposite of violence or force. Authority is a limitation upon freedom that *guarantees* freedom. It is power that is manifest as guidance, advice or council – forms of influence that are far more favourable to receive than any blow of force and compulsion. ‘Authority

implies an obedience *in which men retain their freedom*' (Arendt 1977, p. 106, italics added); it operates through advice that could in theory (though perhaps only foolishly) be ignored. Moreover, there is something fundamentally collaborative about authority. Authority is to some extent in the hands of all participants in an authoritative relationship – it has to be *granted* by those who are subjected to its constraint. Authority has a reciprocal power of holding to account; authoritative figures forsake their authority if they contravene their own principles of legitimisation. What the ambiguity of the term suggests is that 'authority' names not a principle of evaluation but rather an aspect of the constitution of life in common. Indeed, authority is thought of as a kind of glue that holds communities together, as well as a guide through the interminable dilemmas of judgement and interpretation (Sennet 1980). Sometimes we mourn the loss of authority. This statement of 'loss' expresses the condition of *alienation* (or 'worldlessness' in Arendt's terms). The normative ambiguity of 'authority' is a reflection of the inescapable ambiguity of life in common – the perpetual tensions and torments engendered in the joy, necessity, irrationality and incommensurability of living together.

Existing theories wed authority to the making of community, sociality or the common. Max Weber's classic account of three ideal types of legitimacy – types of authority – refer to different processes of constituting associational relationships and political, or collaborative, agency (Weber 1947). Legal rationality, tradition and charisma, the ideal types of authority, are equally ideal types of political system, community or sociality; types of living together; types of '*imperative co-ordination*' (Weber 1947, p. 324, italics added). Arendt describes authority as a thread linking a present citizenry to the founding of the city or *polis*; 'authority or those in authority constantly augment ... the foundations;' they augment the past creation of the political community of which they are a part (Arendt 1977, p. 122). More recently, theorist of governmentality, Rose (1996), ties the term authority to modes and applications of 'expertise' that are involved in the work of *subjectification* – injunctions, advice, meanings and techniques that enfold communal knowledge and organisation into the habits of thought and emotion of subjects, and which invest or incorporate the capacities and desires of individuated bodies (people) into systems of governance. Authority constitutes political community. To feel the force of authority is to feel the reality of a community, to belong (happily or not) to that community. To affirm, exercise or recognise authority is to affirm the reality of, and invest in, a particular community. We can submit to authority for the sake of our membership of the political community – we can submit to the rule of law for the sake of our citizenship – even if we perceive the particular command as wrong or even illegitimate. Further, authority gives the support of the community to those who guide, impel and judge. If I make a decision with authority I do so on the basis of a shared life, an order, a 'common sense', or 'general intellect'. Authority offers its bearer a sense of communal support when facing the potentially paralysing agonies of decision making.⁶ Exercising authority is a way of deferring responsibility to something else, to the common. It is far *easier* than exercising personal will or reason.

Arendt (1977, p. 275) writes of freedom that it 'is only possible among equals' and that 'equality is ... applicable only with in limitations'. By creating such limitations, authority can be seen to *pluralise* the possibilities of politics, diversifying limits and thus creating spaces of freedom that are more (potentially) inclusive. Authority constitutes limitations, carving out spaces of freedom. We could say that

whereas equality was the condition of freedom in the extraordinarily exclusive Greek *polis*, authority was the condition of politics (equality and freedom) amongst *un-equals* in the much more inclusive and diverse Roman *civitas*. Arguably in ancient Rome authority enabled the incorporation of inequality into the citizenry itself, facilitating a far more open and differentiated category of citizenship than had been the case in the Greek *polis*.⁷ At the same time, as Isin (2002, p. 110) argues, authoritarian rituals and displays of hierarchy in Roman life opened up sites for agonism, negotiation and rights claim beyond the official domains of citizenship.

Arendt argues that authority (as conceived in ‘the Western tradition’) is specifically and uniquely tied to a rationality of foundationalism. Authority was bound up with the Roman conviction of the sacredness of foundations ‘that once something has been founded it remains binding for all future generations’ (Arendt 1977, p. 120). Authority and those in authority *augment* the foundation of Rome, forming an unbroken link between the contemporary citizenry and the formation of the *polis*. Authority here is intertwined with a very ‘un-modern’ conception of growth and of time (an ‘un-modern’ structure of technology and experience). Contrary to ‘our’ conception, where growth moves into the future, the Romans saw growth as directed towards the past (Arendt 1977, p. 123). Authority enacts the past within the present, referring all the way back to the sacred point beyond and before the political community, upon which it rests. ‘Tradition preserved the past by handing down from one generation to the next the testimony of the ancestors, who first had witnessed and created the sacred founding and then augmented it by their authority throughout the centuries’ (Arendt 1977, p. 124). With the (supposed) long decline of religion and tradition, Arendt argues, we have lost touch with such conceptions of the sacredness of the past, and of the durability of the world that such sanctification created. Authority – this Roman form of authority that has shaped subsequent political philosophy – is impossible to really understand, let alone deploy, in the context of modern experiences and understandings of time according to Arendt. The Roman foundations of the political system of ‘the West’ have, in her view, been undermined by our transformed relationship to time, sanctity and tradition. The great political revolutions of the past three centuries can be understood as gigantic attempts to repair the broken foundations of authority ‘and to restore, through founding new political bodies, what for so many centuries had endowed the affairs of men with some measure of dignity and greatness’ (1977, p. 140). Only the US, with its sacralised ‘founding fathers’ and Declaration of Independence, Arendt suggests, has come close to creating the conditions of authority in the modern world (an achievement that perhaps rests upon the distance in time between the violence of the colonisation of North America and the sacralised act of foundation) (1977, p. 140).

