

HANNAH ARENDT'S HEIDEGGERIAN ARISTOTELIANISM

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Abstract

Hannah Arendt is sometimes thought to present a modern Aristotelian politics, and this paper first explores that thought's rationale. The rationale is Heideggerian, in that it follows Heidegger's influential focus upon Aristotle's division of action from both production and theory. Arendt criticizes what she calls "the tradition of political philosophy", which allegedly conceals action beneath theory and ends with Marx's confusion of action with production. This paper also questions the rationale of that critique.

Keywords: Arendt, politics, tradition, philosophy, action, Heidegger, Aristotelianism, labour, work, production, Marx.

1. Arendt's Philosophy

Hannah Arendt has sometimes been portrayed, especially in America, as a brilliantly idiosyncratic thinker. Brilliant she was, but to regard her as idiosyncratic is to decontextualize her from her intellectual sources and to detach her from the history of ideas in which she continually immersed herself. Now that Heidegger's philosophy has been partially dissociated from his flirtation with totalitarian politics, it is a benign commonplace that Arendt felt his influence profoundly. Both she and he were influenced by a German philosophical tradition that owed much to Kant, but which traced its origins all the way back to classical Greece. Clearly, Arendt did not feel directly all of the influences felt by Heidegger. Her early apprehension of Heidegger was not as phenomenologist, formed through engagement with Thomistic Catholicism, with Brentano, and with Husserl. Rather, she first understood him as an existentialist, as grappling with those issues raised by Kierkegaard with which she had already been excited, and, therefore, as comparable to Jaspers, with whom, during their later estrangement, she would compare him unfavourably, in ways warranted less by his philosophy than by his politics. Nonetheless, he influenced the way in which she was to become more than an existentialist. It is from him that she adopted a phenomenological, anti-causal conception of action and, also, an antipathy toward what they both call «the tradition» of Western philosophy. Although Arendt did not take

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her politics from Heidegger, what she writes of politics is influenced by that which she took from his philosophy.

Arendt used to be routinely regarded as an Aristotelian, especially in Germany. For example, Jürgen Habermas said that her «chief philosophical work, *The Human Condition*, serves the systematic renewal of the Aristotelian concept of praxis» or action.¹ More recently, it has been argued that, to the contrary, Arendt, as a Heideggerian, cannot be Aristotelian.² And as against that, it has been argued that Heidegger was a singularly authentic interpreter of Aristotle, that Heidegger's philosophy was based in a reworking of Aristotle's³, and therefore that Arendt's «rehabilitation of 'praxis'» may be understood, without contradiction, as at once Heideggerian and Aristotelian.⁴ Of course, whether Arendt should indeed be called «Aristotelian» depends on what is intended by the term, which can have at least three different denotations.

First, what might be called the traditional usage of «Aristotelianism» denotes the assimilation of Aristotle's theoretical and practical philosophies to Christian doctrine. This assimilation was effected, above all, by Thomas Aquinas, whose theological-cum-philosophical project was revived in the late nineteenth-century by Pope Leo XIII and has been sustained by the Roman Catholic church ever since. In the Germanophone world, its revival was assisted, at a distance, by Adolf Trendelenburg and Franz Brentano, and its sustenance, more closely, by Josef Pieper and Robert Spaemann. From this perspective, Aristotelianism «has the character of compromise between "pure reason" and "practical reason"». Theoretical reason «is removed from all contingency» and concerns «the fulfillment of perfect self-sufficiency» and «happiness» within «a totality which is ... more comprehensive than even that of the polis», whereas practical reason «keeps the contingencies of life within boundaries» and «institutionalizes ... means».⁵ Although Arendt agrees about the importance of worldly protection against chance, she is most certainly no Aristotelian in this, Thomistic sense.

A second usage of the term «Aristotelianism» refers to the work of Aristotle himself. Such reference inevitably involves interpretation. Here, the young Heidegger's philologically audacious attempt to reveal the meaning of Aristotle's texts from beneath centuries of Latin translation and scholastic appropriation poses a radical alternative to Aristotelianism in the first sense. He argued that Thomistic tradition had concealed Aristotle's central concern with phronesis, and with the praxis that phronesis «serves»; that is, with our very being and acting in the world. This concern he explored in a seminar series directed to Plato's *Sophist*, in which he used Book Six of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* as the key to reveal the previously hidden meaning of earlier Greek thought. Phronesis he declared to be «conscience set into motion, making an action transparent»⁶.

Arendt attended these seminars alongside other nascent intellectuals, including Hans-Georg Gadamer. It was her first experience of Heidegger, and it, like him, caused a great impression on her. It profoundly influenced her Socratic understanding of the life of the mind, and of thinking as the speech «of the soul to itself»⁷. And it profoundly influenced her

understanding of the life of action, as something utterly immediate. For Heidegger, *phronesis* involves what cannot be forgotten because it concerns one's own being, intending, and acting. As it concerns what is to be done under contingent circumstances, it may be equated with judgment. But it is not to be understood, with Thomistic tradition, as the «prudential» choice of particular means to universal ends. Rather, it is the primal answering of the existential «call» to the vocation of *Dasein* (and we might therefore interpret the interpreter through a lineage that is Kierkegaardian, Lutheran, and Pauline). Heidegger's interpretive aim in distinguishing *phronesis*, and *praxis*, from *theoria* and *techne* was to redirect human sensibility back upon its own being, from its traditional gaze at God and its modern, empirical concern with technique, technology, and production.

Thirdly, the term «Aristotelianism» is used – often with the prefix «neo-» – to characterize a post-Heideggerian project of «rehabilitating» a tradition of «practical philosophy»,⁸ as distinct from theoretical philosophy. Neo-Aristotelians need not, like Heidegger, spend their time in critical engagement with the history of Western metaphysics, because Heidegger has already done that work for them. Franco Volpi has recently argued that Arendt's argument for «a rehabilitation of 'praxis'» places her within this movement.⁹ If so, she might be regarded as one of its leading members, along with such luminaries as Gadamer, Nicholas Lobkowitz, Joachim Ritter, and Wilhelm Hennis (especially given that *The Human Condition* was published in German in 1960, the same year as Gadamer's *Truth and Method*).

Arendt's work shares three characteristics with that of most other members of this post-Heideggerian group. First, it seldom acknowledges Heidegger's inspiration, and this precisely because of these Germans discomforting intellectual proximity to him. Secondly, it is informed by an extensive knowledge of and engagement with what they, like him, call «the tradition», a tradition which they, unlike him, understand to have ended before their own time. Thirdly, her work, and theirs, is concerned with theorizing practice, as distinct from both *theoria* and *poiesis*, theory and production.

2. Political Science, and Political Philosophy

Arendt understood herself to have left philosophy when she left Germany, disillusioned. In America, she represented herself as a political scientist. If she is indeed to be regarded as a post-Heideggerian neo-Aristotelian, then she (alongside Hennis) must be regarded as the group's leading political scientist. As such, she may be contrasted with Gadamer, who, in famously excusing Heidegger's errors by referring to «the political incompetence of philosophy», admitted such incompetence himself. Allowing Heidegger the same excuse, Arendt (again like Hennis, later) disclaimed not politics but philosophy.

