

HANNAH ARENDT AND THE MYTH OF FREEDOM

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Abstract

Hannah Arendt understood political freedom as the understanding of a plurality of free individuals acting to shape their world in a public space. In order to reach this goal, there needs to be positive examples in history. Arendt considered the American Revolution to be just such an instance. This is the ideal type of a revolution: Men create a new beginning through joint political action. In the interest of not allowing this event in the history of mankind to be forgotten and so that it is present to be used for navigation in the future, it must be idealized and exalted. It must be newly recounted so that the collective memory can be anchored within a community. Hannah Arendt wanted to thereby be active in endowing the western world with her «myth of freedom». This «myth of freedom» is no longer supported. Is it possible to bring the «myth of freedom» back to life according to Hannah Arendt's ideas? Which narrative can we use to base our thoughts of freedom on today?

Keywords: Hannah Arendt, political philosophy, political action, American Revolution, political freedom.

For Hannah Arendt «the *raison d'être* of politics [was] freedom»¹, and she believed that freedom is an essentially political phenomenon which is to be experienced neither by the will, nor by the act of thinking, but only by acting². Consequently «to be free and to act are the same»³. «To be free is to be able to practice freedom».⁴ She thus transposed the political realm from human nature to human acting, in the space between the people.⁵ For Arendt our humanity is revealed in the various modalities of action, not in being but in doing:⁶ Political actions are realised in their dynamic in the mutual public communication.⁷ «We first become aware of freedom or its opposite in our intercourse with others, not in the intercourse with ourselves».⁸ People only can be free in relation to each other, thus only in the realms of the political and action; only there do they learn what freedom positively means and that it is more than freedom from force.⁹ If people may not freely and openly communicate with each other, then there is no longer the political realm of freedom. As for her this was solely a question of the human situation in modern times, she was able to confine

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herself to the *Vita activa* [The Human Condition]; the *Vita contemplativa* alongside the dimensions of freedom, which she assigned to the area of «metaphysical concern with eternity»¹⁰ and as such it is left out all considerations.¹¹ Arendt wanted to explicitly unhinge the concept of freedom from its apolitical Christian roots as an individual ability in the sense of free will and to make freedom the epitome of political life in the form of the human predicate of action and ability.¹²

Hannah Arendt advanced to her second great political theme political freedom as the actual human way of life, which is hindered by totalitarianism. Unlike many of her contemporaries Hannah Arendt held the position that freedom is not developed in the private realm but rather politically and at the same time individually. This is regarded by many as an anachronistic, backward-looking or utopian opinion.¹³ With her notion that free action is in principle detached from nothing, she was in conflict with the contemporary theories of society and exposed herself to the accusation of a pre-modern, almost mythical way of thinking.¹⁴ According to Arendt human freedom is expressed in that humans are in the position to discontinue current structures or processes, but also to preserve continuity. For Arendt political freedom is constituted by the ability of a plurality of people to act together in the public sphere despite their various differences.¹⁵ A plurality of humans freely associate with each other and is at pains to ensure the well being of the community in public speech and opposition. In her second main political work *The Human Condition* Arendt asks what conditions must be fulfilled in order to realise a humane i. e. a liberal humane world and to organise it so that it lasts. She differentiated between a private and public sphere,¹⁶ which gained her much criticism, especially from the feminist arena. Arendt's most criticised sentence reads, «Women and slaves belonged to the same category and were hidden away not only because they were somebody else's property but because their life was 'laborious', devoted to bodily functions»¹⁷. It is only the modern society, which «no longer believes that bodily functions and material concerns should be hidden»¹⁸. Such statements are not to be understood as a description of historical processes but in them values are expressed, which comprise of a nostalgic look at the Old World of the Greek polity before Plato. The private realm, which she also called «the realm of the hidden»¹⁹, suffers devaluation in as far as it is connected to the preservation of life. However, only liberation from these necessary activities allows the human to engage in the public realm. On the other hand Arendt emphasised that the resulting pressure from the liberation from vital necessities, «from the standpoint of the public realm and a deprivation of freedom»²⁰ protects the human from apathy and constantly compels them to new initiatives. The necessities of life trigger action impulses, consequently the behaviour, which is of great importance for Arendt's understanding of freedom, even if under other signs, namely that of a spontaneous action in freedom. She clearly sees that where the urge of the necessary weakens, «the distinguishing line between freedom and necessity» blurs, but still wants to hang on.²¹ But is it possible to dif-

ferentiate between the driving force of human actions between actions that arise from freedom and actions that are born of necessity?

