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**The Political Unconscious of Hannah Arendt:
An Encounter with Psychoanalysis**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement
for the degree of Bachelor of Arts with Honors in German Studies from
The College of William and Mary

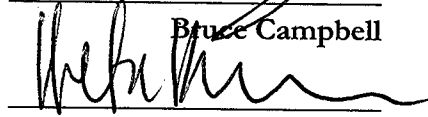
By

Judson R. Peverall

Accepted for *Highest Honors*
(Honors, High Honors, Highest Honors)


Robert Leventhal, Director


Bruce Campbell


Tuska Benes

Williamsburg, VA

April 26, 2013

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Abstract:

This thesis argues for a rapprochement between Hannah Arendt's novel theory of totalitarianism and psychoanalysis. Julia Kristeva has recently suggested that Arendt's conceptualization of politics comes close at points to delivering a theory of the political conscious and unconscious. However, what has received little to no attention from scholars is that Arendt's own analysis of the subterranean pathologies which she claims to necessitate totalitarianism -- diminishing human agency and political freedom; the paradox that as mass culture and capitalist consumption abound, we are also less equipped to control human action -- indeed closely remind one of the very mechanisms proposed by psychoanalysis. However, she never discussed this explicitly and certainly never cited psychoanalytic tools in her work. By examining the specific moments of Arendt's theory which address the intersection of individual psychic life and the oftentimes conflictual world of appearances, we will be able to answer the fundamental question left unanswered by Arendt herself: how does one explain the psychic transformation of the subject to the extent that he readily *desired* and even *enjoyed* his role in the active constitution of the fascist project? By reading Arendt's political thought alongside psychoanalytic writers, such as Freud, Lyotard, Lacan, Adorno, and Kristeva, we find that the enjoyment and desire to have oneself recognized through action and speech assumed a dramatically different form within totalitarianism. Instead of the enjoyment of human freedom in politics, totalitarianism sprang from the fantastical enjoyment of human superfluosity and objectification from within the 'closed-circuit' totalitarian imaginary.

Dedication and Acknowledgements:

In the spring of 2011 I was introduced to Hannah Arendt through my first reading of *The Life of the Mind*, a work which Arendt unfortunately left unfinished due to her untimely death in December of 1975. Having bought the book for a semester long course concerning Modern German Critical Thought from Marx to Habermas, that spring I found myself frequently pausing and looking at the cover of a book which displayed the only woman German philosopher we had or would discuss in that course. In fact, Hannah Arendt was the ‘only’ female face on my own bookshelf of German and French philosophers and critical theorists. Upon reading her biography I was immediately attracted to a figure in German history who not only had overcome unimaginable times of oppression and isolation, but had prevailed in a world of academia almost exclusively dominated by men, some of whom never did welcome her into the ‘gentleman’s club’ of German continental philosophy. Today, countless numbers of students have read the works of Hannah Arendt. Her powerful message that the philosophical spirit should never be shrouded from the public life of politics has influenced notable intellectuals in their critiques of modern social and political conditions, among whom include the political philosophers Jürgen Habermas and Seyla Benhabib as well as the psychoanalyst and critical theorist Julia Kristeva.

It is out of the greatest admiration for Arendt’s immense achievements and contributions to our understanding of politics, totalitarianism, identity and even how we think that I dedicate this thesis to the enhancement of the modern renaissance in Arendtian scholarship. However, my greatest debt is to be owed to my longtime friend, mentor and teacher, Robert Leventhal. The style of writing I have adopted in the following pages is no doubt a reflection of the innumerable hours Rob has spent assisting me in taming my own overly complex sentence structure, understanding the intricacies of psychoanalysis and grappling with Arendt’s own unique philosophical style. I would also like to thank Bruce Campbell who functioned as my academic liaison in Germany while I made my first trip to Berlin to study at the Universität Potsdam in the summer of 2010. With Bruce’s devoted assistance in carefully crafting my initial application essays, I was also able to earn a U.S. Fulbright Scholarship to teach English in Germany in 2013-2014. Without their unwavering support and much needed criticism the completion of this project would not have been possible.

Table of Contents

Introduction	4-15
Part I	
• <i>The Origins of Totalitarianism</i>	15-22
• Hannah Arendt’s Intellectual Climate: The Generation Following Totalitarianism.....	22-34
Parts II & III: Totalitarianism’s Paradox	
II. Mourning the loss of politics.....	35-48
‘The Jew’ as the Figure of Difference.....	49-54
III. Enjoyment of a ‘superfluous’ humanity.....	54-63
Part IV: <i>The Role of Desire and Enjoyment in Hannah Arendt’s Political Theory</i>	63-71
Conclusion.....	82-87
Bibliography.....	88-90

Introduction

At the time of her death in 1975, Hannah Arendt had established for herself a unique place in the history of political philosophy. Her first text, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*,¹ proved to be an unprecedented synthesis of political science, philosophy, social theory and psychology concerning the elements that eventually crystalized into Nazism and Stalinism. Frequently wavering between both political theory and political science, moral psychology and sociology, “Hannah Arendt remains a fiercely independent mind whose work defies classification in terms of established schools of political thought.”² The debates surrounding Arendt’s thought show no signs of abating, as each year brings new academic literature ranging from her reflections on Nietzsche and Heidegger, her contentious views concerning totalitarianism, her criticisms of Marx and even her relevance for contemporary immigration and identity politics.

Her own turbulent personal history with Nazi Germany, statelessness and Jewishness became enshrined in her writing, to the extent that many have argued that if one wishes to examine Arendt’s political corpus, one would have to understand exactly how she conceived of “the great travesty of our time.”³ After her exile from Germany to Paris in 1933 and her subsequent immigration to the United States in 1941, Arendt published *Origins* in 1951, which quickly grounded her as one of the first thinkers of the twentieth century to confront totalitarianism from a truly universalistic perspective. As she would later echo in *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, totalitarianism is not the manifestation of an absolute evil which had been destined to take place in varying European countries (the German *Sonderweg*, for example). On the contrary,

¹ For convenience, I will hereafter refer to this text as *Origins*.

² Seyla Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt* (Lanham, M.D., Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2003): p. xxxvii.

³ For examples of thinkers who argue for the influence of totalitarianism on Arendt’s overall theoretical corpus see: Margaret Canovan, *Hannah Arendt: A Reinterpretation of Her Political Thought* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992); “The Survivor” in *Toward the Postmodern*. Ed. Robert Harvey and Mark S. Roberts (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1993) [Essays composed 1970-1991]; Dana Villa, “Hannah Arendt, 1906-1975,” *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 71, No. 1, *Political Philosophy in the Twentieth Century* (Winter 2009): pp. 20-36.

by the 1960s Hannah Arendt had become a household word synonymous with the ‘banality of evil’, the slogan she adopted as her running thesis with respect to totalitarianism: Arendt argued that this was a radically new form of domination that had arisen out of a multiplicity of forces, reflected through the *European-wide* decline in the political body of the nation-state, the raising up of bourgeois, capitalist imperialism and expansionism, and the infiltration of ‘race-thinking’ alongside an already embedded strong anti-Semitism.