Arendt made her mark as a political scientist in her account of totalitarianism's origins in European anti-semitism and imperialism, which

informed American political scientists' Cold War juxtaposition of that alien creed to their own pluralism. But, raised on the left, Arendt was never a philosophical McCarthyite, and *The Origins of Totalitarianism* exculpates Europe's philosophical tradition from Karl Popper's characterization of it as the open, pluralistic society's most elemental enemy. For Arendt, totalitarianism is an answer to the question of how to live after the demise of traditional certainties, and an answer anticipated less by Plato or Hegel than by Hobbes.¹⁰

Upon completing *Origins*, Arendt returned to consider that which she had left behind. As she said in a letter to Heidegger, a central concern in these years was «representation of the traditional relationship between philosophy and politics, actually the attitude of Plato and Aristotle as the basis of all political theories»¹¹. This «representation» is intended as no rehabilitation, for even if what she calls «the tradition of political philosophy» was innocent of causing totalitarianism, it was nonetheless guilty of hiding the reality of politics. It was not a tradition of a specifically practical philosophy but, on the contrary, a tradition of theoretical philosophers' understanding of the alien activity of politics as a mere means to their own end of contemplation, in opposition to which Arendt defines her concerns: plurality rather than identity, freedom, opinion and persuasion rather than causality, truth or logic, and the life of speech and action rather than of silent contemplation. In contrast to philosophy's ideal of solitary, contemplative «man», the reality of politics is the plural and interactive «world» of «men».

Arendt's aim in returning to the «the basis of all political theories» is genealogical and deconstructive. She wants «to discover the real origins of traditional concepts in order to distill from them anew their original spirit» and «underlying phenomenal reality»,¹² and, as she had written when still in Germany, philosophy's claim «to embody truth as such ... can be seriously undermined only by tracing specific philosophies back to their origins in particular situations». Even if, after her disillusionment with Heidegger the man, and after her political awakening, her ambition is no longer to return all the way back beneath tradition to an «ontic», primordial sense of human Being as such¹³, her ambition at least remains that of returning to a prephilosophical and authentically political sense of being with others.

And, as Theodore Kisiel says, it is «Arendt's unique development of Heidegger's concept ... of being together with others» that yields «her unique concept of the political».¹⁴

Arendt's deconstruction of the traditional «relationship between philosophy and politics» starts from Heidegger's «interpretation» of Plato's «parable of the cave».¹⁵ «Our tradition of political thought began when the death of Socrates made Plato despair of polis life»¹⁶ and, «politically, Plato's philosophy shows the rebellion of the philosopher against the polis»,¹⁷ in claiming for philosophers an exclusive knowledge of the true idea of the good. Arendt considers it «decisive that Plato makes the agathon [good] the highest idea – and not the kalon [beautiful, or noble] – for 'political' reasons»¹⁸.

What Arendt regards as Plato's political reason for elaborating his idea of the good is that, whereas the idea of beauty suggests something that is to be passively and silently contemplated, the idea of the good is – in the words of the young Aristotle, quoted by Arendt – «the most exact measure of all things»¹⁹. As such, the idea of the good is something «to be applied» in an analogous way to that in which technical expertise is applied in craft production. «It is precisely ruling, measuring, subsuming, and regulating that are entirely alien to the experiences» of philosophical wonder and contemplation. However, following his own disillusionment at the death of Socrates – not, as for Arendt, with philosophy, but with politics – Plato modified «the doctrine of ideas so that it would become useful for a [philosophical] theory of politics», which he did by elevating «the idea of the good, since 'good' in the Greek vocabulary always means 'good for' or 'fit'». Therefore, «in the hands of the philosopher, the expert in ideas, [the ideas] can become rules and standards or ... laws». From this, Arendt goes so far as to propose that the idea of «rule ... can be traced to a conflict between philosophy and politics, but not to specifically political experiences»²⁰. It is for philosophical reasons that both «Plato and Heidegger, when they entered into human affairs, turned to tyrants and Führers»²¹.

3. Premises for Politics

Arendt's «representation of the traditional relationship between philosophy and politics» was, she told Heidegger, only one of «three ... interconnected» subjects upon which she was working after Totalitarianism. Another was «an analysis of the types of states, with the goal of uncovering where the concept of authority got into the political ('each body politic is composed of those who rule and those who are ruled'), and how the political sphere is constituted differently in different cases»²². This included the differentiation of totalitarian from authoritarian states²³ in a way that was, again, to prove congenial to American political scientists during the Cold War.

Aristotle's status as the first political scientist was secured by his typology of poleis, and when Arendt describes as «Aristotelian» her characteristic way of approaching new subjects by drawing distinctions²⁴ she is more likely thinking of this than of his differentiation of virtues, his specification of natural kinds, or his seminal definition of disciplines. More elemental than his differentiation of kinds of poleis was, though, his differentiation of political community from the economic community of the oikos or household. For Arendt, these are «two orders of existence», «to which 'every citizen belongs'»: that of the «household community ... concerned with ... the physical necessities ... involved in maintaining individual life and guaranteeing the survival of the species», and that of the «'bios politikos' [which] Aristotle called the 'good life'» – a «definition» which, unlike «the differentiation itself, conflicted with common Greek opinion»²⁵. What Arendt did not say was that Aristotle's definition of political community is teleological, or that, at the outset of the

Politics, he proposes that every kind of community – the *oikos*, as well as the *polis* – aims at some kind of good. It is in this proposition that the tradition finds its best justification for claiming that Aristotle’s practical philosophy is premised upon his theoretical philosophy.

Arendt normally ignores this theoretical premiss, but, on occasion, she expressly rejects it. The idea of something «having its end in itself» she judges «paradoxical».²⁶ For her, and for her pre-philosophical and «pre-polis» Greeks, «no ‘end’, no ultimate *telos*» can justify action, and their understanding of action is utterly alien to «the Aristotelian definition of *praxis* which ... became authoritative throughout the tradition and which stated that “actions do not differ with respect to the beautiful and the non-beautiful in themselves so much as in the end for the sake of which they were undertaken”»²⁷. For them, and for her, actions that are justified by their effects are entirely distinct from those that are fully justified by their intrinsic beauty and nobility. The *kalon*, and not the teleological idea of *t’agathon*, which «degrades ... everything into a means»,²⁸ is, it seems, «the highest idea» of action.

Arendt substitutes another – theoretical – premiss. On her interpretation, the Aristotelian and Greek distinction between political and economic communities is premised on a distinction between freedom and necessity, so that «the freedom of the ‘good life’ rests on the domination of necessity» through citizens’ coercive domination of women and slaves, concerned with satisfying citizens’ needs, and also of children, within the household. Viewing his distinction in this light, Arendt argues that Aristotle made «glaringly contradictory statements» in saying, first, «that the *polis* is based upon the principle of equality and knows no differentiation between rulers and ruled», unlike the *oikos*, and, then, introducing «a kind of authority into ... the life of the *polis*» by introducing «into the political realm ... a distinction between rulers and ruled, between those who command and those who obey». In this way, «he superimposes on the actions and life in the *polis* those standards which ... are valid only for the behavior and life in the household community»²⁹. Arendt’s objection here is not to «rule» or «domination» as such, but only to its introduction into the political world shared, exclusively, by citizens.

Regarding premisses, there is room to doubt that the radical distinction between freedom and necessity which Arendt imputes to the ancients was really so fundamental for them. Kant was the first philosopher who she read, and one whom she often favours by exempting from “the tradition of political philosophy”. Augustine, “the first philosopher of the will”,³⁰ was another early and major influence. Therefore, although her political conception of freedom might well appear to be the outer freedom of citizenship and not the inner freedom of the will, it is conceivable that her attempt at a genealogy of freedom is more influenced by intervening tradition than she allows.