It has often been criticised that Arendt in a sort of history of decay had criticised the lapse of the public political life and mourns the «rise of the social»²². Seyla Benhabib doubts the capacity of Arendt's differentiation between social and political life, thus she recommends relating these rather to the attitude than the contents of the purpose area.²³ It is also put into question, whether Arendt's concept of the public sphere does justice to the sociological complexity and the dissimilitude of modern institutes.²⁴

A plurality of people in the public sphere, who respect each other and reach agreements as equals, is for Arendt the qualitative opposite of the unformed masses. According to her conviction the modern «mass society not only destroys the public realm but the private as well»²⁵. Under the economic and social conditions of the modern age politics runs the risk of losing its freedom and its *raison d'être* as the constructive cooperation of a plurality of people, and this process may go as far as to the destruction of all politics in the totalitarian systems. However, her response to the «highly atomised mass society», the isolation and absence of normal social relations of the uprooted and unattached faceless human is not the commitment of the individual to the state and its homogeneous national community. This form of mass equality offers the best opportunity for the establishment of a dictatorship.²⁶ In fact, the difference between the individuals should remain in order to allow for the possibility of spontaneity, which is understood as the potential for liberal action. For Arendt the modern media world as well as the bureaucratisation and professionalisation of politics are some of the dangers to the public sphere.²⁷ They destroy the free communication process among the people. These are theses, which were rekindled Communitarianism 20 years later.²⁸

For Arendt National Socialism was not marked by a total politicisation of life, but rather by the complete de-politicisation of life because National Socialism aimed at destroying all political elements of freedom, in particular the ability to act in freedom.²⁹ Total authority finds ways to integrate people in the flow of history, so that it no longer prevents this flow, but rather reinvents itself as a moment of acceleration.³⁰ These means are the «force of terror», which works externally and the «the force of ideologically consistent thinking», which comes from the inside.³¹ However, freedom is not only destroyed by dictatorships, but is in decline everywhere, where the concept of politics is replaced either by the concept of society or by the concept of history.³² As soon as the idea gains ground, that the freedom of the people «is to be sacrificed to historical development»³³ because humans, who act in freedom hinder these developments, political freedom, i.e. the joint action of a multiplicity of people, is immediately jeopardised because «a multiplicity of people are fused into one single individual»³⁴. To feel secure in this one mass, which is fused together, and to relinquish one's own freedom of social action in favour of the supposed necessity of history is one of the dangerous attempts of the political co-existence of present times.

According to Arendt the ability of freedom as a mutual political action is expressed in making a start and perhaps creating something new, thus to acquire the world anew with new senses³⁵, or even more: «to establish the world anew»³⁶. This is where her understanding of the modern revolutions as an identity process of freedom and action comes into play. According to Arendt mankind has always known that there are two aspects of freedom: a negative aspect, namely freedom from external force and a positive aspect, i. e. freedom of action to be able to realise the «I can».³⁷ In the consciousness of the revolutionists negative and positive freedom have always been connected. *Rebellion* illustrates the starting point of the revolutionary process and is closely linked to the concept of negative freedom.³⁸ Positive liberation i. e. the establishment of a realm, where freedom may appear in the words and deeds of free men, follows from negative liberation from necessity³⁹. The actual goal of a revolution, which always inherits an «element of novelty»⁴⁰, is the reestablishment of freedom. The revolution inherits «natality», «Gebürtlichkeit» and the connected surprise element of «miracles».⁴¹

Following Max Weber, Arendt sought to conceptualise an ideal type of revolution, which comes close to the real type of American Revolution that she overestimated. The referral to the Roman Republic and the Greek polity – both central ideals in Arendt's thinking – is an important reason for the ideal composition of the political sphere which was created as a result of the American Revolution. Thanks to the American Revolution she already sees an important reason for the ideal composition of the political sphere in its referral to the Roman Republic and the Greek polity as examples. In *Sachverstand und Politik* she remarked that it would be a great mistake if we solely based our perception of freedom and free society on what we have known in the last hundred or hundred and fifty years and even worse if we base it on the party system, which, if one looks more closely at history, has never functioned.⁴² Her critical stance towards the party system corresponded to her favour for the council system.⁴³ The great enthusiasm for the council can only be explained in the fact that «every individual found his own sphere of action and could behold, as it were, with his own eyes his own contribution to the events of the day»⁴⁴. Or as she writes in another paragraph:

«Political freedom ... means the right 'to be a participator in government', or it means nothing».⁴⁵