Within the past two decades there has emerged a new reading of Hannah Arendt’s work which will become the topic of discussion for the remainder of this paper. Both Jean-François Lyotard and Julia Kristeva have suggested the possible link between points in Arendt’s thought and psychoanalysis. In his main piece concerning Arendt, “*Le Survivant*,”⁴ Lyotard argues that Arendt unfortunately subverted one of her most paradigmatic findings, that totalitarian terror sprang out of a *psychological need* which was driven by a latent fear of human birth, action and beginning – which are always unpredictable and spontaneous aspects of human existence. Kristeva, in her book *Hannah Arendt: Life is a Narrative*, suggests that Arendt’s understanding of politics and the self, which sought “to save the freedom of the ‘who’ at the heart of an optimal political plurality, and to not hand it over to some uncontrollable unconscious,”⁵ rather paradoxically reveals the logic behind her ingenious thought: that is to say, “Language, Humanity, all Identity, and even Being itself are more than ‘veiled,’ ‘in retreat,’ ‘forgetting,’ or ‘errant.’ [...] there is the beginning of a *caring* that is not a relentlessness of will, the last example of the will to power, but which preserves nonetheless this miracle of rebirth.”⁶ For both Lyotard and Kristeva, the scope and magnitude of Arendt’s political thought compels us to wager that it would be unjust to dwell on what Arendt failed to accomplish, but to examine the forces underlying her work which

⁴ Jean François Lyotard, “The Survivor” in Jean-François Lyotard, *Toward the Postmodern* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1993).

⁵ Julia Kristeva, *Hannah Arendt*, trans. Ross Guberman (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001): p. 67.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

unconsciously shaped her ‘understanding’⁷ of politics and totalitarianism. Our burden, therefore, is not so much to understand Arendt’s conceptualization of politics and the mind, but rather to examine what she was unable to say in her literature.

It is the principal goal of this thesis to deliver a rapprochement between Hannah Arendt’s thought and psychoanalytic theory. I will use her own texts to argue for the implicit linkage between her socio-political analysis and a psychoanalytical approach to politics and fascism. It is my thesis that Arendt’s theory comes close at several points to an argument concerning a mass-psychology or psychoanalytic interpretation of the unconscious motivations which inform both totalitarianism and politics. It becomes clear from reading Arendt’s work alongside psychoanalysis that her thought is indeed open to psychoanalytic inflection: this thesis will identify the specific moments where Arendt (unconsciously) points to the mental pathologies which led to the destruction of the individual ego and the decline of the public-space within the nation-state, forces which undoubtedly are necessary, underlying components in her theory of totalitarianism. Finally, I will extend this study to Arendtian politics by identifying the particular desires and motivations which constitute the public space of politics, according to Arendt. Here, it is the case that Arendt’s politics is rooted in a fundamental ‘desire for emancipation and recognition from the Other’, which indeed is not alien to the teachings of psychoanalysis, but demonstrates a remarkable pluralism when examined alongside some of the key mechanisms outlined by Freud and Lacan.

But in the end, although the brilliance of her intellectual achievement makes us want to reappropriate her thought for political psychoanalysis, her overt admission that psychology should remain relegated to the private sphere makes this a formidable task. We cannot ignore the moments where Arendt chooses to question and ultimately subvert the forceful importance of desire, fantasy, imagination and enjoyment in the subject’s open sympathy towards and active

⁷ The single passion driving Arendt’s original analysis of totalitarianism was not to provide a *description*, but to come to an eventual understanding of ‘why’. As she writes in the preface to *Origins*: “What I want is to understand.”

participation in totalitarian ideology. Arendt argues in *Origins* that totalitarianism sprang from a bourgeois desire for power and capital, alongside a deeply embedded pathos of latent 'race-thinking' and concurrent resentment of European Jewry. I will argue that, while this is a valid approach, we must fill the gaps in Arendt's otherwise complete historical analysis with an intensive assessment of the psychoanalytic conditions of the subject under totalitarianism. Finally, a psychoanalytic reading of Arendt's understanding of totalitarianism, the project which I see as having exercised the greatest influence over her political oeuvre, will ultimately leave us in a fruitful position to extend this study to Arendt's later conceptualization of politics and the social realm. It is here that I will show that the significance of Arendtian political theory stems from a fundamental 'desire' for the Other, to have oneself recognized in politics. Just as Lacan argued that "Man's desire is the desire of the Other," psychoanalysis will allow us to flesh out a new, arguably more complete, picture of Arendtian politics which can finally take into account the dialectic between the individual psyche and the collective.

In the first section of this thesis, I lay out the subterranean currents within European culture and politics which Arendt argues in *Origins* eventually emerged as the socio-psychic forces underpinning the subjective capitulation to totalitarianism. The first section will also provide the reader with a historical picture of the academic climate of the 1950s at the time of Arendt's writing of *Origins*. Here, I will make the point that with the burgeoning role of psychoanalysis as both a clinical apparatus as well as a tool employed by philosophers and critical theorists, Arendt must have at least been cognizant of the fruitful linkage between both conscious and unconscious psychic mechanisms and the external world of appearances. It is at this crucial juncture that I feel we must reexamine points in Arendt's work which closely reflect psychoanalysis' understanding of the internal defense mechanisms that constitute the subject's ability to deal with the pervasive traumas and conflicts within the external world. In other words, in what sense was Lyotard right in

arguing that Arendt ‘subverted’ her actual psychological discoveries concerning totalitarianism and politics, and, if so, *in what ways does Arendt implicitly describe a mass-psychology?*

In the second section, I will start the discussion by addressing Arendt’s conceptualization of an existential psychology or phenomenology of *loneliness* and *isolation* as an essential precondition of totalitarianism. It is the loss of feeling and care for a common world in the decades leading up to 1933 that ultimately fueled “the radical loss of self-interest” indicative of the totalitarian subject. For those who had felt most frustrated and distant from politics, the objective framework of totalitarian ideology effectively replaced any feeling of autonomous egoism and self-reflection. Thus, for the masses of people who had typically stayed out of politics, but suddenly felt that both social class and political party had become powerless in a failing state apparatus, Arendt argues that the unflinching logic of ideology supplied the subject with an imaginary fantasy of a perfect reality, which gives him a sense of fulfillment and success after years of failure and a general lack of political accomplishment.

The subjective sense of loneliness, isolation and atomization within the nation-state, I argue, emerged during the latter part of the nineteenth century as a result of the subject’s own incapacity to mourn the gradual loss of politics. Arendt recognized within European culture the steady constriction and retraction of the political sphere, which, for her, was the only space that could provide the ‘escape’ from the inequality and oppression within the private and social realms. Indeed, the loss of political emancipation and protection and the concomitant feeling of recognition within a field of plural persons produced the subject’s disconnection and withdrawal from the exterior field of relations with his fellow man. Politics emerged by the twentieth century as the game of elite, capitalist domination and bureaucratic control (what was, for Arendt, ‘the rule by no one’). As Freud identified in his seminal essay *Mourning and Melancholia* (1917), the inability to overcome the lost love-object – in this case, the ideal of political recognition and emancipation

from oppression – results in the ego’s withdrawal from the outside world of object relations. The melancholic’s resultant retreat into his own inner psychic world is marked by the disavowal of his own ego as he identifies with the lost-object itself.. In the case of melancholia, the former lost-object rendered as narcissistic fantasy continues to punish the individual ego, rebuking the ego for its failure to maintain the relationship with its former love-object. Consequently, any meaningful relationship with the outside world registers as superfluous.