4. Modernity

If this second subject that Arendt was «working on» in the fifties was to prove relatively fruitless, the third was to issue in her finest single work, *The Human Condition*:

«Perhaps starting with Marx on the one hand and Hobbes on the other, an analysis of the completely disparate activities that, from the perspective of the *vita contemplativa*, have usually been lumped together in the *vita activa*: that is, work – production – action, whereby work and action have been understood on the model of production: work became “productive”, and action was interpreted in an end-means context. (I would not be able to do this, if indeed I can, without what I learned from you in my youth.)»³¹

From the traditional perspective of the life of contemplation, a simple dichotomy is allegedly drawn between it and the busy, unphilosophical life of action. That Arendt was hardly alone in objecting to this dichotomy we have already seen, and those with whom Volpi associates her in a supposedly shared argument for «a rehabilitation of ‘práxis’» might add to what she here told Heidegger that her elemental differentiation of «beautiful» action from productive «work» (even if not from «labour») was first drawn by Aristotle and then passed on through an Aristotelian tradition of specifically practical philosophy. Rightly or wrongly, this is not how Arendt approaches the subject. Instead, she looks to modern thinkers for the origins of a disaggregation of what tradition had allegedly «lumped together».

We might expect Arendt to look to Kant here. It was in the first half of Kant's *Critique of Judgement* that the Judaeo-Christian idea of creation was most incisively humanized, beginning a line of thought that passed through Schiller, Hegel and Feuerbach to Marx. The thought was that humans can, like God, be creators; that we, too, can infuse our products with our own qualities, or genius. Works of such expressive, «free art» are understood as products of individual artists and not of particular classes of artisans, who instead engage in «mercenary art» or «labor» which «attracts us only through its effect (e. g. pay), so that people can be coerced into it».³² Adapting the traditional idea of perception in light of more recent ideas of sensibility, Kant's idea of «aesthetic» judgement was that such individual works constitute tasteful subjects of polite, civilized communication. Labour is activity performed out of natural necessity, whereas work is freely creative in a way that supplements virtue with virtuosity.

Instead of looking to Kant, Arendt originally looked to Hobbes in attempting her project of conceptual disaggregation. This is, in part, because Hobbes attempted «to get rid of metaphysics for the sake of a philosophy of politics», in which «the task of philosophy» would be «to establish a reasonable teleology of action» in the sense of guiding «purposes and aims».³³ Arendt's use of the term «teleology» here might well be thought surprising. Not only does it conflict with tradition; it also conflicts with Heidegger, for whom *telos* «does not mean anything like ‘purposeful behavior’»³⁴. Nonetheless, for Arendt, Hobbes exemplifies «the teleological

political philosophies» of early modernity, when «insistence on absolute novelty and the rejection of the whole tradition became commonplace». ³⁵ Hobbes' philosophy still resembled that of Plato insofar it was based in a conception of the nature of singular «man», but the nature of that singular subject was reconceived. «The old definition of man as an animal rationale acquires a terrible [indeed, mathematical] precision» as that of an animal able to «reckon with consequences», especially the consequences of his own purposive actions, even as the old idea of contemplation is replaced with an idea of scientific work as «producing» the «objects it wishes to observe». ³⁶ The state is itself an artifact, the result of human reckoning and purposiveness. On Arendt's account, this new political philosophy «founders» for the simple reason that there can be no such fit between intentions and consequences in human action. With Hobbes, «reality and human reason have parted company» ³⁷.

Here, again, we may compare Kant, who, in the second half of his third Critique, having discussed the production of beautiful objects which can be understood as ends in themselves, refashioned teleology into the regulative ideal through which we understand the apparent unity and organic purposiveness of natural phenomena, the inner essences of which can never be known. Here the idea of teleology as purposiveness becomes reflective, contemplative and speculative. Understood through this principle, the state becomes an «organization» in which «all work together» and each is «purpose as well as means». ³⁸

This speculative idea of «the whole that gives meaning to the particulars» ³⁹ is perhaps a surprising one for Arendt to have embraced, given that it renders the position of «the actor ... partial by definition». What Arendt wants to argue, following Kant, is that this idea leads to «the criterion» of judgement as «communicability» among an audience of spectators, and, therefore, that «the standard of deciding ... is common sense». ⁴⁰ From her existential premiss of one's being with others, this may follow, but «the tradition» – more particularly, the tradition of German idealism – was to make something very different of it. Where she wishes that Kant would have elaborated a «political philosophy», such a philosophy was, actually, elaborated by Hegel. And, where she observes Kant speaking of the history of humanity as a species, Hegel elaborated human history as a whole, and as a «totality».

The culmination of German idealism in Hegel need not be regarded as the end – still less, as Hegel himself would have had it, the dialectical and teleological completion – of this philosophical story. Even if neo-Kantianism can be no more than an epilogue, the rise of existentialism may be regarded as another episode, and, for Arendt, one that follows immediately afterwards. ⁴¹ In retrospect, this episode certainly culminates not with Jaspers but with Heidegger himself, and with the postmodernist deconstruction of Arendt's «common sense». Not being together with others within either a purposive totality or an open public space but, on the contrary, being different from others is the postmodern condition, and this is a condition that requires intricate administration and policing of the kind that Arendt consistently calls «rule by nobody»; that is,

rule by precisely the kind of institutional structure that is guided not by any of Montesquieu's «principles of action» but by the conformist and compartmentalized norms of Weber's – and Eichmann's – «bureaucratic rationality».

5. «Practice»

«Practical means moral in Kant», notes Arendt⁴², and his *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft* is, indeed, an account of specifically moral reasoning. In his terminology, Kant follows Christian Wolff,⁴³ but not in its usage, because Wolff attempted to elaborate not a metaphysics of morals but a «general practical philosophy» concerned with all actions and «determinations of the will» (individual, political, and economic), irrespective of whether grounded in inclination or reason.⁴⁴ And moral means rational in Kant.

«Morality» is usually presented by Arendt in the existentialist and Kantian terms of individual responsibility. Her politicization of «evil» apart, Arendt's discussion of morality is confined to a couple important but isolated essays. Insofar as *The Life of the Mind* may be understood as attempting to integrate the insights of those essays with the rest of her philosophy, it is an attempt that was, unfortunately, abortive. What can be said with certainty is that her regard for Kant's moral philosophy and for his usage of *praktisch* and *Praxis* (which, to a considerable extent, was shared by Heidegger, who dedicated his *Sophist* lectures to the neo-Kantian Paul Natorp), and not just Heidegger's use of words with indigenous German roots, influenced her own avoidance of the terms. If she differs from Gadamer and his compatriots in not calling herself a «practical philosopher», it is as much because of the Kantian connotation of «practical» as the Platonic denotation of «philosopher».

Arendt exaggerates in asserting that, whereas for Kant «practical ... concerns the individual qua individual», he «could conceive of action only as ... governmental acts».⁴⁵ As against this, Kant consistently spoke of «action» (*Handlung*) that was either moral and prudential, or skilful⁴⁶, even if he still followed Wolff in consigning specifically «political» acts to the state. The semantic distinction between moral «practice» and political «action» that she attributes to Kant is, in fact, hers. Even if she never says that action is motivated by inclinations rather than reasons, and even if she occasionally says that morality «is» «customary rules»⁴⁷, she resists taking the typical «neo-Aristotelian» path behind Kant and back through Wolff all the way to a Greek idea of *ethos*, in which the distinction between individual reason and individual inclination is overcome by an idea of individuals as accustomed, enculturated and socialized into norms.