According to Arendt the institution of the political freedom as worthwhile constitutive principle of human cohabitation does not allow it to be based on private and economic interests, which the failed Weimar party state illustrates.⁴⁶ According to her conviction the politics of interests leads to the politics of power, the violent rule of people over others and eventually to the destruction of political freedom. Additionally the institution of political freedom requires an anchor on the other side of human limitations, in order to ensure the immortality of the whole body⁴⁷. Since it excludes transcendent instances the codification of freedom in the form of the constitution forms the final instance. In 1971 she spoke of «belief in

the constitution»⁴⁸. Nevertheless this is not a consequence of every revolution, the constitution from the French Revolution⁴⁹ just as the German constitution of 1918 does not appear to afford timeless codification of freedom. According to Arendt the majority of revolutions, including the Russian Revolution, must fail because they are concerned with the social aspect instead of the political aspect, thus their issues are not worth a public debate.⁵⁰ Being dominated by the social question, the revolutions lost sight of their actual purpose, namely freedom. Arendt's concept of freedom is not based on the issue of socially fair distribution⁵¹, her chief concern is political not social equality. She did not believe that the social question could be resolved politically but rather economically. A justified objection counters that social problems are often actual political problems and that the question, whether it deals with a social or political problem, in many cases is itself a political question.⁵² However, Arendt never corrected herself.⁵³ For her among all the revolutions, perhaps excluding the tragically failed Hungarian revolution,⁵⁴ there was only one exception: the American Revolution.⁵⁵ If one does not regard the situation of the slaves, poverty here was hardly an issue. However, she saw the political danger of poverty:

«The political trouble, which misery of the people holds in store is that manyness can in fact assume the guise of oneness...».⁵⁶

In her essay, written in 1975 *200 Jahre Amerikanische Revolution* (200 years since the American Revolution) she wrote that «the American institutions of freedom, which were established 200 years ago, have existed much longer than any other comparable glorious period of history. These highlights of human history have justifiably become paradigms of our tradition of political thinking. ... As highlights they continue to live to enlighten the actions and thoughts of people in dark times»⁵⁷. For her the American Revolution represented one of those very seldom historical moments, in which one joint supranational world is actually constructed. For Arendt in contrast to other revolutions the American Revolution is in itself an expression of freedom. In her eagerness to glorify this revolution she awarded it the attribute of non-violence, a characterisation, whose empirical soundness is vehemently doubted.⁵⁸ Additionally she proved uncertain regarding the attributes of a real revolution. In her book *On Revolution*⁵⁹ she explicitly named violence as a characteristic of a true revolution. She wrote:

«...only where change occurs in the sense of a new beginning, where violence is used to constitute an altogether different form of government, to bring about the formation of a new body politic, where the liberation from oppression aims at least at the constitution of freedom can we speak of revolution».⁶⁰

In contrast, in *Macht und Gewalt* she emphasised that violence in the form of wars and revolutions must not be the only possibility to stop historical processes.⁶¹

It was important for Arendt that humans do not function according to a stimulus-reaction scheme, but remain unpredictable in their actions. Arendt ascribed this ability to constantly act on new initiatives to the possibility of human action. If the historical process in its continuity and discontinuity is not understood as the result of joint actions of humans but as the development and the meeting of external, sub and super human powers, then the human race has turned away from history⁶² in favour of a transdescental reality or world spirit. In all the differences Arendt⁶³ converges in her rejection of Romantic philosophy, but also in her educational pathos, with Isaiah Berlin⁶⁴ and Karl Popper⁶⁵. The human being is the one who acts and who is responsible for his actions, not any power outside himself. As soon as humanity is no longer the ruler of history changes become so «improbable» that all great events appear as miracles.⁶⁶ The modern political freedom, which is associated with human rights⁶⁷, did not originate from «the freedom of Christians», which was given by God⁶⁸. That is exactly how Arendt read the American Declaration of Independence, in which it states:

«We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness».⁶⁹

In the American Declaration of Independence from the 4th July 1776 or in the correspondence between Jefferson and Adams Arendt believed to perceive those «rare moments in history»⁷⁰ in which political freedom was visible. Paralysed forms are broken through without violence as a result of the power of human actions⁷¹ and existing conditions change. Arendt believed this new style American freedom was established for its own sake, it constitutes an immortal, i. e. a permanent political sphere, in which human mortality is annulled. For Arendt the new type of positive freedom, established by the Founding Fathers, wins precisely through the until then absent, the new and the unexpected a creative quality, which the person in his ability to achieve formally ennobles. This side of the human being, namely his freedom to achieve something completely new, was discovered during and thanks to the revolution. Therefore the revolution plays such an important role: as the promoter of the rediscovery of the human ability to a new form of freedom. This positive freedom to do something novel is for Arendt the essence of being free. However, she was preceded by the most primary gesture of freedom, the freedom to be able to leave a place or oppressive conditions, in the sense of liberation.⁷² While the negative liberation from something within a given form of government may occur, the positive freedom, as the American Revolution illustrated, according to Arendt «necessitated the formation of a new, or rather rediscovered form of government; it demanded the constitution of a republic»⁷³. Only in the execution of their struggle for the liberation did the revolutionaries experience freedom. They discovered what it is not only to be free but also to act in freedom.