However, the authority that Arendt defines as necessarily foundationalist (and therefore inaccessible in a modern future-orientated egalitarian world) is strictly and explicitly limited to a certain tradition of European political philosophy. To open up the conception and practice of citizenship, we need to think the concept of authority in more pluralisable, and thus more *general*, terms than did Arendt (and to take the risk of confusing everything with everything else against which she warned (1977)). To recognise and articulate alternative formations of citizenship, we have to be less specific in our terms than Arendt – the great specifier – would usually allow. Indeed, Arendt herself treats the category of authority in more general terms

in a utopian moment of her writing in which she imagines the potential reconciliation of equality and authority in the generalisation of the ‘council system’, which spontaneously emerges in many revolutionary moments (1963).⁸

Authority and objectivity

Instead of tying the concept ‘authority’ to foundationalism, as does Arendt, I think that we can more usefully delineate the specificity of authority with reference to the power of knowledge, or to be more precise, the power of *objectivity*. In place of ‘the foundation of the city’ of Arendt’s schema, I argue, alongside Dawney (2013), we can posit the more general term ‘objectivity’, which is the ‘foundation’ or essential referent of experiential knowledge. Authority can be specifically associated with forms of power relationship and status that rest upon inequalities of knowledge. Indeed, knowledge (not foundations) is the key term that appears in the account of ‘authority’ in the Oxford English Dictionary.

Authoritative relationships derive from inequalities of knowledge. Authoritative statements provide guidance, judgement or witness from the position of ‘knowing better’. As Arendt (1977) remarks, the most essential and uncontroversial relationships of authority are those between adults (who know better) and children (who cannot be expected to know). To speak with authority implies speaking from a position of greater knowledge. We can say, then, that the force of authority depends upon collective acceptance of some criteria of knowing, rather than upon foundations *per se*.

The force of authority has, then, something to do with the structures and the force of knowledge. But it is clear that the force of authority is not the same as the force of *truth* itself. To be impelled by authority is not the same as being compelled by reason. There is no inequality in access to reason. The force of reason is something that is deployed in the art of argumentation – an art that takes place between equals – not authoritative command. A statement might remain authoritative despite being untruthful, depending upon who declared it and in what circumstance, so authority cannot be the same as truth. Moreover, authoritative statements can refer to matters of *opinion*, not only of veracity. Valid knowledge is an essential condition of authoritative relationships, voices and statements, but authority is not simply ‘the rule of truth’.

The condition of authority, I would suggest, is not access to truth *per se* (nor necessarily to past foundations or a shared place) but is rather access to some kind of ‘idea of objectivity’; an idea of *impartiality* and of *reality*. Objectivity is the essential outside of experiential knowledge – it names a position outside of particular perspectives (the outside of the community), and outside of the subjective realm of interpretation and ideas (the outside of thought). Simmel suggests that the stranger is the human figure of objectivity (Simmel 1971a).

Without an idea of objectivity that is before and outside of particular experience, we are buffeted around in a manifold plurality of possibilities of interpretation, occupying the desert of contingency. An idea of objectivity provides a principle of judgement that is beyond experience and beyond the decision of experiencing subjects. This judgement, this referent, is like an anchor or focus point for experience, it places limits upon contingency. To invoke ideas of objectivity is to seek a route beyond the anxiety and loneliness of finite singularity; to escape the condition of alienation or worldlessness; it is to seek the groundwork of a common world.

Kant saw such principles of judgement as the ‘a priori’ (before experience) principle of order that makes experience itself possible. Here, the a priori is seen as the eternal, universal, transindividual form into which all actual individual experiencing consciousnesses are poured. Simmel transformed Kant’s question, ‘how is experience possible?’, into the interrogation of the possibility of *shared* experience and association; he asked ‘how is *society* possible?’ (see Lash 2005). Like Foucault, Simmel claimed that there is not one, fixed, form of a priori shaping the consciousness of all humanity for all time, but that rather the a priori is itself historical and diverse. There are different grounds of common meaningful experience, grounds that are constructed within history, which are nonetheless *real objective grounds* beyond and before particular consciousness, interests or interpretations, delineating what we can experience to be real and indisputable. Some have taken this idea of the ‘historical a priori’ to be overly structuralist or singular, too much wedded to the outmoded idea that there is such a thing as ‘Society’ (with a capital, totalising, ‘S’) that shapes and determines the meaning of individual life. However, the image that I take from Simmel’s reflections is that of multiple, overlapping, contested and conflicting a priori (or we might say ‘ideas of objectivity’) corresponding to an incongruous multiplicity of forms and processes of association, sociality, or community. This interpretation is in keeping with: Simmel’s account of objectification as a part of normal and constant processes of living and of culture (1977a, 1997b); his controversial argument to the effect that there are distinct forms of female and male objectivity, corresponding to female and male culture (1984, 1997b); and his references to the fundamental incommensurability of genuine truths (1991). Rather than the a priori, that makes experience per se possible, we can work with the concept of ‘ideas of objectivity’ that make the authority of given societies, communities or sociations possible; anchoring and enabling specific commonalities, solidarities, of experience.