Instead of taking this path to a primordial ethics, Arendt traces «action» to prephilosophical Greek through Latin. She refers not to *actio* (still less to *actus*, with its traditional, teleological implication of actualization, completion or perfection) but to the infinitive, *agere*, which she associates with the Greek *archein*.⁴⁸ As she notes in *The Human Condition*, *archein* can mean either «to begin» or «to rule», and here she accords with Ar-

istotle's famous definition in *Metaphysics Delta*. Where she goes beyond Aristotle (and beyond Liddell and Scott), in the speculatively philological manner of Heidegger, is in proposing that the term can also mean «to lead», and that this pre-traditional meaning explains both of the others.⁴⁹ Even if opposed to a division between ruler and subjects, she seems not to object to that between leader and followers, but, of course, when she speaks of action, she (as with the meaning she attributes to Kant's «practice») intends to exclude governmental rule. Therefore, even in relation to the term *archein*, she says that «to act ... means to take an initiative, to begin ... or to set something into motion»⁵⁰. The term *praxis*, and its familiar contrast with *poiesis*, enters Arendt's genealogy of «action» when she blames Plato's Statesman for the loss of the original sense of *archein*, which is there «replaced by a relationship that is characteristic of the supervisory function of a master telling his servants how to accomplish and execute a given task»⁵¹. This «transformation of action into the execution of orders» is what led to the equation of *praxis* with *poiesis*,⁵² and to what Arendt alleges to have been Aristotle's own «flagrant contradiction» of what he said of political equality and freedom⁵³.

6. Performance and Measurement

We began this essay by saying that Arendt adopted a phenomenological view of action from Heidegger, and we have noted her epistolary acknowledgement of this to him. Nonetheless, there remains some room to agree with the claim that this very acknowledgement «suggests ... a point-by-point rebuttal»⁵⁴. She made the acknowledgement immediately after referring to his famous *Letter on Humanism*, and, in rebutting any understanding of «action ... on the model of production ... in an end-means context», she at least half disagrees with what he said in beginning that text:

«We are still far from pondering the essence of action decisively enough. We view action only as causing an effect. The actuality of the effect is valued according to its utility. But the essence of action is accomplishment. To accomplish means ... *producere*».⁵⁵

For Arendt, the essence of action is not, as it is for Hobbes, «causing an effect», but nor is it, as it is for Heidegger, «accomplishment», even when what is meant by this is «to unfold something into the fullness of its essence», and even when what is meant by a being's «essence» has nothing to do with any universalist abstraction of a human nature.⁵⁶ Rather, for Arendt, developing the idea of being together with others, the essence of action is its very performance before others. It is to others that the self is revealed. On her account, action is always accompanied by speech, *logos*, and this for the Heideggerian reason that it involves the actor's «disclosing» and «revealing» of himself to others.

The idea that the essence of action is performance, undertaken for its own sake, as actualization, distinct from production, is one that neo-Aristotelian practical philosophers would claim for Aristotle and their tra-

dition. Arendt disagreed when, early, she wrote that Aristotle understood «praxis in the light of poesis, his own assertions to the contrary notwithstanding», and that he «introduced in a systematic way the category of means and ends into the sphere of action».⁵⁷ In *The Human Condition* she concedes that his concept of actuality theorized the characteristically Greek idea that «greatness ... lie[s] only in the performance itself and neither in its motivation nor its achievement», adding, once again, how «paradoxical» is the idea of an «end in itself» but allowing that, on Aristotle's own account, the «specifically human achievement lies altogether outside the category of means and ends».⁵⁸ In her last work she gave his theoretical philosophy its full, teleological due, acknowledging that, on his account, «ends are inherent in human nature»⁵⁹. This, she thinks, separates him decisively from her morality of individual responsibility, as (unlike those who «reckon with consequences») he «never even» mentions «the specifically moral problem of the means-end relationship»,⁶⁰ but then morality is something that she kept separate from politics.

We can therefore say of Arendt that she moved progressively toward the position of neo-Aristotelian practical philosophy. (Certainly she moved a long way from the time when she could say that Aristotle, and the metaphysical tradition he initiated, held «that the inquiry into the first causes of everything ... comprises the chief task of philosophy», and that it was against this tradition that Hobbes contended «that, on the contrary, the task of philosophy was ... to establish a reasonable teleology of action».⁶¹) But in moving toward a metaphysically teleological Aristotle, she still kept herself entirely separate from Thomistic tradition, insisting that it «never» occurs to Aquinas «that there could be an activity that has its end in itself and therefore can be understood outside the means-end category», whereas Aristotle differentiated «the productive arts ... from the performing arts».⁶² It is therefore hardly surprising that even a friendly suggestion that her way of drawing distinctions represented «a medieval habit of thought» elicited the response that it «comes right out of Aristotle. And for you, it comes out of Aquinas».⁶³ But then what she says of Aquinas she implies even of Heidegger: that it is «striking» how he, «who depended so heavily on the Philosopher's teachings and especially on the *Nicomachean Ethics*, should have neglected the distinction between poesis and praxis», which is «crucial for any theory of action».⁶⁴ For her, still more clearly than for Heidegger, if action has any «essence», it consists only in performance.

What Arendt called Hobbes' «reasoned teleology of action» reduced the good, the goal of action, to what the tradition called «external goods», as distinct from the internal good of actualizing human potentiality. In modernity, authority disappeared along with belief in any such measure of the goodness of individuals' inclinations, reasons, and actions.

Arendt is as opposed as was Heidegger to any Platonic idea of the good, as a standard. Where she broke from Heidegger politically was in opposing, still more, the replacement of such traditional authoritarianism with any new totalitarianism. What she instead wished to replace it with was a plural world of existential viewpoints. But it does not follow that

this world is to lack any standards. We have heard her quote the young, Platonic Aristotle that the idea of the good is «the most exact measure of all things», but she also quotes the older Aristotle that «the measure for everybody is virtue and the good man». To this, she adds that such a «standard is what men are themselves when they act»⁶⁵. It is a standard set in public remembrance and in histories of heroic acts and exemplary lives; «courage is like Achilles etc.»⁶⁶. This is the kind of history written by the Greeks, the Romans, and the Florentines, a kind of history that has more in common with poetry than philosophy, written by those who believe in fortuna and perhaps in recurrence, but not in progress.

That Kant believed in the historical progress of humanity as a species, Arendt well knew, but here she accused him of a contradiction just as radical as that of which she accused Aristotle. «The very idea of progress ... contradicts Kant's notion of man's dignity»,⁶⁷ and it is the idea of «man's dignity» that she wished to retain. This she understood to be expressed not only in his «practical», moral philosophy but also in what she identified as his belief in «exemplary validity»⁶⁸, and she combined the two in the proposition «that, confronted with the example of virtue, human reason knows what is right and that its opposite is wrong»⁶⁹. This conception of regulative validity is, she further proposes, «far more valuable» than his reconceptualization of teleology as a regulative ideal.⁷⁰ This is a view of Kant that Arendt shares with Gadamer, and that draws Kant close to what neo-Aristotelians call practical philosophy, even if she, unlike Gadamer, and unlike John McDowell, does not attempt to elaborate it into a rehabilitated ethic of the *kalon*, the noble, as opposed to the good.

7. Arendt's Politics

Although she never understood herself as attempting to rehabilitate a tradition of political philosophy, she did, briefly, invoke a «tradition» of political, exemplary and «revolutionary» action. Whereas members of the post-Heideggerian group back in Germany were conservative, she established a very different reputation for herself in *On Revolution*.

In part, this was due to her changed, American context. She had no interest in that context philosophically, and she evidently never felt any imperative to engage with American pragmatism or with the analytic philosophy of mind and action,⁷¹ but she was more favourably impressed by American politics. Whereas the focus of her old compatriots (even Lobkowitz, who for years taught in the States but did not, like her, make it a new home) remained upon the heritage of what she calls «Europe's cultural grandeur», she became interested in «the New World's political development».⁷² Away from European metaphysics, she thought (unlike Ritter or the early Hennis) that action springs not from any final, teleological ends but from ever new beginnings. America's revolution was successful because it occurred in a veritably new – and tradition-free – world, and American politics posed no danger of totalitarianism because they occurred in a public sphere that lacked mass parties and a massive, bureaucratic state.