«For the acts and deeds which liberation demanded from them threw them into public business, where, intentionally or more often unexpectedly, they began to constitute that space of appearances where freedom can unfold its charms and become a visible, tangible reality».⁷⁴

In this process they created a «body politic which guarantees the space where freedom can appear»⁷⁵. In the republic an action is possible as an expression of freedom. Because freedom in the execution of the action is a goal in itself, the actions of humans, who want to be free, must always be exercised. In order to avoid the loss of this revolutionary spirit of freedom of the Founding fathers, this spirit is to be preserved in a new political sphere. In this secured sphere guaranteed by the constitution – more in the declaratory part than in the organisational part⁷⁶, a passion for political freedom must be able to survive⁷⁷. These are conditions, which according to Arendt's conviction the American Revolution was unable to create. The constitution concerns the contents of the treaty, the securing of the spirit of the founders and the act of the treaty. The latter is an alliance between people and «gathers together the isolated strength of the allied partners and binds them into a new power structure by virtue of 'free and sincere promises'»⁷⁸. The civilised society in the spirit of the act of foundation is to be preserved by not using the developed structures of power against the constitution. The thought of the promise on the one hand allows plurality, but on the other hand the unpredictability of actions. Arendt separates the power, which has come to be through an alliance of the free, from the dominance and violence against the masses: «under the condition of human plurality can never amount to omnipotence»⁷⁹, the assistance of many and various is therefore a guarantor for the conservation of freedom. Although power is a fixed part of political coexistence, it may not be understood as a fixed possession but rather ends as soon as the people no longer act jointly and disband.⁸⁰

«Power is the only human attribute which applies solely to the worldly in-between space by which men are mutually related».⁸¹

This in-between space draws on the basis of legitimating of the act of foundation and on the ability to be able to make a new start, not as Arendt emphasised on «the belief in an immortal Legislator, or the promises of reward and the threats of punishment in a 'future state', or even the doubtful self-evidence of the truths enumerated in the Declaration of Independence»⁸². Thus in contrast to the Declaration of Independence Arendt wanted to do without the coverage in form of natural justice or metaphysics and wanted – with the help of institutions, in her example the Senate and the constitutional courts – to create⁸³ «the perpetual state»⁸⁴. Although according to Arendt the founding spirit of the American Revolution has not been successfully conserved.⁸⁵ However, these problems are shared by the founders of all immanent and transcendental institutions.

In both cases it concerned the protection of experienced events. According to Arendt the establishment of freedom must be remembered in

order to face the «amnesia», which she diagnosed in the USA after the Second World War.

«Fear of revolution has been the hidden leitmotif of post-war American foreign policy in its desperate attempts at a stabilisation of the status quo, with the result that American power and prestige were used and misused to support obsolete and corrupt political regimes that long since had become object of hatred and contempt among their own citizens».⁸⁶

This amnesia leads to «fear of revolution», a stabilisation of the *status quo* and a catastrophic lack of the power of judgement.⁸⁷ In order to challenge the process of the loss of freedom Arendt pleaded for a culture of remembrance. As an example of such a culture of remembrance she mentioned the Biblical exodus stories, which in the American tales actually played a supporting role,⁸⁸ and «Vergil's story of the wanderings of Aeneas after he had escaped burning Troy»⁸⁹. The historical significance of both legends «lies in how the human mind attempted to solve the problem of the beginning, of an unconnected, new event breaking into the continuous sequence of historical time»⁹⁰.

«Both are legends of liberation, the one of liberation from slavery and the other of escape from annihilation, and both stories are centred about a future promise of freedom, the eventual conquest of a promised land or the foundation of a new city...»⁹¹

The forty year journey through the desert and Aeneas' odyssey form a temporary abyss between the old and the new. This is the time, in which the people have the chance to use their ability to start something new. They must provide their own freedom and make their own absolute beginning.⁹² It is the question of the liberation from oppression and the establishment of freedom as a lasting and tangible reality.⁹³ The human, who is existentially predestined, makes a new beginning himself, not an otherworldly creator.⁹⁴

Similar to ancient and biblical tales Arendt wanted to introduce the American Revolution as a modern secular legend of foundation in the free world and retrieve this «lost treasure»⁹⁵ of the revolutionary tradition for her contemporaries. It is a question of, in sense of Walter Benjamin of original phenomena, forms of public freedom, which are solely waiting to be saved from the continuity of the past.⁹⁶ It depends just as little as with the Exodus or the story of Aeneas on the historical fact, incidentally a reason why the fundamental study of Arendt's blatantly shortened and misinterpretation of the American Revolution hardly plays a role in her matter of concern.⁹⁷ Certainly, she exposed herself with this action to the criticism of only wanting to replace the old transcendental myths with a new inherent myth, the freedom myth characterised by America.