Simmel describes objectivity as forms that are produced through practices of culture but that stand outside of subjectivity; culture consists of a movement, or flux, back and forth between subjectivity and objectivity (Simmel 1997a). We produce objective forms as a means to communicate and collaborate and to create things bigger than ourselves or our own capacities – objective culture is the condition for working on things collaboratively and for their perfection across time. Objectivity is the form of living together of shared culture; it enables us to work together. As Jason Read has argued (drawing on Paolo Virno), alienation is not about the loss of subjectivity to objects, but ‘the loss of objectivity for the subject’, the loss of the preindividual and transindividual components of subjectivity. ‘[A]lienation is a separation from the condition of the production of subjectivity; it is not a loss of what is most unique and personal but a loss of connection to what is most generic and shared’ (Read 2011, p. 124). The recognition of objectivity, augmenting ‘ideas of objectivity’, is then the alternative to alienation; it is a formation of experience that makes being political possible. Objectivity is the common, the shared ground from which meaningful subjectivity commences; it is a promise of escape from finitude and singularity.

Objectivity remains such, then, only in so far as it is not captured or possessed by individual consciousness, reasoning or interpretation. When a form of judgement is mastered and mobilised within an argument, rather than deferred to, it is functioning as a tool of deduction, not a mode of encountering external reality.⁹ We approach the objective through induction, through experience and experimentation,

through collaboration, through participation with a reality that is essentially external, the world as it pushes back. There is a difference between truth, which includes the truth powers of deduction and reason, and objectivity. Objectivity is a particular type of veridification. ‘Truth settles no conflict in the public place. It speaks to man only in the solitude of his conscience’ (Rancière 1991, p. 90). But ideas of objectivity come precisely to *collectives*; objectivity names the legitimacy of scientific *institutions*, it justifies legal *systems*. Objectivity is not truth, it is the condition of living, experiencing and acting, in common.

Objectivity figures as a kind of anchor, a focus point, that stands outside of the community and to which the multiplicity of authority relationships, voices and statements (which constitute the reality of community) refer. In so far as we are community, we are bound by a common objectivity. Authoritative relationships, voices and statements concretise around such ‘ideas of objectivity’. This binding is authority. The gap between deduction (*subjectively* mastered truth) and objectivity (the truth of external reality approached through induction, experimentation and collective memory) offers insight into the vicissitudes of authority. This gap explains the necessarily deferential, deferring, suspended forms of authoritative statements. Authoritative voices, statements and commands speak of objectivity somehow, without themselves being objectivity; they call upon the truthfulness of objective reality without being the source of, or masters of, that truth. They *recall* objectivity. The elders of the city recall and form a link with the foundation of the city; they do not found it. The law refers to the principle of universality; it is not itself universal. Authority always points beyond the judgement, will and perspective of the person who is exercising it. It points to and recalls, falling back on, objectivity and incontrovertible truth (reality) without taking it over, or making it the possession of a subjective conscious. To make objectivity into the possession of human subjectivity would be to bring this reality *into* consciousness, *into* the community, such that it would no longer be able to play the role of *outside* arbitration (the source or essential referent of authority). The nature of the reality, of objectivity, remains itself fundamentally mysterious, necessarily contestable, beyond subjective grasp. The form of objectivity as externality renders necessary a gap between the objective itself and the subjective figures and statements, which call upon the principle of objectivity. The power of objectivity is necessary for authority, but it functions as a suspended power, a power referred to and evoked, made manifest, not exercised or possessed by any participant. This implies, amongst other things, that any given ‘idea of objectivity’ needs to represent some kind of mystery or radical exteriority; its true character *must* remain a matter of interpretation for it to go on being the outside.¹⁰

Rather than being essentially foundationalist, then, we might propose that authority is essentially *objectivist*. Authority and those who exercise it augment ideas of objectivity, which is at the same time the augmentation of collective reality. In these terms, the foundation of the city appears as *one* ‘idea of objectivity’ amongst others, one spectacular point and radical exteriority to which the citizens of Rome could all refer, and yet to which they had differentiated, unequal, access – an inequality forming the basis of authoritative relationships (imperative coordination) and agonism. Other ideas of objectivity include *universality*, which is so essential to law and other rationalist systems of community. As I will now argue, a paramount idea, or cluster of ideas, of objectivity that operates in contemporary political community is that of *biological life*.