Arendt started «with Montesquieu [her] analysis of the types of states»⁷³ because he «was the first to discover» that governmental or state «structure taken in itself would be altogether incapable of action or movement». Political power is, instead, «generated by men acting together». Whereas for Plato «the best form of government would also be the most unchangeable and unmovable», Montesquieu «introduced three principles of action», including the principle of virtue, the «love of equality in sharing power», which «inspires the actions in a republic».⁷⁴ However, as Arendt was much less interested in constructing a typology of states than in conceptualizing free and public action, her attention soon switched from Montesquieu to Machiavelli. Whereas Heidegger simply said that translation of Plato's *Politeia* «into German as 'Der Staat'» demonstrated modern incomprehension,⁷⁵ Arendt acknowledges the importance of Machiavelli's use of «the hitherto unknown term *lo stato*» «for a new body politic» that banished the idea «of the good» from «the public» to «the private sphere of human life».⁷⁶ The principle of republican virtue was conceptualized by Machiavelli as «the excellence with which man answers the opportunities the world opens up before him in the guise of fortuna where the accomplishment lies in the performance itself and not in an end product which outlasts the activity that brought it into existence and becomes independent of it».⁷⁷ Here Anglophone scholars have «borrowed from» her, rehabilitating «the *vita active*» by tracing a specifically «Atlantic republican tradition» that took its theory from Aristotle, its precedents from Rome, and stretched from Machiavelli through Harrington to the revolutionary founding of the USA.⁷⁸

Having traced this «revolutionary tradition», Arendt was unprepared for the student revolt that exploded in 1968. Even if she had not committed anything like the errors she forgave in Heidegger, she now, and not for first time, experienced the unintended consequences of her own literary interventions into human affairs.

On Violence was written as a corrective. For example, having previously spoken of Marx's «glorification of violence»⁷⁹, Arendt soon revised her judgement when confronted with the real «glorification of violence» in the student movement and in Sartre's supposedly Marxist existentialism.⁸⁰ Having issued this corrective, she turned increasingly from praising the life of action to reflecting on the life of the mind.

One view that she did not revise is her own glorification of spontaneous, popular councils. Revolutions' real political spring in the desire for freedom has too often been misrepresented and repressed, as happened in 1789 and in those subsequent European revolutions which began with the spontaneous creation of local councils, or soviets, but were misled by those wearing philosophical blinkers⁸¹ or were simply crushed, as happened to the Paris Commune in 1871 and in Hungary in 1956.⁸² That the revolutionary council is now the «appropriate institution» to replace the «the polis, the space of men's free deeds and living words» she declared before 1968,⁸³ and, even in its aftermath, she made amply clear that a federation of councils remained her political ideal.⁸⁴ But, given her premisses,

political ideals can have little more than moral ideals to do with the life of action.

8. Actions and Consequences

As she told Heidegger, Arendt intended to begin her conceptual distinction between «activities that, from the perspective of the *vita contemplativa*, have usually been lumped together in the *vita activa*» «with Marx on the one hand and Hobbes on the other». The reason for which she proposed to take Hobbes – who clearly «interpreted [action] in an end-means context» – as a starting point was itself largely Marxist. She has already told us that Hobbes attempted «to get rid of metaphysics for the sake of a [teleological] philosophy of politics», but this attempt was itself a means to the end of legitimating not only the state but, beyond that, capital accumulation, which «the tradition» had condemned as the vice of pleonexia, greed. Hobbes she understood as a possessive individualist, and «the only great philosopher to whom the bourgeoisie can rightly and exclusively lay claim», who, in perceiving that «the limitless process of capital accumulation needs» a sovereign state, had «an unmatched insight into the political needs of the ... rising bourgeoisie», and who legitimated that state «for the benefit of the new bourgeois society».⁸⁵ What is most fundamentally new about this society for Arendt is its focus upon the processes of labour and consumption. Hobbes Arendt regards as commercial society's first and greatest philosophical champion, Marx as its greatest critic.

When Arendt observes that with Hobbes «reality and human reason have parted company», she adds that this observation was an «insight» of «Hegel's gigantic enterprise to reconcile spirit with reality».⁸⁶ What she never adequately explores is how the German idealist tradition inspired by Kant culminates in this «enterprise», or, more particularly, how Hegel's reconciliation of «spirit with reality», of rationality with actuality, was itself directly inspired by the second half of Kant's third Critique, the *Critique of Teleological Judgement*. What Kant regards as a regulative principle of reflective judgement, through which we make sense of individual beings and, even, of nature as a whole, Hegel imputes also to natural and social actuality. It is by thoroughly reworking in terms of the dimension of time what Kant says of our reflective understanding of purposive and organized being that Hegel is able to elaborate his great philosophy of history. Being is replaced by becoming. As Arendt remarks, for Hegel we find meaning in history by understanding our present as a particular moment between past and future. Whereas she sees in history at most only contingent «trends», Hegel rationalizes it as a whole admitting of actual progress and of increasing self-consciousness through our progressive understanding of ourselves in relation to other beings and to the totality of beings, an increasing self-consciousness that Hegel calls the actualization of reason. Our rationality is reconciled to natural and institutional actuality through progressive understanding of our participation, as individuals, in the universality of nature, of society, and of our society's

history. As we have heard Arendt say of Kant, it is «the whole that gives meaning to the particulars».

What Arendt objects to in Hegel's history is what she perceives as its subordination of humans to a naturalistic necessity. Individual and fully rational purposiveness is subordinated to a superhuman purposiveness, reducing individual activity to the status of participation in a universal process, so that the full self-consciousness of one's temporal relations to others that Hegel regards as modern freedom is tantamount to the denial of what freedom is regarded as by Arendt, which is, if not Kantian autonomy, then at least Kantian spontaneity. She refers to Hegel's historical teleology only as a «dialectic», which perhaps implies a consistent Kantian scepticism about Hegel's false claims for reason. What is here curious is that she continually equates what Hegel says of the «cunning of reason» with what she attributes to Kant as the statement of a «ruse of nature»,⁸⁷ perceptible to observers of history but not to its actors. What is at issue here is how best to understand the ramifications of the unintended consequences of action.

Arendt's epistemological objection to Hobbes is that actors can never know beforehand what will be the effects of their actions, so that politics cannot be simply explained in terms of rationality and intentionality. This epistemological objection may be attributed to her appreciation of Kant's antinomy of free will and causality, and that the consequences of an action motivated by a good will can be disastrous.⁸⁸ She argues that this «perplexity of human action», which «has been the one great topic of tragedy since Greek antiquity», can only be adequately addressed by acts of forgiveness, which guarantee «the continuity of the capacity for action, for beginning anew».⁸⁹ More specifically, she often admitted that it was the tragedy of Greek politics that competition between individuals, each of whom regarded action to have no further justification than its intrinsic «beauty», was tempered by no principle of forgiveness when individual acts had tragic consequences, and that this caused the disintegration of political communities which could, she implies, have been saved by acceptance of such a principle. This admission does not prevent her from blaming later tradition for the continued exclusion of the principle from politics. That the Christian principle of forgiveness remained of purely spiritual significance she blames on Augustine's becoming «a neo-Platonist and Thomas Aquinas a neo-Aristotelian», so that both supposedly isolated forgiveness from the realm of politics in a separate realm of the spirit.⁹⁰ It might, therefore, appear surprising that Arendt continually refers so dismissively to what she often calls Hegel's attempt to reconcile «Spirit» with reality, but this is less surprising when we note her argument elsewhere for some such separation. For example, in contrast to her argument for the political desirability of forgiveness of those who can know not of the consequences of what they do, she argues that «the actual antipolitical thrust of the Christian message that all human affairs should be managed according to goodness» (not Greek beauty, or republican glory) and that evil should be repaid «with good», requires its adherents «to retreat from the public arena».⁹¹