If melancholia persists because of the subject’s inability to overcome or move past the ‘loss’, the subject will tend towards an ‘escape’ from the brutal assault on the individual ego, in which case he may sooth the conscious feelings of loneliness and isolation. For Arendt and psychoanalysis, it is in virtue of the subject’s inability to deal with the persistent feeling of loss and lack that explains the *subjective proclivity towards the objectivity* of National Socialism and Communism. By repressing the actual lost object, totalitarian ideology as the absolute Law of History or Nature satisfies the individual’s overwhelming sense of loss and abandonment, however now with a crucial caveat. The ego remains subordinate to the mandates of the new fantastical object: “Unlike in empathetic love, where the ego identifies only partially with its object, in a state of infatuation the ego is necessarily impoverished,”⁸ and the subject consequently acts ‘as if’ the object speaks the only Truth of the world. “Conscience has no application to anything that is done for the sake of the object; in the blindness of love, remorselessness is carried to the pitch of crime. The whole situation can be completely summarized in the formula: *The object has been put in the place of the ego ideal.*”⁹ The logic of the narcissist is the same self-denial Arendt located within totalitarianism: even the Leader “is nothing more nor less than the functionary of the masses he leads,” who “depends just as much on the ‘will’ of the masses he embodies as the masses depend on

⁸ Alexander Mitscherlich, *The Inability to Mourn*, (New York: Grove Press, 1975): p. 61.

⁹ Sigmund Freud, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, 3rd Ed. (London: Hogarth Press, 1945): p.75.

him.”¹⁰ And as the ‘will of the masses’ only exists *because of ideology*, its object - that is, absolute perfection - exists in the following circular form: “without me you are nothing and without you I am nothing; utopia depends just as much on you as you depend on the Idea of utopia for your existence.” For Arendt, the “unfailing logic of ideology” replaces individual egoism and simultaneously orients the subject in his world, giving him a picture of his placement in the ‘historical struggle of classes or races’.

But Arendt remains unclear as to why it is that the *seeming* necessity and deductive rigor of ideology should be so *desirable*. In other words, even if the masses felt lonely and isolated after a loss of a common world, why should they feel that the world can only function in light of a single guiding principle? Freud’s articulation of narcissism sheds light on this issue by arguing that the retreat into the seemingly perfect, closed circuit of the narcissistic object is necessary because the subject is always desirous of *lack*, of the love and completion once provided through the lost object. After a traumatic loss, the super-ego satisfies this lack by telling the ego, “you are not a failure, because now you can have the object in its perfect form, and it is X of the outside world which is not part of ‘real perfection.’” The narcissist aligns the world to coincide with the internal logic of his own super-ego fantasy. That (X) which does not fit under the totalizing and sadistic rubric is recognized as a deficiency and met with a sadistic reprimand. What is *wrong* with the world, which in reality arises from the subject’s own sense of individual failure and lack, is *transferred* to the external object of difference.

I then take up the fantasy of X (the Jew) in Arendt’s work and claim that her view is problematic because it fails to recognize the subject as fully desirous and, moreover, capable of *jouissance* even in the throes of totalitarian ideology. Important in this analysis is the thought of Adorno, who, like Arendt, considers a similar problem within modernity: the elevation of

¹⁰ Arendt, *Origins*, p. 325.

subjective freedom, on the one hand, and the domination of subjects through the logic of commodification inherent in the capitalist economy and the instrumental rationality of the modern state, on the other.¹¹ It seems problematic, however, that Arendt, who indeed takes into account the mechanisms for the destruction of autonomy and subjectivity in modernity, does not reflect on the ways in which totalitarian ideology can lead to a distinct colonization of the world of appearances and in turn constitutes the content of desire. Distinctly characteristic of this internal domination is the usage of a ‘figure of difference’ as Other, which would behave as a foil against the absolutist ideology of Nazism and Fascism. In effect, the Jew represents on a conscious level the failure of the nation. Insofar as both Arendt and Adorno argue that ‘the Jew’ (or in Arendt’s language, “the Jew in general”) behaves as the symbol of cultural paralysis, Arendt’s analysis is far less compelling after she suggests that the social bondage and stereo-typology of Jews was only established through financial alliances.¹² By enlisting Freudian vocabulary to analyze anti-semitism as a symptom of ‘mass-paranoia’ present within totalitarianism, Adorno provides a justification for why Jews were not only outwardly hated for their economic and social position, but indeed were deeply ‘envied’ by the capitalist bourgeoisie, who secretly resented their own position as permanently subject to the “priority of work” and the objectified values of the nation-state.

After having addressed the latent melancholia which effectively weakened the political subject, as well as the transference of guilt and responsibility to the Jew as a ‘figure of difference’ and the employment of totalitarian ideology as the guiding social and ego ideal, I will turn my attention in the third section to Arendt’s understanding of the pathologies that produced the totalitarian ‘genocidal mentality’. By merely recalling the Jew as an object of transference as well as

¹¹ Robert Fine, “Debating Human Rights, Law, and Subjectivity: Arendt, Adorno, and Critical Theory,” in *Arendt and Adorno: Political and Philosophical Investigations*, eds. Lars Rensmann and Samir Gandesha (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012).

¹² Arendt, *Origins*, p. 20. Arendt argues that the “handling of private business” based on the loyalty found in private affairs, not in politics, was the only kind of relationship “that ever tied a Jewish group to another stratum in society.”

the symbolic power of totalitarian ideology, we have still not answered one of our principal questions: how does the subject take active enjoyment in his active constitution of the fascist project? It is here that I attempt to find in Arendt's thought her possible understanding of the *jouissance* that occurs in genocide. I propose that Arendt does have a solution to this problem: the enjoyment in surplus value and capital eventually led to the enjoyment in surplus people. However, this will require a careful reading of Arendt's account of both imperialism and capitalism, which are, for Arendt, essential to the widespread acceptance of a 'superfluous humanity'.

The new guiding principle of the nation-state after imperialism was that human beings, which at first meant those of the colonial world, were superfluous in the universal expansion of unlimited and superfluous power and capital. This ethos was carried back to the nation-state in the late nineteenth century in the form of racial, xenophobic ideology. However, in order to understand the level of *jouissance* within capitalism, imperialism and finally in totalitarianism, we must recall that it was Lacan who, referring back to Marx's capitalist critique, reiterated that the 'desire' for *surplus value* is functionally analogous to the desire for *surplus enjoyment*. In order to achieve the possible 'surplus' value, we are motivated by the hope for surplus enjoyment to give up the *base use value* (We could quench our thirst with water from the sink, but instead opt for the 'superfluous' Coke). "For Fascist ideology," as Žižek argues in his Marxist-Lacan analysis of ideology, "the point is not the instrumental value of the sacrifice, it is the very form of the sacrifice itself, the 'spirit of sacrifice...'" For Arendt, what imperialism, capitalism and totalitarianism all have in common is the desire for surplus enjoyment in the form of a command: Give up the notion that your action is instrumental and obey the command of ideology for its own sake. Your excess enjoyment is what is left over: by subtracting the empirical matter from the form you can enjoy only the superfluous, 'empty' form (the material brand or the human race or ethnicity).