In order to keep this freedom myth alive a culture of remembrance is required, which firmly anchors any events in consciousness, through a permanent process of communication, i.e. a dialogue between the people, through a historiography that forms legends and through a «reification»

in the form of ideas.⁹⁸ The mutual dialogue on a formative event forms a bulwark against forgetting and keeps present what one has not experienced, the unseen and the not current: remembrance, Mnemosyne, the mother of the muses and arts, may linguistically be so concentrated that the thought changes into something, which is immediately firmly anchored in the memory.⁹⁹ Thus a certain matter of memory is ascribed a particular importance; it is used in a way to create a certain meaning. Arendt pleaded for the spirit of the foundation of freedom, as it took shape in history or rather in the historical legend of the American Revolution to become the core of the «cultural memory»¹⁰⁰ of a community of the free and to develop a corresponding normative historical consciousness. Following the Jewish tradition and additionally to the function of a «founding» memory¹⁰¹, the cultural memory also takes on the role of a *counter memory* to the factual conditions in the past, present and future.¹⁰² Therefore it is not astonishing that under this point she seems often to excessively glorify or to build a legend around the counter memory. History in itself should not be remembered but rather the specific meaning of the same.¹⁰³ Even the actor on his part is in danger of repressing or misunderstanding the real meaning of his actions.¹⁰⁴

For Arendt all human actions are contingent; because humans possess the ability to act and to disrupt history, it is their responsibility to change unfree conditions. Although Arendt had devised for the positive option in her concept for a founded memory an absolutely normative benchmark, something like a collective historical symbol, in another passage she insists that she wants to take away people's «signposts».¹⁰⁵ On the other hand Arendt mentions certain positive and negative events in the past, the remembrance of which offers benchmarks for the interpretation of history and presence and which are supposed to invite further reasoning. With that she created a critical potential and normative impulses, which contradict her postulates of thoughts without restriction.¹⁰⁶ She wanted to orientate the public towards a contemporary political practice of freedom.

Can one think ahead of Arendt and if yes, in what sense? Is that which is derived from her expert knowledge only so loosely interwoven with her personal experience and thus connected to a context¹⁰⁷ that it is accessible for the affirmative, the sympathiser, however it withdraws from the empirical as a theoretical generalisation?¹⁰⁸ There is certainly a series of points of thought, which it is worthwhile to follow up, and which – even if in another way as Arendt herself might have found correct – were picked up. There is, on the one hand, her consequent approach, which starting from the empirical social research is essential today for the description and interpretation of human behaviour. This approach corresponds to the clear renunciation of casually constructed transcendental instance devised for the anchoring of the basic phases. Rather with her argumentation she is the co-founder of a «public philosophy» with civil religious traits¹⁰⁹, although she did not rely on a civil religion.¹¹⁰ Her thoughts on the formation of a cultural memory have been proven to be heuristically fruitful on a cultural anthropological level in the research of Geertz¹¹¹ and Assmann. What she said about amnesia has been accepted in particular way by the

memory researchers.¹¹² From the same field of research her idealistic concept of freedom has certainly experienced many set-backs.¹¹³ However, she constantly rejects the postulate of free will, as propounded by Rousseau.¹¹⁴ To declare one such variable quantity as a fundament of freedom appeared too bold to her.¹¹⁵

For Hannah Arendt in the history of humanity there have been two great moments of freedom, which she stylised in an idealising way: the Greek polity and the American Revolution. In the American student revolt of the nineteen sixties¹¹⁶ she initially saw a central moment of free action twinkle again and pinned her hopes on Daniel Cohn-Bendit¹¹⁷ and others, in which she thought to be able to perhaps discover little Thomas Jeffersons or John Adamsses. If she had experienced the revolutions of 1989/90, we may speculate that she would have understood the revolutionary created «public sphere» and the practiced political actions on the Round Table as a «spontaneously formed organ of the people»¹¹⁸ and would have celebrated the so-called peaceful revolution altogether as the rebirth of freedom.¹¹⁹ Herein there is possibly, alongside the concept of totalitarianism, a motive to be found why the founders of this Institute in Dresden chose the name of Hannah Arendt.¹²⁰ However, in the meantime in these circles of civil liberties disillusion has also arrived. Hannah Arendt's utopia of a «free republic» once again appears to have vanished into the distant future.