Where Arendt sees fortuna and uncertainty in the separation of free will from causality, Hegel perceives systemic purposiveness and a progress that is at once actual and rational. Where she infers from the unintended consequences of action only confirmation of Kant's categorial limits to human reason, Hegel infers the superior understanding and rationality of the reflective observer who, as Arendt puts it, casts a backward eye over history. As she often indicates, the contrary view of Hegel was less confirmed than inspired by the French Revolution, which seemed to actualize philosophical rationality politically. What she does not appreciate is the way in which Hegel found confirmation of the rationality of actuality in the kind of «speculative history» that had been written by Scots and translated into German. She did often refer to Smith, whose «invisible hand» she equated with Hegel's «cunning of reason» and, less often, Kant's «ruse of nature». Although she occasionally related what Smith said of commerce to what Locke said of labour, she (unlike Kant) did not relate this to wider ideas of communication or order in ways vindicated philosophically by the way in which Hume (who Arendt considered uninteresting⁹²) advanced beyond Locke. The likes of Hume and Smith identified beneficial consequences of individual action when actors are constrained by rules, and argued that the appearance and persistence of those rules may be explained by those very benefits. As Smith demonstrated, «wealth» and «society» result when commerce is not guided by the visible hand of the state but freely conducted by self-interested individuals acting in accordance with impersonal rules. Although this ordered and civil society is the consequence of human action but, unlike the social contract theorized by Hobbes and Locke, not the result of human design, Hegel took its rationally systematizable satisfaction of material needs to forcefully confirm the progressive rationality of the life of society, in which the lives of individual minds participate. Rejecting this social dialectic, Arendt rearticulates Heidegger's phronetic «conscience» (but never Smith's «impartial spectator») to describe the life of the mind as that of an interior dialectic of «two-in-one».⁹³

9. Marx and the Tradition

For Arendt, if Plato stood at the beginning of the tradition, then Marx stood at its end. And if Plato hid action behind the idea of the good then Marx hid it behind the idea of labour. This idea of labour still belonged to philosophical tradition insofar as it was the idea of a value, but Marxism broke with tradition in challenging «the intellectual sphere's claim to absolute validity» and in «unmasking ontology as ideology».⁹⁴ Adapting Marx's concept of labour as «man's metabolism with nature», Arendt accused him of confusing it with «work» and, still more seriously, of confusing necessity with freedom.

Arendt often refers to the claim that, following Feuerbach, Marx and Engels corrected Hegel's «inversion» of «man», as subject, and consciousness or idea, as predicate, or that they put Hegel's dialectic back «on its feet».⁹⁵ The usual point of her reference is that Marx, in using the same

concepts, nonetheless stays within a Hegelian scheme. And, before *The Life of the Mind*, she consistently maintained that Hegel remained within the tradition. Therefore, her usual location of Marx was still within the tradition, even though marking its termination.

Where, for Arendt, both Hegel and Marx tested the boundaries of philosophical tradition was in identifying truth with history (always referring, genealogically and deconstructively, to the Roman origins of «tradition», she does not say that to speak of tradition is already to imply an idea of truth as historical, whether affirmatively or deconstructively). That the truth with which they were concerned was anthropocentric, and in this differed from what Plato, Aristotle and their successors regarded as the highest subjects of truth, did not concern Arendt. What did concern her was that «man» was not understood as an unchanging form by Hegel and Marx but as a «species-being» of which progress can be predicated as a «project».⁹⁶ Here, it seems, an idea of the progress of knowledge intruded into philosophical tradition from modern science, encouraging Hegel to impute necessity to historical development and Marx to explain that development in terms of economic laws. Against them, and against Plato and Aristotle, Arendt objected that «man» is not a subject at all, and that there is instead an existential plurality of «men». She does not consider it to be a problem that this precludes issuing truths about humankind as such.

Historicism apart, Arendt proposes that Marx's position resembles «the inherent materialism of [Aristotle's] political philosophy»⁹⁷, that Marx, «unlike his predecessors in the modern age but very much like his teachers in antiquity, equated necessity with the compelling urges of the life process», and this transhistorical agreement not by mere coincidence but because Marx's «general and often inexplicit outlook was still firmly rooted in the institutions and theories of the ancients»⁹⁸. With Aristotle and Plato, materialism and idealism were combined, in that the ideal subject of their theoretical philosophy was entirely self-sufficient in a way that could be imitated by those human beings who subordinated others to their rule within the household. The domestically ruled provide the necessities of life so that their rulers are freed from such necessity. On this view, the institution of the polis was the community of «the ruling class» and its «ultimate goal ... [the] management of material conditions», of «what is useful for the good life of the ruling class», and man «becomes political by nature» because of this necessary «interest» in ruling others if he is to be free. What Marx therefore did when he asserted that man was the subject of whom ideals might merely be predicated was «fully assert» «the materialism inherent in our tradition from its very beginning».⁹⁹ For Marx, as for the Greeks, material necessity had to be mastered before freedom could be enjoyed.

What Aristotle celebrated as the freedom of the few, Marx condemned as the oppression and exploitation of the many. Whereas Aristotle took it to be natural that slaves and women need to be ruled, and argued that those who are necessarily engaged in productive work are not free to engage in politics, Marx looked forward to their liberation. Here, Arendt

agrees with Aristotle. What she adds is that there is a radical difference between the «labour» of women and slaves, endlessly engaged in the natural life cycle, reproducing life and what has to be consumed in order to sustain life, and, conversely, the kind of «work» which, in its concern for ends as well as means, creates both durable products and the artificial «world» that protects us from fortuna. For evidence to support this distinction, she looks not to Aristotle, or to Kant, but to «every European language»¹⁰⁰. This distinction between labour and work is one that has allegedly been hidden by the tradition, from Plato, who consigned both to the cave, along with «action», to Marx, who understood both in terms of production, and, still with Arendt's «tradition of political philosophy», understood action (as she said to Heidegger) «on the model of production».

What Arendt calls Marx's rebellion against philosophy comprised his Feuerbachian inversion of Hegel, his assertion of mankind's subjectivity as «species-being». Against this, Arendt asserts the anti-essentialist claims of Dasein, the diverse claims of «men» rather than «man», which she thinks can only be advanced once one has domestically mastered the realm of natural necessity and escaped into the political realm of freedom, as expressed in action. Setting aside traditional claims that the life of the mind is «the good life», for the sake of which humans produce and act, she proposes that the life of action is the true kingdom of ends, for the sake of which humans labour and work and in which they are free from those needs that bind us all down, together and uniformly. *The vita activa* is our escape from our common, human condition of biological (or, to be truer to the Greek, zoological) need.

10. Production and Freedom

Arendt understands Marx as sharing her elemental opposition of freedom to necessity. As she notes, he identifies action with «labour» because it is labour that enables us – not individually and existentially but as a species and historically – to escape our animal condition, by producing a «surplus», over and above what is necessary to merely sustain life, and thereby changing the material conditions of our consciousness in creating what she calls a «world». She accuses him of thereby confusing labour with work, taking as emblematic of this confusion his proposition that Milton wrote «Paradise Lost for the same reasons and out of similar urges that compel the silkworm to produce silk».¹⁰¹ Her claim is that «Marx's whole theory hinges on the early insight that the laborer first of all reproduces his own life by producing his means of subsistence», and she therefore presents Marx as proposing that Milton was merely «producing his means of subsistence» out of the same natural necessity, and with the same exclusion «of 'imagination'», as a silkworm produces silk.¹⁰²

What Marx wrote in the passage to which Arendt refers is that «Milton produced Paradise Lost as a silkworm produces silk, as the activation [Betätigung] of his own nature»¹⁰³. The «urges» to which Arendt refers are indeed «similar» in the two cases, insofar as they are both natural;

the «reasons» can only be the same if they are of the kind that may be imputed to activity by an observer, as a silkworm does not act from reasons. Arendt's accusation against Marx's concept of human subjectivity, or what she calls animal laborans, is that it excludes imagination and reason, but motivating this accusation is her objection to any conception whatsoever of a human nature as setting limits to our spontaneity and freedom of action.