In the final section, I turn my attention to Arendt's understanding of politics. By articulating and rendering explicit the unspoken, unwritten (shall we say unconscious) psychoanalytic categories within Arendt's theory of totalitarianism, we can finally extend this study to Arendt's overall political theory. Arendt's politics, largely influenced by her analysis of totalitarianism, seems to be fundamentally informed by the subjective *desire* for emancipation, which can only be satisfied by the realization of freedom through action and speech within the political sphere. Jürgen Habermas led a critique against Arendt's work, claiming that her rendition of politics failed to comprehend the significance of strategic concerns in the socio-economic realm. Habermas argues that the "impenetrable pluralism" of opinions in politics must be informed by the administrative processing of social problems, something which Arendt does not account for. This criticism, however, misses the significance of specific motives and goals to Arendtian political action. For her, the ascendance to the political realm, and the concomitant partiality with critical reason (instead of the instrumental reasoning of the private and social) for happiness and freedom, is motivated by the individual's desire to escape the social oppression of the private realm. The concerns of the political realm, then, will always take into account social oppression - "not, however, in pursuit of some ultimate goal of economic justice, but rather because social oppression destroys the conditions for political community."¹³ The strategic concerns of politics can never become ultimate ends, since they must be informed by political concerns and judgment, which at the most fundamental level is grounded in the desire for ultimate emancipation and freedom.

This desire for emancipation is informed by the same utopian impulse of psychoanalysis: the possibility of a creative and self-developing autonomy but the simultaneous awareness of a lack of potential, the subjective lack of communicative freedom. However, desire is rooted in

¹³ James T. Knauer, "Motive and Goal in Hannah Arendt's Concept of Political Action," *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 74, No. 3 (Sep., 1980), pp.731.

fantasy and imagination, and the cultivation of desire for freedom, and the critique of reason is simultaneously the critique of fantasy. In order to develop this, it is necessary to find in Arendt a theory of imagination and a theory of intersubjectivity. Arendt's theory of imagination can be found in her lectures concerning Kant's aesthetic philosophy, in which she differs from thinkers such as Jürgen Habermas in claiming that political judgment is not due to cognitive factors (i.e. valid judgments are so due to the fact that we have preconditions for such), but rather owes itself to the free-play of imagination, which "considered in its freedom -- nothing compels us to consider it as such -- is not bound to the law of causality, but is productive and spontaneous, not merely reproductive of what is already known, but generative of new forms and figures."¹⁴ The bridge between Arendt's theory of imagination and theory of intersubjectivity can be forged by identifying the link between her notion of judgment and taste with Freud's reality principle, but with a slight modification. For Freud and Arendt, the 'mature' individual¹⁵ seeks to obtain pleasure, but is no longer "governed by the pleasure principle, but obeys the reality principle, which also, at bottom, seeks to obtain pleasure, but *pleasure which is assured through taking account of reality*, even though it is pleasure postponed and diminished."¹⁶ Arendt argues that "taking account of reality" means looking towards the 'realm of approbation' within the world. In other words, our pleasure now stems from the *universal communicability of our judgment*.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 163

¹⁵ Here one is reminded that both Freud and Arendt are children of the Enlightenment: the term maturity or "Mündigkeit" here refers to Kant's seminal essay, "Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung" (1784). For Arendt, those who fail to consider the Other in their political judgments have yet to recognize the fact that as radically dependent creatures, political power is based on action in concert, not the strength of one individual. Moreover, such a man only sees himself as *animal laborans* and *homo faber*, which only provides him with an essentially instrumental reasoning. Arendt goes to great pains to demonstrate that it is only by appealing to the intersubjectivity present within politics that man realize human freedom. Freedom, for Arendt, as we will discuss later in this paper, does not exist according to a particular instrumental logic, but in virtue of the critical and reflective multiplicity of opinions in politics which may bring about unforeseen historical ruptures and transformations.

¹⁶ Sigmund Freud, *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (New York: Norton, 1966): p. 444. (my italics).

Arendt develops a theory of intersubjectivity in her division between the private and public realms; however, I argue that psychoanalysis is in the best position to illuminate this. Arendt's argument that the self exists through its private personality as well as through its public appearance within the world is not completely alien to psychoanalysis. Indeed, the Lacanian notion of the intersubjective self seems to propose a certain 'politics', as the subject is split between immediate self-certainty of the imaginary and its representation in language and discourse within the symbolic order. Frederick Dolan makes the argument that Lacan "suggests possibilities for articulating the essentially plural identities Arendt regards as characteristic of the 'realm of human affairs' in ways that might well enrich her account of the 'subjective in-between.'"¹⁷ In the final analysis, the cultivation of desire for freedom -- the affirmation of human freedom -- is, for Arendt, what fundamentally informs the validity of the imaginary and the intersubjective self.

I. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*

In midst of the turmoil of World War II, Arendt began to work on what would become one of the most influential analyses of totalitarianism to date, her tour de force, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951). The text was originally published in Great Britain under the title *The Burden of Our Times*, only to be given its modern title after its printing in the United States. For Arendt, totalitarianism represented a watershed moment in human history, because it originated through the gradual destruction of a common body politic and highlighted modernity's increasing tendency to ostracize political action and critical reasoning in favor of mechanical labor and instrumental reasoning. The particular pathologies she located within totalitarianism, to be sure, had much to bear on her complete philosophical oeuvre. However, Arendt did not merely attempt to describe

¹⁷ Frederick M. Dolan, "Political Action and the Unconscious: Arendt and Lacan on Decentering the Subject," *Political Theory*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (May 1995), p. 333.

the ‘elements’ of totalitarianism, but rather she offered a theoretical alternative for rethinking the modern condition after the appearance of totalitarian domination. In her words, modern civilization had shattered the project of the Enlightenment or any optimistic hope in progress; the new era necessitated new and more chastened ways of examining the politics and socio-psychological landscape that had brought it about. For Arendt, we can “no longer afford to take that which was good in the past and simply think of it as a bad load which by itself time will bury in oblivion. *The subterranean stream of Western history has finally come to the surface and usurped the dignity of our tradition.*”

In her first philosophical masterpiece *The Human Condition* (1958) and her series of articles in *Between Past and Future* (1961), Arendt furthers her argument towards a theory of totalitarianism by identifying the hidden elements within culture, authority, freedom, public life, and the *vita activa* which brought about totalitarianism.¹⁸ The formal solutions found within purely economic or social theories, such as Franz Neumann’s Marxist analysis of Nazism, became suspicious for Arendt, leading her to ask the fundamental question: why was the totalitarian subject, who crossed varying classes and interest groups within society, so able and willing to participate in the totalitarian project? As perhaps the most tantamount figure of the twentieth century to lead a comprehensive analysis of totalitarianism’s role in distorting the political space, Arendt further distinguishes herself from many of her contemporaries by orienting her philosophy around *the reparation of the political space* after its destruction under totalitarianism.