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- ³ Ibid, p. 153.
- ⁴ Breier, K.-H. (2001) *Hannah Arendt. Eine Einführung*. Hamburg. S. 92. [Self translation.]
- ⁵ Cf.: Sontheimer, K. (2005) *Hannah Arendt*. München. S. 108. [Self translation.]
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- ⁸ Arendt (1968/1993), op.cit, p. 148. In Karl Jaspers, who follows Arendt here, it reads: «Freiheit verwirklicht sich in Gemeinschaft. Ich kann nur frei sein in dem Maße wie die anderen frei sind». (Freedom is realised in the community. I can only be free in as far as others are free.) Cf.: Jaspers, K. (1949) *Vom Ursprung und Ziel der Geschichte*. München. S. 196.
- ⁹ Arendt H. (1958/²2000) *Freiheit und Politik*. In: *Zwischen Vergangenheit und Zukunft. Übungen im politischen Denken I*. München. S. 201–227, quote: 201. [Not in the English version.]
- ¹⁰ Arendt H. (1958) *The Human Condition*. Chicago. P. 55.
- ¹¹ Ibid, p. 55 f. Ralf Dahrendorf criticizes the complex exclusion of *vita contemplativa* in Arendt's analysis («das völlige Fehlen der *vita contemplativa* in der [Arendtschen] Analyse»; cf.: Dahrendorf, R. (2006) *Versuchungen der Unfreiheit. Die Intellektuellen in Zeiten der Prüfung*, München. S. 90). In her unfinished work *Vom Leben des Geistes* (Vol. 1: Das Denken [1979], Munich, ³1993) Arendt observed the contemplative life.

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- 38 Cf.: Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 32, 39 f.
- 39 Arendt (1962/2000), op. cit., S. 240. [Not to be found in *Between Past and Future*]. See instead: Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 74, 142.
- 40 Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 27.
- 41 Cf.: Arendt (1993), op.cit., S. 32. See also: Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 211 f., as well as Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, S. 169 f. (on Arendt's understanding of 'miracle').
- 42 Cf.: Küppers, H. (ed.) (1962) *Sachverstand und Politik in der Demokratie* (10. Europäisches Gespräch in Recklinghausen, with the participation of Hannah Arendt). Cologne. S. 176 f. Also see: Reif, A. (ed.) (1976) *Gespräche mit Hannah Arendt*. München. S. 95. Here she speaks of the «Party machine».
- 43 Cf.: Reif, *Gespräche mit Hannah Arendt*, S. 95 f.
- 44 Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 263.
- 45 Ibid, p. 218.

- 46 Cf.: Küppers (1962), op. cit., S. 176 f. See also: Arendt (1951), op. cit., p. 145 f.
47 Cf.: Arendt (1951), op. cit., p. 145 f.
48 Reif (1976), op. cit., S. 74.
49 However, the French Revolution played a central role for the communicative
memory because important thinkers constantly reassess this great historical
happening and strive to conceptually understand it: «I am inclined to think
that it was precisely the great amount of theoretical concern and conceptual
thought lavished upon the French Revolution by Europe's thinkers and phi-
losophers which contributed decisively to its world-wide success, despite its
disastrous end». Cf.: Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 219 f.
50 Cf.: Benhabib (1998), op. cit., p. 247 ff. Already Miller in *The Pathos of Nov-
elty* (p. 196) countered that there was a serious problem in relation to Hannah
Arendt's understanding of «social» and «political».
51 In contrast cf.: Rawls, J. (1971/1979) *Eine Theorie der Gerechtigkeit*.
Frankfurt/M., esp. 336. See: Besier, G., Lindemann, G. (2006) *Im Namen der
Freiheit. Die amerikanische Mission*. Göttingen. S. 272 ff.
52 Benhabib (1998), op. cit., p. 247 ff. Also see: Bernstein, R.J. Rethinking the
social and the political. In: Williams (2006), op. cit., vol. III, p. 237–256.
53 Popper also believed that the French Revolution failed, as did the Russian
Revolution because the struggle for freedom degenerated into terrorism. Cf.:
Popper, K. (1996) *Zum Thema Freiheit*. In: Popper K. *Alles Leben ist Problem-
lösen. Über Erkenntnis, Geschichte und Politik*. München. S. 172. In contrast the
Hungarian Revolution of 1956 was victorious and failed. Ibid.
54 Cf.: Arendt, H. (1958/2000) *Die Ungarische Revolution und der totalitäre Im-
perialismus*. In: Arendt, H. *In der Gegenwart. Übungen im politischen Denken
II*. München. S. 73–126. The work essentially serves to remind of the «freedom's
day of death» (S. 73) and with it to conserve the «historical events» of sponta-
neous actions for the following generations.
55 She understood the worldwide «rebellion of students» in the mid-sixties as a
shadow of the American Revolution. According to Arendt the American stu-
dents learned that «one can change things. Without this trust in the change-
ability of things the opposition in America can not be understood». [Self trans-
lation.] See: Reif (1976), op. cit., S. 75.
56 Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 94.
57 Cf.: Arendt, H. (1986) *Zur Zeit, Politische Essays*. Berlin. S. 163. [Self
translation.]
58 Cf.: Benhabib, *Reluctant Modernism*, p. 160.
59 See: Hobsbawn, E.J. (2006) Hannah Arendt on revolution. In: G. Williams (ed.)
Hannah Arendt. Critical Assessments of Leading Philosophers. Vol. 2. Abing-
don–New York. P. 173–179.
60 Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 35.
61 Arendt, H. (1970/1996) *Macht und Gewalt. Mit einem Interview von Adelbert
Reif*. München. S. 34.
62 Arendt, *Was ist Politik?* S. 33.
63 Cf.: Arendt, H. (2002) *Denktagebuch 1950–1973*. Munich. Vol. 1, 175 ff. Vol. 2,
767 f.
64 Cf.: Berlin, I. (1999) *Die Wurzeln der Romantik*. Berlin. S. 171 ff.
65 Cf.: Popper, K. *Die offene Gesellschaft und ihre Feinde*. Vol. II, S. 262 ff.
66 Arendt, *Was ist Politik?* S. 33.
67 Cf.: Arendt, H. (1949) *Es gibt nur ein Menschenrecht, Die Wandlung*.
S. 754–770. Here she claimed that the right to freedom is the actual essence of
human rights (ibid, S. 759).
68 Cf.: Schönherr-Mann (2006), op. cit., S. 111.
69 *The Declaration of Independence* and *The Constitution of the United States*. Intr.
by P. Maier. New York, 1998. P. 53.
70 Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 130.