Arendt misrepresents Marx's account of Milton and of human nature, and this for the same reason that she misrepresents the Aristotelian idea of teleology. To say that, in writing imaginative poetry, Milton was activating his own nature is to imply that human nature consists in potentialities to be actualized and fulfilled; so long, that is, as one is not prevented from acting freely and naturally. For Marx, Milton was freely actualizing his natural urge to create, to produce, or, in Arendt's terms, to «work».

What Marx suggests in referring to Milton's poetry goes well beyond the Aristotelian idea of poiesis that informs Arendt's «model of production». She refers warmly to the famous passage in which Marx, speaking of labour as specifically human actualization, identifies «what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees» as the architect's conception of the building as a purposive ideal to be actualized, prior to his own activity of building.¹⁰⁴ Both Arendt and Marx differ from Aristotle's model of production in understanding it more as a human activity than a process that occurs in the product, and Arendt even follows Marx in relating activity to process as the objectification of labour.¹⁰⁵ The point Marx makes with reference to Milton is that actualization of the human capacity for creativity need not be limited to labour's objectification in its product. *Paradise Lost* was not a form that «already existed ideally»¹⁰⁶ in Milton's mind before he commenced writing it. It was, to the contrary, formed on the parchment at the same time as it was formed in his mind. It was a product not just of his will, practical reason, and physical effort, but also of the spontaneity of his imagination. It was, in other words, an expression of a freedom that separates human beings still more from the nature of silkworms and bees.

It is this freedom that Marx understood to be opposed to capitalism. What, following Smith, he called «productive labour» is labour that produces financial wealth, or «capital». What, adapting Feuerbach, he regarded as wrong with capitalism is that it subordinates human activity to the accumulation of inhuman capital, or of reified «exchange value». He referred to Milton as an exemplar of human freedom. But Milton was also subject to the material imperatives of the socially systemic process of capital accumulation. Marx therefore immediately followed Arendt's quoted passage by recording of Milton: «He later sold his product for £5 and thus became a merchant»¹⁰⁷.

Under capitalism, «activities which formerly ... passed as ends in themselves ... become directly converted into wage-labour».¹⁰⁸ Most labour is immediately alienated from the worker as a commodity, an exchange value. *Paradise Lost* was not produced out of alienation, even though it was later commodified. In selling it, Milton became a «merchant», a

participant in capitalism, but in working on it, in first producing it for something other than its exchange value, Milton acted as a fully human being. In actualizing his poem, Milton also actualized himself.

As Marx says elsewhere, «if the silkworm were to spin in order to continue its existence as a caterpillar, it would be a complete wage-worker»¹⁰⁹. But, unlike one of Engels' Mancunian weavers, it does not spin merely in order to sustain its present mode of existence. Rather, it spins its cocoon in order to actualize itself, to become a moth. This Arendt misses, in her simple dichotomy of freedom and necessity. Following Heidegger's conceptualization of power, dynamis, as possibility rather than specific potentiality, she lacked any idea of the activation or actualization of one's nature, and therefore Marx was much more profoundly opposed than was she to what she deplored in labour: the fact that the worker's «life-activity is for him only a means to enable him to exist»¹¹⁰.

A second way in which Marx goes well beyond the Aristotelian idea of poiesis is in analyzing the way in which labour and production – but not, of course, capital – are fully «socialized» under capitalism. Arendt conceived of labour as solitary, asocial, and private. Even «work», although it helps create the public world, is distinguished from action in that it does not participate in that world. In contrast, Marx, following Hegel, but here far more importantly following also Smith, recognizes the importance of labour not just as a «factor» or «force» of production but in the fully «social relations of production», of distribution, and of exchange. Milton's life as a poet may have been solitary, but as a «merchant» he entered into the social relations of the production and accumulation of capital.

11. Labour and Society

Arendt may have recognized Marx as the greatest critic of commercial society, but she also regarded him as the greatest prophet of its successor: not socialism or communism, but what she called a «labouring» and «consuming» society. This is the technological and utilitarian «mass society». As a society that is more inclusive and «comprehensive than even ... the polis», that «keeps the contingencies of life within boundaries» by providing welfare, and that pursues temporal «happiness» by institutionalizing «means», it is a society as beloved by Thomist Christian Democrats as post-Marxist Social Democrats, and a society at least tolerated by American Democrats and Republicans. But it is a society loathed by Heidegger and by Heideggerian neo-Aristotelians, including Arendt.

Arendt's conception of capitalist history and economy is Marxist, but minus what she calls Marx's dialectical «philosophy». Marx's conception of a future communism she always regarded as a philosophical fantasy, the actualization of philosophy's Platonic ideals by rationally «making history» in a way guaranteed success by Hegel's postulation of freedom as the goal of historical necessity. The idea that history can be intentionally made she regarded as epistemologically erroneous in the same way as is Hobbes' idea of the state as an artifact, and similarly dangerous. That freedom might emerge out of necessity she regarded as a conceptual

«confusion», and confusion compounded by Marx's description of the communist realm of freedom in terms of humankind's emancipation from our most essential activity: labour.

The labour theory of value, as it developed from Locke through Smith and Ricardo to Marx, was the target of especial criticism. Arendt held no brief for neoclassical economics, and (like Aristotle) had no problem with distinguishing between commodities as objects of use and of exchange. Her issue was with the concept of value. As she well knew, in his interpretation of the cave parable, Heidegger had said that Plato offered «the occasion for thinking of 'the good' 'morally' and ultimately reckoning it to be a 'value'»¹¹¹, and in the *Letter on Humanism* he had protested that «thinking in values is the greatest blasphemy imaginable against being», and «that precisely through the characterization of something as 'a value' what is so valued is robbed of its worth»¹¹². Arendt followed Heidegger in protesting that «universal relativity ... and loss of intrinsic worth ... are inherent in the very concept of value itself»¹¹³ and, as we have seen, that Plato adapted his idea of the good to make of it a measure of human affairs. Marx, in his rebellious attempt to «abolish philosophy» by «realizing it», proposed that the objectification of man's most essential activity is the measure of all things, thereby bringing us «to the threshold of a radical nihilism».¹¹⁴ Here, too, she followed Heidegger. He complimented Hegel and Marx's recognition of «the homelessness of modern human beings», attributing this to «the modern metaphysical essence of labor ... the objectification of the actual through the human being» and its concealment «in the essence of technology», which might point to «communism» but certainly not to emancipation.¹¹⁵ For Arendt, too, the modern human condition is one of «alienation» from the «world».

Arendt, then, shares much with Marx; with his critique of modernity, his classical ideals, and even his revolutionary hopes. He, too, eulogized the Paris Commune, in which «public functions» were performed as «real workmen's functions», «as Milton did his *Paradise Lost*, for a few pounds», but, unlike Arendt, saw «the emancipation of labour [as] its great goal».¹¹⁶

In insisting on the separation of a realm of action from that of production and procreation, Arendt indeed evokes something of the ancient ethos of politics. The question that must be asked is whether that political realm has any greater rationale than the domination by its members of those engaged in production and procreation. Arendt might ridicule the idea of an «end in itself», but we might ask whether action undertaken for its own sake has any greater justification. She might abhor the idea of the good as a measure by which to judge action, but we might reasonably suspect that we would be beyond nihilism's threshold without some such standard. She might wish to separate politics from philosophy, and we might acknowledge that philosophy has not always cared enough for our world, but we might well nonetheless fear the destination of a politics freed from principled scrutiny. Most of all, we should fear the destination of a capitalism freed from politics.