Biology, modernity and politics

To recap the arguments of the paper so far – I have suggested that a critical grasp of politics, citizenship and positive power demands attention to the formations of experience that make being political possible. Arendt's reflections on the *duration* of the political, and the performative production of political experience, point towards *authority* as a term (and historical memory) through which to grasp this durational dimension of political subjectivity. I have also suggested that Arendt's *own* treatment of the concept authority (as indeed, her treatment of the concept of 'the political' per se) is too tightly drawn, too much restricted to the political and philosophical experience of a 'West' imagined as singular. Indeed, Arendt was herself drawn to a looser definition of authority when she attempted to creatively explore and articulate a lost alternative system of governance. With that exception Arendt defined authority (and the possibility of politics) very strictly, and declared an absence and impossibility of authority. Instead, like Foucault, we could identify a diverse plethora of existent formations of political subjectivity. In place of the specifically Roman experience of authority, as based upon the sacred foundation of the city, I have proposed a more general, and thus diversely applicable, conceptualisation of the experiential structure of authority; I have proposed that authority is not essentially foundationalist but is, rather, essentially objectivist. Thinking authority in these terms might help us to grasp the duration of political subjectivity in considerably more plural terms than Arendt's own analysis would allow.

In the remainder of the paper, I want to suggest that thinking authority in these terms enables us to identify the idea and experience of *biological life* as a basis of authority – and thus of political subjectivity. In other words, we can identify as one groundwork of citizenship the very domain that Arendt herself described as the *anti thesis* of politics, the harbinger of behaviourism and despotism that had taken hold of, and destroyed the public realm of freedom and appearance; the domain of biological life, economy and 'the Social' (Arendt 1958).

In an argument that has been taken up in more or less indirect fashion by Foucault (1978, 2003, 2007, 2008), Agamben (1998), Hardt and Negri (2000), Dillon and Reid (2005), Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy (1997, Kirwan 2013) and a great many others in the past decade, Arendt argued that Western modernity was created, and can be defined, by a transformation in values through which biological life became the paramount collective concern (Arendt 1958). In this, concern for the brute facts of survival, and the associated impulsion and moralising force of biological necessity, has crowded out all the alternative ideals (including creative work, free political action and, most devalued of all, contemplation), and taken over the public sphere. In Arendt's eyes, the 'rise of the Social' (which is to say the rise of biological life to the status of ultimate value) subjected the public realm to the 'essentially private' concerns of biological survival economy, and thereby supplanted the domain of freedom with one of necessity.

In contrast – and in line with Foucault's approach – I want to argue that the 'rise' of biological life, economy and modern science is better understood, as a material-technological process of *objectification* – whereby biological life and economy are constructed and come to be experienced as objective reality. In becoming objectivity biological life becomes the virtual groundwork of political worlds, a condition of many-plural becomings political. It is along such lines that Foucault's (1978, 2003, 2007, 2008) analysis of 'biopolitical modernity' diverges from

Arendt's (1958) account of the 'rise of the Social'. Foucault defines modernity as the moment at which man places himself in question as a *living species*, the moment of emergence of biopolitics. He identifies the rise of concern for biological life, survival and economy as paramount in the shaping of modern governance (Foucault 1978, 2003). But he associates this with a proliferation and decentralisation of power and authority (the development and spreading out of 'governmentality') not with their destruction (Foucault 2007).

Although he does not explicitly reference her writings, many of Foucault's historical and textual references in his biopolitics lectures suggest that he is thinking with and against Arendt at this time. As I have argued elsewhere there are numerous resonances between Foucault and Arendt in the analysis of the role of the biological in modern politics (Blencowe 2010, 2012 ch. 3). Both describe a positivity – a production of force, embodiment and historicity – in biopolitics and both identify a continuity between the Christian pursuit of pastoral care for the soul and the biopolitical valorisation and pursuit of life. But where Arendt sees only a closing down of politics and a profusion of necessity, Foucault sees a profusion of *governmentality* (which is to say of authoritative relationships) and sites of negotiation.

As Fredrick Dolan has argued, Foucault's account of the modern normalising, biologising power, is of a power that is addressed to citizens who are at liberty, and in comparison to Arendt's account is a vision of *politicisation* (Dolan 2005). The difference between them on this matter is perhaps most starkly apparent in the contrast between Arendt's assertion that the 'no-one' by which modern society is ruled 'does not cease to rule for having lost its personality' with Foucault's insistence that we need, precisely, to lop off the king's head in our thinking and stop imagining power as something that is exercised by a personal sovereign (Arendt 1958, p. 40, Foucault 2000b, p. 122). Further, Arendt argues that the despotism of the family becomes the model of government in the modern age. There has, she claims, emerged a new entity, 'society', and it constitutes a kind of massification of the family. The modern age, the age of society, is normalising because it is like a family, characterised by despotism and conformity rather than individuality and action. Action is excluded as the cost of behaviourist social science, individuality is excluded from the public, and an immense force of conformism is exerted over all. The equality of members of modern societies 'resembles nothing so much as the equality of household members before the despotic household head' (Arendt 1998, p. 40). Foucault, in what could be read as an implicit response to Arendt's thesis, argued that with the emergence of the population the family disappears as a model of government, becoming instead its privileged *instrument* (Foucault 2007, p. 104–105). Not 'family style totalising despotism' but individualising, regularising, even autonomising and definitely dispersed *governmentality* characterises modern society, according to Foucault – normalising impetus and all.