- 71 Arendt, *Über die Revolution*, S. 168. [English version: «...one of the rare moments in history when the power of action is great enough to erect its own monument»; see: Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 130.]
- 72 Cf.: Arendt, *Gedanken zu Lessing*, S. 23.
- 73 Cf.: Arendt, *On Revolution*, S. 33.
- 74 Ibid, p. 33.
- 75 Ibid, p. 125.
- 76 Cf.: Greven (1993), op. cit., S. 86.
- 77 Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 126.
- 78 Ibid, p. 170.
- 79 Ibid, p. 39.
- 80 On criticism of Arendt's concept of power cf.: Brunkhorst, H. (1994) Brot und Spiele? Hannah Arendts zweideutiger Begriff der Öffentlichkeit. In: U. Kubeshofmann (ed.) *Sagen, was ist. Zur Aktualität Hannah Arendts*. Vienna. S. 157. Also see: Habermas, J. (1976/1978) Hannah Arendts Begriff der Macht. In: Habermas J. *Politik, Kunst, Religion. Essays über zeitgenössische Philosophen*. Stuttgart; esp. 123.
- 81 Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 175.
- 82 Ibid, p. 199.
- 83 James Miller had already ascertained in 1977 that in Arendt there is a great contrast between the pathos of the *Neugebürtlichkeit* of action on the one hand and the desire for the permanence of a durable constitution of freedom on the other hand, James Miller had already ascertained in 1977; see: Miller, *The Pathos of Novelty*, p. 182.
- 84 Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 231.
- 85 At the beginning of the seventies she even feared the annulment of the constitution and with it the end of American freedom. The Student Movement wanted to make the constitution function once again. Cf.: Reif, *Gespräche mit Hannah Arendt*, p. 77 ff; quote: 79.
- 86 Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 217.
- 87 Ibid, p. 216 f.
- 88 Cf.: Besier, Lindemann, *Im Namen der Freiheit*, S. 23, 58.
- 89 Cf.: Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 205.
- 90 Ibid, p. 204 f.
- 91 Ibid, p. 205.
- 92 Arendt, *Das Wollen*, S. 197.
- 93 Ibid, S. 193.
- 94 Cf.: Arendt, *Was ist Existenzphilosophie*, esp. 31; 34.
- 95 The final chapter of the English edition of *Über die Revolution* reads: «The Revolutionary Tradition and Its Lost Treasure»; in the German edition the title prosaically reads: «Tradition und Geist der Revolution» (Tradition and the Spirit of the Revolution). Also see: Arendt, *Introduction to Benjamin, Illuminations*, p. 50 f.
- 96 Miller, *The Pathos of Novelty*, p. 186.
- 97 Cf.: Thaa, W., Probst, L. (ed.) (2003) *Die Entdeckung der Freiheit. Amerika im Denken Hannah Arendts*. Berlin–Vienna.
- 98 That is also true for works of culture and art.: Arendt, H. (1958/2000) Kultur und Politik. In: *Zwischen Vergangenheit und Zukunft. Übungen im politischen Denken I*. München. S. 302.
- 99 Arendt, *Vita Activa*, S. 157. Also see: Assmann, A., Harth, D. (ed.) (1991) *Mnemosyne. Formen und Funktionen der kulturellen Erinnerung*. Frankfurt/M.
- 100 Cf.: Assmann, J. (1999) *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis. Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen*. München.
- 101 Cf.: ibid, S. 78 ff.
- 102 Cf.: the parallels with Walter Benjamin, as Arendt experienced them: Arendt, *Walter Benjamin*, S. 20; cf. also: Arendt, H. (2000) *Die Lücke zwischen Ver-*