Arendt’s motivation for writing *Origins*, as she describes in the 1973 preface, was “to understand and to come to terms with”¹⁹ the great trauma of the twentieth century. Her language reflects the dialogue between the psychoanalyst, who provides a narrative regarding the patient’s

¹⁹ Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, (New York: Harcourt, 1973): p. xl.

hidden unconscious motivations, and the analysis: Arendt writes, to understand means “examining and bearing *consciously* the burden which our century has placed on us -- neither denying its existence nor submitting meekly to its weight.”²⁰ We must, in other words, come to terms with “the appearance of some radical evil, previously unknown to us” by reinterpreting crucial historical ruptures. Indeed, the intellectual and emotional impact of *Origins in 1951* “satisfied a number of real, indeed urgent, though often unarticulated and perhaps even unconscious, needs.”²¹ Arendt’s push to forge new theoretical horizons with socio-historical tools was, at least in the 1950s, an unforeseen effort to interpret and to explain the twentieth century’s greatest catastrophe.

Arendt finds deeply imbedded within Western culture the rudiments which brought about the calamitous destruction of the public sphere, human action and responsibility. It is worth noting first that Arendt’s methodological approach falls neither in traditional historiography nor in structural philosophy, and most political scientists reject her methodological approach because it lacks the substantive empirical-analytical aspects of most any scientific research. She is most certainly not concerned with the “representation of the past through the chronological arrangement of all the available evidence,” which, “struck her as trivial.”²² Rather, drawing from her reading of Walter Benjamin, Arendt’s method of analysis is didactic, which seeks to “present events as mere surface phenomena, reflecting deeper, subterranean currents of meaning.”²³ For Benjamin, “the tradition of the oppressed teaches us that *the state of emergency* in which we live is not the exception but the rule.”²⁴ It is the idea or the *realization* of ‘political failure’ which funnels the

²⁰ Ibid., p. viii (my emphasis, J.R.P.)

²¹ Steven E. Ascheim, “Nazism, Culture, and the Origins of Totalitarianism: Hannah Arendt and the Discourse of Evil,” in Ascheim, *In Times of Crisis: Essays on European Culture, Germans, and Jews*, p. 122.

²² Judith N. Shklar, “Hannah Arendt as Pariah,” *Partisan Review* 50 (1953): p. 69.

²³ Michael Marrus, “Hannah Arendt and the Dreyfus Affair,” *New German Critique* 66 (Fall 1995): p. 14.

²⁴ Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings: 1938-1940*, Volume 4. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003): p. 392 (my emphasis, J.R.P.).

concept of progress, to bring about a “real state of emergency.”²⁵ That is to say, progress is the result of a critical moment, whereby we are able to move past the failing status quo by allowing a revolutionary politics to “brush history against the grain,” to “blast open the continuum” of a supposedly homogenous history and to view the present in a radically different light.²⁶ It is Arendt’s goal to explode certain moments in the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries, which had up until then been seen as irrelevant to the rise of totalitarianism. Following Benjamin, Arendt attempts to make conscious hidden or forgotten moments within history, in order to “bring about a real state of emergency” for the generation following totalitarianism.

The fundamental questions presented by totalitarianism, for Arendt, are thus concerned with a hidden pathos which led to its rise to power. First, Arendt asks, what were the unique tools employed by totalitarianism which had made it so easy for the subject to capitulate? Secondly, what was the relationship between the polity and the individual both before and during totalitarianism? In other words, totalitarianism was rooted in important historical causal chains, which produced a particular socio-psychological landscape within Europe. Indeed, she dismisses the notion of a *Sonderweg* or even a distinctly German national essence: “these were not [...] exotic or alien phenomena but matters of urgent universal concern.”²⁷ Indeed, her universalist thinking sharply contrasts that of Daniel Goldhagen’s *Hitler’s Willing Executioners*. She closely parallels

²⁵ Ibid., p. 184-5. “The concept of progress must be grounded in the idea of catastrophe. That things are “status quo” is the catastrophe. It is not an ever present possibility but what in each case is given [...] Redemption depends on the tiny fissure in the continuous catastrophe.”

²⁶ Ibid., p. 396. “Thinking involves not only the movement of thoughts but also their zero-hour [*Stillstellung*]. Where thinking suddenly halts in a constellation overflowing with tensions, there it yields a shock to the same, through which it crystallizes as a monad. The historical materialist approaches a historical object solely and alone where he encounters it as a monad. *In this structure he cognizes the sign of a messianic zero-hour [*Stillstellung*] of events, or put differently, a revolutionary chance in the struggle for the suppressed past. He perceives it, in order to explode a specific epoch out of the homogenous course of history; thus exploding a specific life out of the epoch, or a specific work out of the life-work.* The net gain of this procedure consists of this: that the life-work is preserved and sublated *in* the work, the epoch *in* the life-work, and the entire course of history *in* the epoch.”

²⁷ Ascheim, “Post-Holocaust Jewish Mirrorings of Germany: Hannah Arendt and Daniel Goldhagen,” in Ascheim, *In Times of Crisis: Essays on European Culture, Germans, and Jews*, p. 140.

Christopher Browning's "ordinary men" in arguing that Nazism's crimes were not compelled by a *Sonderspecies* but rather "a variety of socio-psychological and ideational pressures and forces"²⁸: "The reality is that 'the Nazis are men like ourselves'; the nightmare is that they have shown, have proved beyond doubt what man is capable of."²⁹ Arendt argues that it was a certain deeply entrenched mentality which made it possible for totalitarianism's insidious form of 'total domination' to be accepted by the subject as the new *status quo*. Totalitarian consciousness allowed "for the force of Nature or of History to race freely through mankind, *unhindered by any spontaneous human action*."³⁰ 'Total domination' is, according to Arendt, the 'production' of human consciousness, by way of formatting thought to cohere to the single ideology; that is to say, 'thinking' becomes entirely impossible outside of this objective landscape.³¹

With that said, Arendt attempts in *Origins* to uncover what, in my terms, is the "socio-psychological conditioning" necessary for totalitarianism to establish itself.³² Indeed, "social factors, unaccounted for in political or economic history" illuminate for Arendt the implicit mental landscape necessary for 'total domination' to take a foothold in the first place. Anti-Semitism and the Age of Imperialism helped to bolster the complete transaction of totalitarianism not merely through political means and ends, but more importantly through the belief that 'belonging' to the *nation* was not a legal matter, but rather a psychological vice or virtue rooted in the combination of 'race-thinking' and enlightened conceptions of 'man'. Arendt reflects Tocqueville in arguing that, while anti-Semitism had always been present within European culture, it became increasingly

²⁸ Ibid., p. 142.

²⁹ Arendt, "Nightmare and Flight," in *Essays in Understanding* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1994): p.134.

³⁰ Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 2nd enlarged ed., (La Vergne, TN: Benediction Classics, 2009): p. 465

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 438. "Total domination, which strives to organize the infinite plurality and differentiation of human beings as if all of humanity were just one individual, is possible only if each and every person can be reduced to a never-changing identity of reactions, so that each of these bundles of reactions can be exchanged at random for any other."

³² Arendt claims that while the "deciding forces" for the Jews were without doubt political, the "underlying psychological reflections of the Jewish question in the individual had something to do with the specific cruelty, the organized and calculated assault upon every single individual of Jewish origin" (*Origins*, p. 87).