For Arendt the rise of the Social (of the biological, of economy) is a closing down of spaces of politics and an invasion of the public sphere by the concerns of the private. In contrast, Foucault argues that biological life (alongside labour and language) were *objectified* through material, technological and governmental practices, specifically through the carving out in reality of population and its related phenomena. These were techniques of observation and governance that made collective population-level phenomena visible and produced the great collective bodies of nineteenth- and twentieth century politics (2007, p. 79). For Foucault, this objectification of biological life is not a closing down, but precisely an opening-up, of

domains of politics, creating new spaces for the conduct of conduct, setting up grounds for resistance, facilitating rights claims and proliferating new political bodies (1978, 2003, 2007). The capacity of objectivity to constitute the groundwork of open power relations, relations of authority, helps to make sense of Foucault's diagnosis of biological politics.

I will now move on to characterise the transformations in the formations of experience which constitute the possibility of biopolitical authority, making the case that the objectivity of life has generated new grounds of authority, citizenship and politics. This is not intended as a normative 'defence' of biopolitics, but rather as a description of the practical, emotional, functioning of biopolitical authority – a power, and a citizenship practice, that is used in the pursuit of a great spectrum of ends, which entails a plethora of exclusions and inequalities, and which frequently breaks down and gives way to new violence, domination and despotism.

What is biopolitical authority?

We can define 'biopolitical authority' as authority that obtains from having experienced biological or economic life; from having experienced, touched upon the limits of, life. Biopolitical authority is not, then, exactly the rule of scientific truth – or of a despotic, totalising life force, collectivisation or sovereign. It is, rather, the power and attraction that congeals around a diversity of performances and manifestations of experiencing life. To be biopolitically authoritative is to mediate experience of life, to be a conduit to the force by which life (objectivity) pushes back. To know life, to make life manifest, to make a promise that life is real ... to provide a link to life is to generate biopolitical authority.

Life, understood as a clearly discreet mode of existence, as a fundamental value, and as the immanent telos of functionalist reason, was brought into being through certain innovations in knowledge practices – particularly through attention to population level phenomenon and the immanently connected, reproductive and infectious, character of human bodies (Foucault 1970, p. 160, Jacob 1973, p. 33–34, Blencowe 2012, p. 44–45). These knowledge practices objectify life. Having been technologically, materially objectified, biological life becomes the real, the external, to which human sciences, including political economy, medicine, biology and liberal politics refer. Markets are described and perceived in terms of biological growth and processes of self-regulation; market forces are perceived in liberal political economy essentially as vital, biological, processes (Foucault 1970, 2008, Gibson-Graham 2006 ch. 5, Cooper 2008, Goodchild 2007).

The becoming objectivity of life enables life, biology and economy, to function as grounds of (biopolitical) authority; this is a becoming that occurs through a reconstitution, above all a *collectivisation*, of embodiment achieved through innovations in, and applications of, knowledge. Biopolitical authority is what happens when life – biological life – becomes objectivity; when biological life becomes the outside of thought. Biological life is a powerfully reality-making idea, a contemporary idea of objectivity. 'Biology' is experienced by us moderns as one of the most important sources of 'inescapable fact', beyond perspective or interpretation. Indeed the term 'biological' is often treated as a synonym of 'necessity'. Life and death, survival and morbidity, are no matters of perspective. Life is hard reality.

The theories and knowledges of biological connectedness transform structures of experience and perception such that the present and immediate future become full of potentiality and significance (Foucault 1970, p. 278, 2003, p. 223, Blencowe 2012 ch. 2). The present becomes *more real*, more intense. Relative immortality is present within the living world, manifest in population life, which comes before and continues after any individual finite lives. The mere fact of living becomes the manifestation of *life* – a process that is self-transcendent, (quasi)-transcendental, a becoming more than itself. Modern sexuality organises bodies as participants in flows of life that are transorganic, reaching beyond and breaking the limits of given organic bodies. Biopolitical embodiments (such as modern classes and nations) are animated by this experiential economy, the augmentation and investment of bodies' capacities. These transformations in embodiment, in the technological conditions of experience, constitute life as objectivity. It is life as *transorganic* connection that is able to appear as objectivity, to become the outside of perspective and thought; and to become the groundwork of the world.

Crucially, life, survival and growth serve as a principle or provider of *judgement* within modern frames of epistemology and political reason (Foucault 1970, 2008). Life is a capacity for normative differentiation, for delineating good and bad, rightness and error, justice and injustice, figured as the difference between survival and death, growth and decline, health and pathology. Life is not only creative, auto-generative; it is also auto-normative – and this normative capacity is essential to the role of life in liberal political technologies. The auto-normative character of life means that it can serve as a locus of judgement, an immanent external, impartial, objective, position. Biological life is the outside of experience, perspective, consciousness and thought – the outside reality in which resides the knowing of what is right.