- gangenheit und Zukunft. In: Arendt, H. *Zwischen Vergangenheit und Zukunft. Übungen im politischen Denken I*. München. S. 14. On Hannah Arendt's relationship to Walter Benjamin see: Schöttker, D., Wizisla, E. (2005) Hannah Arendt und Walter Benjamin. Stationen einer Vermittlung, *Text und Kritik*. Zeitschrift für Literatur, 166/167 (September). S. 42–66.
- 103 Cf.: Althaus, *Erfahrung denken*, S. 304.
- 104 Cf.: Miller, *The Pathos of Novelty*, p. 184. Also see: Benjamin, W. (1980) Geschichtsphilosophische Thesen: Ueber den Begriff der Geschichte. In: *Gesammelte Werke*. Vol. 1–2, Frankfurt am Main; Benjamin, W. (¹³2003) *Illuminationen. Ausgewählte Schriften*. Sel. S. Unseld. Frankfurt/M.
- 105 Arendt, *Diskussion in Toronto*, p. 109. [Self translation.]
- 106 Ibid.
- 107 Cf.: Miller, *The Pathos of Novelty*, p. 197.
- 108 Cf.: Hermand, J. (2005) «Finding myself in history». Hannah Arendts Amerika-Erfahrung, *Text und Kritik*. Zeitschrift für Literatur 166/167 (September). S. 21–27
- 109 Cf.: Kleger, H., Müller, A. (ed.) (²2004) *Religion des Bürgers. Zivilreligion in Amerika und Europa*. Münster.
- 110 Cf.: Miller, *The Pathos of Novelty*, p. 192.
- 111 Cf.: Geertz, C. (⁴1995) *Dichte Beschreibung. Beiträge zum Verstehen kultureller Systeme*. Frankfurt/M.; esp. 49.
- 112 Cf.: Markowitsch, H.J. (²2005) *Dem Gedächtnis auf der Spur*. Darmstadt; Ders./Harald Welzer (2006) *Das autobiographische Gedächtnis*. Stuttgart.
- 113 Cf.: Geyer, C. (ed.) (2004) *Hirnforschung und Willensfreiheit. Zur Deutung der neuesten Experimente*. Frankfurt/M.
- 114 Cf.: Arendt, H. (1968) *Between Past and Future*. New York. P. 164.
- 115 Cf.: Miller, *The Pathos of Novelty*, p. 187.
- 116 Reif, *Gespräche mit Hannah Arendt*, S. 95. Cf.: Greven, *Hannah Arendt*, S. 87 f.
- 117 Cf.: Cohn-Bendit, D. (1995) *Sie war keine ‚engagierte‘ Philosophin. She was not an ‚engaged‘ philosopher*. <http://polylogos.org/philosophers/arendt/arendt-philolo.html>.
- 118 Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 249. On this idea in general cf.: Reif, *Gespräche mit Hannah Arendt*, S. 85. Also see: Greven, *Hannah Arendt*, S. 88.
- 119 Cf.: Althaus, *Erfahrung denken*, S. 272, note 102. The former citizen's rights campaigner, Ehrhart Neubert, reclaimed Hannah Arendt's concept of freedom for the peaceful revolution and makes the old Federal Republic of Germany responsible for the loss of this new beginning. Cf.: Neubert, E. (2006) Revolution und Revisionismus in Sprache, Geschichte und Recht, *TD*, 3, S. 47–77; 50; 66.
- 120 See the address of Saxony's state minister, Hans Joachim Meyer, and the chairman of the board of trustees, Matthias Rößler, on 17. June 1993 on the occasion of the opening of the Hannah-Arendt-Institute, Dresden 1995, 17–19; 23–26. Cf. also: R. Deppe et al. (ed.) (1991) *Demokratischer Umbruch in Osteuropa*. Frankfurt/M.