‘repressed’ with the dawn of Enlightenment ideals and the prevailing call for equality. The tendency to assign all members of society to a set of categories and criteria concerning what it meant to be a rational, i.e. ‘normal’, human being granted Jews legal rights of equality. However, outwardly manifested political equality was underscored by the still ever-present feeling that Jews represented a particular Other in European culture. Jews consequently never gained a particular seat in any social class or strata. But the Age of Imperialism, with its seed of ‘race-thinking’, reified this latent animosity towards European Jewry by claiming that state membership was now part of a specific national narrative regarding what it meant to be a ‘native.’ Thus the nation came to be defined by a particular ‘tribal consciousness’ with the rise of the Pan Movements and state ideologies which delineated the ‘secret’ and *telos* of history. Ultimately, ‘The Jew’ as Other became the ideal candidate onto whom the nation could project its failures and melancholy for several reasons: The Jewish state bankers and merchants of the latter half of the 19th century were left increasingly powerless through their replacement by capitalist, bourgeois imperialists; ‘the Jew’ was finally reduced to “a psychological quality,” according to Arendt, and “instead of being defined by nationality or religion,”³³ Jews everywhere were being transformed into an almost mythical Other.

Next, the bourgeois ethic of competitive individualism and competition, Arendt argues, brought about a widespread distaste for public activity and responsibility. A public sphere of intersubjective speech and action was slowly meted out through the dominant personality-type of the bourgeois, who only looked after the cares of capitalist business and individual labor. The bourgeois value of endless capital accumulation, therefore, was realized as inevitable within Nazism. However, totalitarianism differed from any other government before it due to a crucial caveat: the accumulation of capital and power was no longer its end goal, but rather violence and

³³ Arendt, *Origins*, p. 66 (see generally: chapter 3, “The Jews in Society”)

terror became its chief *telos*: only when the end of government is terror can it be assumed that the individual will no longer take recourse to individual thinking and political judgment, which themselves are spontaneous and unpredictable in nature, according to Arendt, but will rely on the ‘seemingly perfect logic’ of totalitarian ideology for existence within the world.

The final element within the latent substructure of totalitarianism was the disappearance of the autonomous individual, the emergence of the mob and the widespread psychological existence of loneliness and social isolation. The modern mob is a precursor of the lonely masses of totalitarianism because it included all of those who had lost their place in society through industrialization and economic and social changes. The overwhelming majority of individuals who could not be affirmatively identified with a specific trade or position possessing a voice in the public sphere were made ‘superfluous’ members of the nation-state. Because of feeling abandoned by politics and relegated to the dark shadows of the private sphere, the lonely mob became the chief target for the ideological manipulation of totalitarianism. The difference between the several decades before totalitarianism and its actual crystallization was that totalitarianism ensured the complete destruction of the intimacy of private life. Arendt sums up:

While isolation concerns only the political realm of life, loneliness concerns human life as a whole. Totalitarian government, like all tyrannies, certainly could not exist without destroying the public realm of life, that is, without destroying, by isolating men, their political capacities. But totalitarian domination as a form of government is new in that it is not content with this isolation and destroys private life as well. *It bases itself on loneliness, on the experience of not belonging to the world at all, which is among the most radical and desperate experiences of men.*³⁴

Thus, totalitarian “mass loneliness” means that instead of simply being isolated by one’s political situation, the private sphere of individual contemplation, has been destroyed. As a result, desperate men who can no longer retreat into their private spaces resolve themselves to the objective laws of ideology as a way of belonging to the world.

³⁴ Arendt, *Origins*, p. 475

Her chapter entitled ‘Total Domination’ is significant for several reasons. Arendt argues that the concentration camps and the Gulag became “the guiding social ideal of totalitarian domination in general,” since it was only there that it could be revealed that “anything is possible.” In effect, the camps furnished the “theoretical verification” of the totally fabricated universe produced through ideology, which never did take recourse to the reality of the world.³⁵ The way in which the subject under totalitarianism thinks in terms of “*giving or executing orders*,” bears witness, Arendt argues, to the attempt to turn oneself into an apparatus meeting the requirements of ideology, an apparatus which, even in the private setting of contemplation, conforms to the objective model presented by totalitarian culture. Everything which is different is exposed to the collective and is seized as criminal.

Arendt’s Intellectual Climate: The Generation Following Totalitarianism

In order to contextualize Arendt’s political thinking, we must first examine the burgeoning intellectual currents at the time of her writing that admittedly had much to bear on her theoretical approaches. With the emergence of Nazism and Stalinism, the intersection of state domination, politics and private life became the prevailing motif of intellectual conversations throughout the latter half of the twentieth century. These governments ushered in a new political landscape identified by an unforeseen form of ‘total domination’, which clearly differed from other historical examples of tyranny and terror. Governments which had been labeled as ‘traditional regimes of terror’ include, The Reign of Terror (1793-1794), Shaka’s rule over the Zulu (1816–1828), the rule of Ivan IV Vasilyevich (*Ivan the Terrible*, 1547-1584) in Russia, and the Massacre of the Innocents carried out by the Roman King Herod (37-4 BCE). In these cases, terror was characterized by the

³⁵ Ibid., p. 438.

mass executions of supposed enemies of the state; nonetheless, their form of domination directly followed the traditional conceptualization of state tyranny outlined by the Greeks: a leader or group which “rules without law, looks to his own advantage rather than that of his own subjects, and uses extreme and cruel tactics [...] against his own people as well as others.”³⁶ Framing state terror as the absolute oppression of the masses carried out by the will of a few, moreover, carried well into the twentieth century with few modifications. The French social psychologist Gustave LeBon wrote in 1916 during the turmoil of the First World War: “Terrorization has always been employed by revolutionaries no less than by kings, as a means of impressing their enemies, and as an example to those who were doubtful about submitting to them [...]”³⁷ However, after 1945 a whole cadre of philosophers, political scientists, historians, and social psychologists -- including Hannah Arendt, Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, Herbert Marcuse, Franz Neumann and Leo Löwenthal -- were confronted with the question: how could Nazism and Stalinism be explained, whose terror was no longer a function of state structure and its apparatuses. In other words, ‘total domination’ did not depend on ‘a leader or group’ to oppress the masses. Quite the contrary. Totalitarianism had enlisted an all-too-willing subject as an active participant in state terror, whose submission had not entirely resulted from the Leader’s or the Party’s tyrannical control, but rather had grown out of an internalized self-subordination created through totalizing ideology. As Arendt herself astutely remarks in *Origins*, the key difference between totalitarian terror and all other historical examples of terror is that totalitarianism does not stop after the liquidation of political opposition. Totalitarianism aims to replace any spontaneous human action with the single movement of history established by ideology:

³⁶ Betty Glad, “Why Tyrants Go Too Far: Malignant Narcissism and Absolute Power,” *Political Psychology*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (March 2002): p. 2.

³⁷ Gustave LeBon, *The Psychology of the Great War: The First World War and its Origins*, (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1916): p. 391.