Biological life is an *accessible* outside. We experience life, we push up against and experiment with it, we run tests and write theories. We have a great deal of experiential knowledge about life. Nonetheless life remains uncaptured, uncapturable by individual thinking reason, its force remains somewhat secret, mysterious, hidden. There are special techniques for experimenting with or observing life and institutions devoted to the task; normal encounters with life, birth and death; as well as chance occurrences and individual escapades that generate a sense of having 'really lived'. People and statements draw authority from the inequalities in access to (in-equal experiences of) biological life. By fostering life, knowing life or making life manifest we augment life as objectivity and establish authoritative relationships, voices and statements.¹¹

Biologists and doctors with their tests and interrogations are authoritative in the biopolitical worlds. So too are those who have encountered the edges of life – moved close to death, created new lives (see Dawney, 2013). Markets, with their capacity to test imaginings against the free flux of life (to test businesses and policies against the natural life forces of survival in a market) bear immense authority. Liberal and neoliberal governments see markets as mechanisms by which governmental theories, policies, can be tested against the unfettered forces of life, engendered as the idea of 'market forces'. It is not so much that economic liberalism affirms that the market is *good* as that it abdicates responsibility for deciding between good and bad, success and error, by *deferring judgement to the market*. Economic liberalism (a biologicistic, vitalist, pragmatist mode of reasoning) affirms and augments the basis of liberal authority and political community by affirming and augmenting the *objectivity* – the impartiality and the inescapable *reality* – of the

market. Instead of a reasoning ‘head of state’ liberalism imagines politics as a *pragmatist* process whereby policy ideas are developed and thrown to the wind of vital market force. Politicians are not judging markets, but are rather calling upon markets to judge their policies. Neoliberalism is a social-constructivist version of this liberal technique of governing. Neoliberal theory maintains the sense that vital market forces can act as the natural, external, arbiter of policies and success, but introduces the idea that the behaviours from which market forces *emerge* are not natural givens but rather have to be constructed through mechanisms of quantification, comparison and education (hence the expansion of the state that accompanies this ‘laissez fair’ rationality). Once emergent, however, the market forces are considered the natural, biological-type, self-regulating life forces, the outside objectivity.

In the late seventies, Foucault tried to make sense of the success of neoliberalism, then ascendant in Western Europe and the US, by exploring the original appeal of its early variety, Ordo Liberalism, pointing to the political problem that it was called upon to solve (Foucault 2007, p. 120–121). Although developed in the inter-war years, Ordo liberalism became influential in Germany after the Second World War. The great dilemma for German politicians in the wake of the Second World War was that of how to found a German State after the horror and shame of the experience of Nazi totalitarianism. Through the marketisation of the State, neoliberalism offered market forces as an external arbiter – an external source of judgement – to people who could not begin to trust their own, let alone anyone else’s, ability to take responsibility for the State. We might add that the Second World War marked the start of a more general Europe-wide problem of how to recover the objective basis and authority of European nation states after the global denunciation of the eugenic reasoning, and the breaking up of Imperial power, which had both been so important to the self-imagining and authority of twentieth century European states. The success of neoliberalism as a political programme can be seen in terms of its ability (or promise) to solve the problems of authority-deficit that were created by the experience of totalitarianism, the Second World War and anti-Colonial struggle – experiences in which both the bio-sociological and economic model of ‘the West’ was called into radical doubt and shame. Neoliberalism affirms the objectivity of markets and makes it possible to externalise judgement. It is, then, less a valorisation of the market than it is a ‘deresponsabilisation-machine’ for government.

Citizenship in the context of biopolitical authority

I am arguing that with the historical–material objectification of biological life, biology and economics became a groundwork (or so many groundworks) of citizenship; the ground upon which to claim and contest rights or call to account. The ‘rise of the Social’ is not the destruction of ‘political life’, but the constitution of additional groundwork upon which authority and politics can be played. Where Arendt sees the biological (which includes the economy) as an inherently anti-political domain of necessity, we can instead identify biology as an idea of objectivity or objectness, in relation to which people are unequal (having unequal access) but which also hold open spaces of freedom between un-equals, agonism and negotiation. I am not suggesting that biopolitics incorporates authority and is therefore a ‘good’ type of power, but simply that biopolitical formations of power and experience constitute groundworks upon which to stand as rights claiming citizens, to enact politics, to demand and dispute.

If biology and economy constitute the objectivity, the sense of reality, of biopolitical authority then it is possible to contest and transform distributions of authority by reimagining, or otherwise enacting, those connections. To contest and work upon the *nature* of biological and economic life-process, therefore, is to challenge and attempt to transform the *what* of 'real experience', and thus the distribution of unequal relations to experience-of-reality (objectivity); it is to challenge the *distribution of authority*. Building upon the above analysis of the essentially objectivist character of authority, we can assume that wherever biopolitical authority exists such contestation and transformation necessarily remains *possible*. This is because the idea of objectivity that is the reference point, or constitutive outside, of authority can only function as such in so far as it *remains outside*, outside of known fact and subjective grasp, a mystery, a matter of interpretation, faith and debate. Just as a genuinely authoritative (rather than a despotic) Church must leave the nature and will of God as a matter of debate and interpretation, so any genuinely authoritative biopolitics *necessarily* leaves the question of what life, biology and economy actually *are* open to negotiation, multiple interpretation and contestation. If these things stop being open to interpretation they stop being a mystery, they become matters of known fact, rather than the site of objectivity, and cannot function as the basis of authority (though they might well go on to figure in aesthetic regimes of domination). If the nature of economic or biological force were to be placed beyond speculation and mystery, then biopolitical authority (though not necessary biologicistic domination) would cease.