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- 1 Habermas, 1983: 174.
- 2 Villa, 1996.
- 3 Kisiel, 1993; Brogan 2005, and, most relevantly, Taminiaux, 1997, which argues that Arendt uses Heidegger's concepts against Heidegger and, therefore, is not Heideggerian; from what Arendt says of Marx inverting Hegel's concepts (see below) and, therefore, remaining Hegelian, she would disagree.
- 4 Volpi, 2007: 45; Volpi's emphasis.
- 5 Spaemann, 2000: 60.
- 6 Heidegger, 1997: 39. The notes of Arendt's own, 1962 course on the *Ethics* can be consulted on the website of the Library of Congress.
- 7 Heidegger, 1997: 420.
- 8 Riedel, 1972; 1974. See Knight, 2007: 91–101.
- 9 Volpi, 2007: 45; Volpi's emphasis.
- 10 Arendt, 1968g: 156–157; and this notwithstanding Hobbes' concern with private interests, *ibid.*: 139.
- 11 Arendt, in Arendt, Heidegger, 2004: 120–121.
- 12 Arendt, 1968e: 15.
- 13 Arendt, 1994a: 29–30.
- 14 Kisiel, 2005: 154.
- 15 Arendt, in Arendt, Heidegger, 2004: 120; for Heidegger's interpretation, see Heidegger 2002a: 17–106, and, in the later form cited (in the original) by Arendt, Heidegger, 1998b.
- 16 Arendt, 2005: 6.
- 17 Arendt, 1968a: 107.
- 18 Arendt, in Arendt, Heidegger, 2004: 120–121; Greek transliterated. On the good as «the 'highest idea'», see Heidegger, 1998b: 175.
- 19 Arendt, 1968a: 291.
- 20 Arendt, 1968a: 112–113.
- 21 Arendt, 1971: 54.
- 22 Arendt, in Arendt, Heidegger, 2004: 120.
- 23 Arendt, 1968a: 96–104.
- 24 Arendt, 1979: 337.
- 25 Arendt, 1968a: 117.
- 26 Arendt, 1953a: 7; Arendt, 1958a: 154–156.
- 27 Arendt, 1953b: 4; quoting Aristotle's *Politics* 1333a9–10. Inexplicably, Arendt's editor has substituted his own, misleading phraseology for Arendt's accurate translation at 2005: 46.
- 28 Arendt, 1953a: 6.
- 29 Arendt, 1968a: 117–118. For a comparison Aristotle's premiss of being and Kant's premiss of freedom, see Heidegger, 2002b.
- 30 Arendt, 1978a: 84.

31 Arendt, in Arendt, Heidegger, 2004: 120.
32 Kant 1987: 171; Kant's emphasis.
33 Arendt, 1968c: 76.
34 Heidegger, 1995: 85.
35 Arendt, 1968c: 77; Arendt, 1958a: 249.
36 Arendt, 1958a: 284; Arendt's emphasis.
37 Arendt, 1958a: 300.
38 Kant, as quoted in Arendt, 1982: 16; Kant's emphasis (cf.: Kant, 1987: 254).
39 Arendt, 1982: 59.
40 Arendt, 1982: 69.
41 She traces «the history of existential philosophy» back before Kierkegaard to
Schelling; Arendt, 1994b: 163, 167–173.
42 Arendt, 1982: 61.
43 Kant, 1996: 46
44 Kant, 1997: 226
45 Arendt, 1982: 61, 60.
46 E. g. Kant, 1997: 226, 42.
47 Arendt, 1994c: 321.
48 Arendt, 1958a: 177, 189; Arendt, 1987: 39; Arendt, 2005: 126. In *On Revolution*
she instead presents *principium* as the Latin analogue of *arche*; Arendt, 1965:
212–213.
49 Arendt, 2005: 45–46; Arendt, 1958a: 189–190.
50 Arendt, 1987: 39.
51 Arendt, 2005: 91.
52 Arendt, 1953a: 2.
53 Arendt, 1968a: 116.
54 Taminiiaux, 2002: 26.
55 Heidegger, 1998c: 239; cf.: Heidegger, 2002b: 49; «Actuality means
producedness»; Heidegger's emphasis.
56 Heidegger, 1998c: 239.
57 Arendt, 1953a: 6.
58 Arendt, 1958a: 206–207.
59 Arendt, 1978a: 62.
60 Arendt, 1978a: 61.
61 Arendt, 1968c: 76.
62 Arendt, 1978a: 123; Arendt's emphasis.
63 Mary McCarthy, then, Hannah Arendt, in Arendt, 1979: 337, 338; Arendt's
emphasis.
64 Arendt, 1978a: 123–124.
65 Arendt, 2005: 24.
66 Arendt, 1982: 77; Arendt's emphasis.
67 Arendt, 1982: 77.
68 Arendt, 1982: 76; Arendt's emphasis.
69 Arendt, 2003: 61.
70 Arendt, 1982: 76.
71 Her most extended dismissal of the former is in an early review of Dewey
(Arendt, 1946) and of the latter in a late footnote on Wittgenstein (Arendt,
1978b: 243–245).
72 Arendt, 1965: 195.
73 Arendt, in Arendt, Heidegger, 2004: 120.
74 Arendt, 2005: 63–65, 69.
75 Heidegger, 2002a: 12.
76 Arendt, 1968a: 137–138.
77 Arendt, 1968b: 153.
78 Pocock, 1975: 550, *passim*.
79 Arendt, 1968d: 22.

80 Arendt, 1970: 19, 12, 14; emphasis added.
81 Arendt, 1965: 239–279.
82 Arendt, 1958b.
83 Arendt, 1965: 280–281.
84 Arendt, 1972: 230–233.
85 Arendt, 1968f: 139, 143, 142, 141.
86 Arendt, 1958a: 300–301.
87 Arendt, 2005: 57, 76; Arendt, 1978a: 153; Arendt, 1968c: 82; Arendt, 1982: 54.
88 See especially Arendt, 1994b: 171.
89 Arendt, 2005: 56–59.
90 Arendt, 2005: 56.
91 Arendt, 2005: 137.
92 Arendt, in Arendt, McCarthy, 1995: 24.
93 E.g. Arendt, 1965: 102; Arendt, 2003: 89–93.
94 Arendt, 1994a: 29–30.
95 This proposition is advanced in Marx’s Paris manuscripts, in the co-authored
German Ideology, and again in Engels’ *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical
German Philosophy*. It became a commonplace of orthodox Marxism.
96 Arendt, 1978b: 46; Arendt, 1978a: 153; Arendt’s emphasis.
97 Arendt, 2005: 17.
98 Arendt, 1965: 64, 63.
99 Arendt, 1953a: 16–17.
100 Arendt, 1958a: 80.
101 Arendt, 1958a: 321.
102 Arendt, 1958a: 99–100; Marx’s emphasis.
103 Marx, 1976: 1044; Marx’s emphasis.
104 Marx, 1976: 284; cf.: Arendt, 1958a: 99.
105 See especially Arendt, 1958a: 102–103.
106 Marx, 1976: 284.
107 Marx, 1976: 1044; emphasis added.
108 Marx, 1976: 1041; Marx’s emphasis (abbreviated).
109 Marx, 1978: 20.
110 Marx, 1978: 19.
111 Heidegger, 1998b: 174.
112 Heidegger, 1998c: 265.
113 Arendt, 1958a: 166.
114 Arendt, 1968d: 32, 34.
115 Heidegger, 1998c: 258–259.
116 Marx, 1974: 252–253; Marx’s emphases.