In a perfect totalitarian government, where all men have become 'One Man', where all action aims at the acceleration of the movement of nature or history, where every single act is the execution of a death sentence which Nature or History has already pronounced, that is, under conditions where terror can be completely relied upon to keep the movement in constant motion, no principle of action separate from its essence would be needed at all.³⁸

The new canon of thinkers that arose in the aftermath of Nazism and Stalinism centered their focus on the diminishing body politic and public sphere as evidenced by these particular governments. Still, others sought to understand the capitulation to and endorsement of fascist ideology in terms of the loss of subjective autonomy and capacity for critical reflection. However, central to this new generation of thinkers became the theories of psychoanalysis originally proposed by Freud prior to the outbreak of totalitarianism in Europe. Suddenly, psychoanalysis became important to the study of social and political life, as its central tenets were employed by The Frankfurt School in the 1950s and 1960s. Psychoanalysis revolutionized the way in which political and social theorists approached the intersection of state domination and individual life: specifically, the significance of ideological state apparatuses in determining individual consciousness as well as the psychic mechanisms for constituting the political and social imaginary. The role of the unconscious mind, its structures and mechanisms – displacement, disavowal, repression; masochism and narcissism; projection, identification, and delusion – became central to cultural analysis, Marxist theory, feminism, political thought, as well as literary criticism. It became apparent for many that psychoanalytic theory could be used effectively in studying both the genesis and the persistence of subjective endorsement of fascist ideology. Hugh Trevor Roper, a historian of Nazism, recognized the use of psychology in political philosophy and science:

The study of history and politics is primarily the study of men, and [...] all political theory and political science must begin with a clear view of the psychology of man, at least in certain aspects of his behavior. All the great and effective political theorists have recognized this. Hobbes began his political theory with a psychological theory -- his mechanical, despotic state was devised for a mechanical, fear-driven humanity. John Locke and his eighteenth century followers advocated freedom --- i.e., non-intervention by

³⁸ Arendt, *Origins*, p. 467.

government -- on the assumption that man was naturally good and self-improving and that his economic activities were naturally helpful to society [...] The same point can be made indefinitely. Political theory that does not start from a theory of man is in my view quite worthless.³⁹

Social and political theorists began to take seriously their oftentimes implicit psychological hypotheses concerning authority, internal censure and domination, the link between external oppression and internal repression, and the paralysis of judgment and the triumph of instrumental over critical reason.

Hannah Arendt is well known for her lack of sympathy for psychoanalysis and individual psychology. She was quick to condemn “psychology, depth psychology or psychoanalysis, which discovers no more than the ever-changing moods, the ups and downs of our psychic life” and whose “results and discoveries are neither particularly appealing nor very meaningful in themselves.”⁴⁰ Indeed, for Arendt, “the *monotonous sameness* and *pervasive ugliness* so highly characteristic of the findings of modern psychology” seems to contrast “so obviously” with the “enormous variety and richness” of the individual’s outward display to the world.⁴¹ Julia Kristeva has argued that Arendt’s preference to ignore psychoanalysis and psychology are:

[...] not only for reasons that she would no doubt deem ‘personal’ but also as part of an effort to sustain the consistency in her thought. Her main goal is to preserve the freedom of the ‘who’ at the heart of an optimal political plurality and to avoid subjecting it to an unchecked unconscious. In doing so, she runs the risk of depriving the ‘who of someone’ of its body, making it cumbersome, perhaps, but also incredibly flexible.⁴²

For Kristeva, then, Arendt’s rejection of the unconscious came out of an effort to preserve the uniqueness of each individual subject. However, what Arendt does not realize in doing so, is that the implication is, we should remain quiet concerning the way in which the internally constituted

³⁹ Hugh Trevor-Roper, “Human Nature in Politics,” *The Listener*, vol. 50 (10 December 1953): pp. 993-4.

⁴⁰ Arendt, *The Life of the Mind* (New York: Harcourt, 1978): p. 34.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 34-35

⁴² Julia Kristeva, *Hannah Arendt*, trans. Ross Guberman (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001): p. 181.

Self has developed psychohistorically – something which must have an impact on one’s appearance in the world.

Arendt was clearly aware of the prevailing psychoanalytic circles and intellectual currents at the time she wrote *Origins* and *The Human Condition*, and most certainly by 1978 when she published *The Life of the Mind*. Psychoanalytic theory was well received by the late 1950s and 1960s in a milieu of academic powerhouses, including The Frankfurt School. Melanie Klein (1882-1960) alongside Anna Freud (1895-1982) became the guiding female psychoanalytic theorists of the first half of the twentieth century, who, like Arendt, had lived and worked first in German-speaking countries, but with the rise of Nazism had migrated to England and the USA. Instrumental in broadening the scope of psychoanalysis past the seminal theories of Anna’s father, Sigmund Freud, their work expanded the field “to include narcissistic personality disorders, character analysis, ego psychology, and the treatment of depressive and schizoid as well as neurotic conditions in children and adults,” drawing attention to the “interpersonal and maternal determinants of our psychology so scandalously overlooked by Freud.”⁴³ Carl Jung (1875-1961) in his essay *Wotan* expanded his theory of the collective unconscious to the study of Nazism, which “drew on Environmental Determinism and Völkisch roots. The theory of the collective unconscious would allow for the possibility of a racial and a national unconscious which have obvious political implications.”⁴⁴ In 1944 Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno published *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, which enlisted psychoanalytic tools to discuss the various pathologies which shaped the failure of the Age of Enlightenment and which had led to the eventual leveling of the three-pronged nature of civilization: politics, economics and culture. In all three cases, the plains of autonomy are

⁴³ Janet Sayers, *Mothers of Psychoanalysis: Helene Deutsch, Karen Horney, Anna Freud, and Melanie Klein* (New York: Norton, 1991): p. 3-4.

⁴⁴ Nicholas Adam Lewin, *Jung on War, Politics and Nazi Germany: Exploring the Theory of Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* (London: Karnac Books, 2009): p. 14. See Jung’s 1936 essay *Wotan* [in: *Four Archetypes*, Vol. 9, Part 1 of the *Collected Works of C.G. Jung* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010)] concerning his analysis of Nazism as well as *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* [2nd ed (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981)].

compressed and flattened into a two dimensional self, whereby all parts of life have become dominated by the ‘culture machine,’ the apparatus created through capitalism’s tendency to commodity and homogenate all aspects of living. This flattening, according to Horkheimer and Adorno, is also characterized by the subjective loss of autonomy within the archetypes, clichés, images and paradigms of the culture machine. Finally, the Freudian psychoanalysis Jacques Lacan (1901-1981) became a powerful voice in the French school of psychoanalysis throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Thinkers such as Slavoj Žižek and Deleuze and Guatarri were able to absorb Lacan’s three orders – the Real, the Imaginary and the Symbolic – into their philosophical and critical analyses in order to show the intrapsychic forces governing the ego’s understanding of subjectivity, politics and culture.

Perhaps Arendt’s division between the private and the public realms, a prevailing leitmotif which runs throughout her life’s work, may indeed shed light on the issue as to why she never conducted an intensive study of psychoanalysis. To be sure, psychoanalysis is a tool with which one can analyze and reveal the hidden neuroses of one’s private life, by way of sexual experience, trauma and repression. However, for Arendt the collision of the private and public realms not only crippled the public realm’s capacity for human action and freedom, but it eliminated the private realm’s ability for refuge, self-reflection, and re-birth. In other words, Arendt’s writing suggests that psychoanalysis would have interfaced the political realm with the varying private realm activities of man, all of which Arendt believed promulgated totalitarian results.