Of course, none of this is to suggest that the biological has played a primarily *positive* role in modern government (not in the normative sense of the term 'positive' at least). The fact that the objectification of biology and economy generates authority (and not simply violent domination) does not mean that biopolitics, or biopolitical authority, is 'good'. Authority, whilst not domination, *is* power and can be used to serve abhorrent ends. Neoliberal rule, like most authoritative forms of government, is very often in-egalitarian, racist and supremely unjust in its implications. Further, neoliberalism has frequently lost or given up on biopolitical authority and instead given way to biologically inflected modes of domination. As the mythical threat of hell drew despotic violence throughout the authoritarian regimes of both Rome and medieval Christendom, supplementing authority with despotic violence (Arendt 1977), so the ideas of 'infection', 'dangerousness', 'degeneracy', 'racial decline', 'insecurity', 'crisis' and 'economic collapse' draw despotism and 'specification' (Hallward 2001, p. 40) throughout modern and contemporary biopolitical government, supplementing biopolitical authority with violent and racist domination. Biologism and economism have been taken up in the aesthetic ordering of some of the most violent and despotic regimes ever known. It is necessary to recognise and analyse how neoliberalism is not only domination, but also produces and calls upon biopolitical *authority*, not in order to defend neoliberalism, but so as to understand its success as a political formation. Biopolitical authority has enabled neoliberalism to endure as a political system. Moreover, analysis of the ways in which neoliberalism produces authority can open insight into the viable pathways and barriers to contesting rights and distributions in neoliberal regimes.

Marketisation is a key aspect of neoliberal governance; it is a theory and a set of techniques through which 'experience of the market' is made synonymous with 'the possession of authority'. The authority of marketised citizens resides in inequalities of access to experiencing the mythic real of market forces. This formation of

authority renders inequality *intractable*, making the position of the economically excluded thoroughly abject and impassable; being without citizenship. Those who do not participate in markets (which in neoliberal ontology means being engaged in economic competition) exist in the marketised community at an *impassable distance from reality*. From the perspective of marketisation, to be unengaged in markets is not only to be lacking in authority, but to be outside of reality; it is to be entirely beyond the ‘real world’ in which ‘real experience’, and thus the cultivation of (marketised) authority and citizenship, is possible. No justice will be effectively claimed for the economically excluded on the basis of marketised biopolitical authority. This implies that the redistribution of authority towards the economically excluded might be achieved through arguments and performative actions concerning the real *nature* of life (connected capacities), rather than through arguments proclaiming the irrationality or injustice of markets. The authority of markets rests upon their capacity to encounter reality, not upon their legitimacy or justice.

Marketisation is, however, only one aspect of experiencing life that can be called upon in neoliberal worlds. As argued above, it is necessary for the idea of objectivity (the idea of life) to retain some mystery and ungraspability for it to go on functioning as the real, the outside, that authority calls upon. The nature of life-forces, of reality, *necessarily* remains open to alternative interpretations within neoliberal thought. Marketisation is then necessarily *one* theory of the nature of life forces and of reality in neoliberal thinking amongst others. Others include, for example, the classical liberal concept of ‘civil society’ which persists as a theory of life-forces despite its rejection in the theories of marketisation; or the concept of the ‘creative city’ in which the presence of ‘bohemianism’, gay communities and artists stood as an effective theory of the vitality of many major cities and nations through the 1990s and 2000s (Brigstocke 2013a). Economically excluded groups and individuals, denied citizenship through marketisation, are often able to claim authority through drawing upon alternative conceptions of what life (and thus objectivity or reality) is; claiming through the experience of suffering to have ‘really lived’, establishing authority through reference to life otherwise understood. For example, Noorani (2013) discusses the ‘expertise by experience’ that can (sometimes) be claimed by people that suffer mental illness; whilst Dawney discusses the experiential authority of the bereaved and wronged mother Doreen Lawrence. These authoritative figures draw upon alternative, non-market, conceptions of what it means to ‘have lived’.

Conclusion – on pluralism and the redistribution of biopolitical authority

This paper has set out a new theorisation of (aspects of) the nature and production of authority, conceptualising authority in terms that are able to make sense of biopolitics as generative of authority in contemporary life, in contrast to accounts that paint the rise of the biological as the destruction of politics (e.g. Arendt 1958, Agamben 1998). Drawing upon insights from Arendt, Simmel and Foucault, I have described something like an experiential analysis of the framework and functioning of authority: an aesthetic or phenomenological diagram of authority. I have also explored some of the implications of this diagram for understanding the production and specificity of biopolitical authority. The paper has, as such, added to the vocabulary for describing and analysing different types of power in the present,

highlighting a distinction between biologicistic or economistic domination and biopolitical authority.

This descriptive account of the aesthetic, affective or experiential functioning of authority does not imply a normative political or ethical objective. However it does have consequences for our understanding of how it is (and is not) possible to go about the pursuit of *any* such objective. Describing the experiential structure or aesthetics of authority is a contribution to the ontology of power, and the ontology of power makes visible possibilities of both domination and politics. I have briefly touched upon some possible implications of the analysis for the citizenship practices in neoliberal polities. The aesthetics of biopolitical authority also has implications for how one might pursue the normative programme of pluralisation, decentralisation and opening-up of authority in the contemporary context of biopolitics (a normative ambition of many contemporary thinkers of ‘the political’). The analysis suggests that the pursuit of additional, plural and dispersed authority would proceed not through an ‘escape from biopower’ or from the economy, biology or the population, but rather through the *multiplication* (and affirmation of the existing multiplicity of) processes and relations of interconnection, co-causation, function and determination. The pursuit of politics becomes a question of contesting, choosing and performing different biologies and economies (or ecologies) rather than seeking an outside of biopolitics, sovereignty or power. We might seek to pluralise citizenship, and to proliferate or re-distribute authority, by contesting singular representations of objectivity, biological life and economic force. The precedent of pluralist, redistributive, and ‘opening-up’ politics (in biopolitical worlds) has been set not by anarchism, but by the biology–economy–objectivity pluralising projects of socialist feminism, diverse labour movements, cooperatives, alternative economics and, indeed, state-based programmes of reorganising and augmenting connections of capacities such as the introductions of social insurance and welfare.

Challenging exclusionary or despotic political structures is not simply about attacking the grounds upon which they rest, it is also about creating new organisations of sociality, mutual influence and connection – new economies and ecologies – as well as making existent multiplicities of such visible. I want to suggest that politics requires taking charge of the creation and performance of *ideas of objectivity* – fostering the courage and imagination to augment, call upon and even to create additional ideas of objectivity. This could mean fostering and performing wholly new or unfashionable ideas. Or it could mean re-appropriating existing ideas.

It is without doubt crucial to challenge monopolistic anchoring of values in specifying or singular projections of biological life and economy – as in the tyrannical forms of biological-determinism, securitisation, marketisation, cultural progress, racial purity, development discourse and so on. But we might best challenge such exclusionary and despotic power/knowledge by utilising and proliferating, not trying to escape from, the authority of biological life and economy as objectivity. Instead of getting stuck in the position of ‘anti-biologism’ or ‘anti-economy’, we can use our understanding of the power of biological life in political culture to inform diverse strategies of empowerment, politicisation and authority-production.

Biological life is a constellation of ideas of objectivity that are enormously powerful, and that have been historically produced through practices of knowing, observing, describing and testing. Above all biological knowledge is the statement of the enormous existent connected *capacity of bodies*, of everybody, to influence

and create other bodies (other people). These statements might serve as exemplars for the practical work of proliferating objectivity. We can highlight and play upon the multiplicity of biology and economy, calling authoritative voices into self-contradiction. We can also deliberately add to that multiplicity, additionally highlighting and describing peoples' *capacities* and their interconnection, affirming our ecological nature, and creating alternative reference points for authoritative relationships, voices and claims. Our biology and economy – our material relationality – is *no* singularity. It is not the redemptive 'life itself' that would rescue us from Capital or medicalised bureaucracy (cf Hardt and Negri 2000, 2005, Rose 2007), nor is it the sheer anti-political force of necessity (cf Arendt 1958). Biology and economy might, however, be so many historically, materially specific objectivities that constitute, pluralise and open up the groundworks of citizenship.

Notes

1. The extent to which Arendt does in fact romanticise or 'long for' the Greek *polis* is open to debate, given that Arendt clearly explains the dependence of the Greek model upon despotism, rigid patriarchy and slavery. Given her Nietzschean allegiances, we might instead assume that Arendt writes about Greek democracy *not* because she wishes us to draw inspiration from the ancient Athenians but rather, in the spirit of genealogical critique, because she wishes to problematise the values of mainstream European political philosophy, by disrupting the narratives concerning its mythological origins.
2. For a more extensive discussion of authority as the *durational* element of political life see Brigstocke (2013) who argues that productions of authority can be understood in terms of amplitude, gravity and distance. See also Brigstocke *et al.* (2013).
3. Arendt argues that it was his ignorance of the experience of authority that left Plato calling for the despotic rule of a Philosopher King, held in place by the terrible power of a mythological threat of hell (Arendt 1977).
4. Arendt's 'we' appears to be European political philosophy.
5. See Kirwan (2013) for an extensive critical discussion of this argument concerning loss. Brigstocke (2013) also offers a critique and elaboration of Arendt's arguments concerning the relation between modernity and authority; maintaining that authority persists in modernity in immanent and aestheticised form.
6. See Noorani (2013) for a detailed discussion of the positive role of authority in the constitution of mutual support groups.
7. See Isin (2002) for a discussion of the differences between the Greek *polis* and the Roman *civitas*.
8. The council system would be authoritarian, but it would involve an authority that came neither from above nor below, but always from peers; and this egalitarian authority is, for Arendt, 'the lost treasure' of the revolutionary tradition (Arendt 1963).
9. Possibly this is what Simmel is thinking of when he refers to subjectivity 'recapturing' objective culture (e.g. 1997b).
10. A similar argument is made by Kirwan (2013), drawing on Jean Luc Nancy, regarding the role of the community in contemporary politics. Community can only function as the ground of politics in so far as community is *always already* lost, failed, 'inoperative'.
11. For a full exploration of the construction of political bodies and political experience through biological knowledges, or 'bio-mentality' see Blencowe (2012).

Notes on contributor

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