For Arendt, it became impossible to grasp the usefulness of psychoanalytic theory as an instrument for the analysis of political transformations or decisive historical ruptures, because any tendency to individualize the public realm, whereby the convictions of private life were routinely applied to the public realm, was suspiciously in step with bourgeois mentality. In *The Origins of*

Totalitarianism (hereafter: *Origins*) we find that it was the decline of the public sphere of the nation-state which helped usher in totalitarianism, accomplished through the rise of a manipulative bourgeoisie who utilized the state as a tool for its own economic and ideological domination, rooted in the imperialism and racism of the nineteenth century. The imperialist-minded bourgeois proffered the idea that citizenship was no longer linked to constitutional law or tradition, but rather tied up in conceptions of race and isolationism (crystallized by the decline of the party system in favor of the Pan-movement race ideologies). Finally, after the Great Depression, revolution, and the aftermath of the First World War, the failure of the nation-state produced a feeling of isolation and separation, whereby men no longer felt bound by the responsibilities of public life, and were increasingly indifferent and apathetic to politics. The “mass man,” who no longer believed in public interest and support, was now deeply invested in the primacy of private interest and individual labor. Totalitarian ideology, according to Arendt, was openly endorsed because it supplied concrete answers and futures to men who felt isolated from a public and political world of plurality.

The prevailing bourgeois mentality of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was, for Arendt, at the heart of the decline of the public sphere: that is to say, the bourgeois promulgated a long-held apathy to public responsibility due to its belief that individual success or failure is singularly tied to ruthless competition: “a citizen’s duties and responsibilities could only be felt to be a needless drain on his limited time and energy.”⁴⁵ Otto Rank, a close colleague of Sigmund Freud, argued that it was indeed this ‘self-sufficient type,’ the autonomous ego, of the bourgeois personality which psychoanalysis itself had originally sought to normalize. After all, it was the rational individualism cherished by the Enlightenment and accepted by bourgeois culture which led to theories of a ‘normal’ self, allowing for any deviations to be cast out as ‘neurotic’ or

⁴⁵ Arendt, *Origins*, p. 313.

‘abnormal’, “even when it was not an outspoken illness but merely a matter of difference in temperament, character or social standards.”⁴⁶ For Arendt, because psychoanalysis grew with Freud – out of the “leveling of all human psychology to the common denominator of a neurotic world view, according to which almost every manifestation of human thought and behavior has been labeled ‘pathological’ or ‘abnormal,’ except the psychology itself which is accepted as an unfailing standard” – it harbored the same tendency to ignore human plurality and difference. Arendt must have argued that psychoanalysis as practiced by Freud could not allow for real personality development in terms of autonomy and creativity, because it was based on a deterministic point of view, a theory of the self that disguised the prevailing ideology of the day -- that of the bourgeois personality.

However, the notion that psychoanalysis is characterized by a “*monotonous sameness and pervasive ugliness*”⁴⁷ is just wrong. Neither Freud nor for that matter any psychologist or psychoanalyst are cited in *The Life of the Mind*, which at first glance would seem an ideal starting point. Instead, she elects to borrow from one of Nietzsche’s more psychologically loaded passages in order to demonstrate that the field only unveils the ugliness, repetition and abnormality of the psyche: “*Das Gefühl ist herrlich, wenn es im Grunde bleibt; nicht aber wenn es an den Tag tritt, sich zum Wesen machen und herrschen will.*”⁴⁸ But as Kristeva argues, why should we be afraid of the “ugliness” of our inner world, which so clearly *does* compel our actions and thinking?

Even more important, it is simply not true, except perhaps in the case of a psychoanalytic vulgate not worthy of Arendt’s seriousness of purpose, that psychoanalysis remains at the level of the ‘general’ at the cost of ‘discourse.’ Quite the contrary, Freud’s discovery has shown that psychic life becomes a life only when it represents itself in a unique way – in the particular discourse that constitutes a veritable poetics and maieutics of the individual subject. Psychoanalysis invokes a representation that endures until it reaches the ‘ugliness’ of the urge [...].⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Otto Rank, *Beyond Psychology* (New York: Dover Publications, 1958): p. 28.

⁴⁷ Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, p. 34.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

⁴⁹ Kristeva, *Hannah Arendt*, p. 179.

Freud talks about psychoanalysis as a scientific theory which has uncovered timeless truths; however, recent developments in psychoanalytic theory and criticism have shown that concrete historical realities do not have to be generalized and dehistoricized. Psychoanalytic theory furnishes a set of analytical categories and dynamics that can be historicized and mobilized to account for the cathexis of the subject to totalitarian power.

The central question which runs throughout this thesis is: In what ways can the thought of Hannah Arendt be open to psychoanalytic inflection, allowing one to see that Arendt actually approached, albeit not explicitly, but unwittingly, that there was a “psychic” basis of fascism and “total domination”? Relatedly, if it is the case that there is reason to argue that Arendt herself unconsciously arrived at close parallels between her own work and psychoanalytic theory itself, in what ways does she subvert this claim and consciously ignore potentially insightful discoveries involving the interrelation between the Self and politics and totalitarian domination? It is clear that Arendt understood the way in which totalitarian ideology acts as an objective apparatus which sought to diminish and ultimately eradicate critical reflection. She suggests that the terror of totalitarianism is only possible because its “onion like shape” and “cold logic of ideology” were able to mask the subject from his underlying sense of loneliness and isolation from the reality of the world. Indeed, making the difference between totalitarianism and other historical forms of oppression and domination, Arendt argued in *Origins* that this form of government based on terror and violence against its citizenry was never content with dominating the subject by “external means, namely, through the state and a machinery of violence,” but rather through the ideological apparatus employed by the state and culture, “totalitarianism has discovered a means of dominating and terrorizing human beings *from within*.”⁵⁰ Moreover, she also understood, that, just as the artificially fabricated totalitarian universe, which subsumes all elements of reality according

⁵⁰ Arendt, *Origins*, p. 325 (my emphasis, J.R.P.)

to the dictates of ideology, seems in the eye of the totalitarian subject *to be* the ‘perfect reality’ of the world, it actually represents “an anti-social situation and harbor[s] a principle destructive for all human living-together.”⁵¹ She outlines the subterranean socio-psychic forces inherent within totalitarianism which crystallized in the leveling of personal autonomy and critical reflection: the subject is propelled into a world of loneliness, isolation and objectivity, a place from which rational judgment and conscience are precluded, and where being within the world only makes sense within the single, closed-circuit totalitarian ideology. The starting point for totalitarian ideology, for Arendt, is the supposed “race or class,” whereby “Nazi Germany and Marxist Russia sought to imperialize the world through the extension of these ideas over all time and space.”⁵² Moreover, the ‘object of difference’ necessary for this original premise is ‘the Jew’ or particular class

In the end, it is clear that Arendt moved past the traditional, rationalist philosophical accounts of human intentionality, “which were not rich enough to account fully for *irrational actions*,” and opted to explain how “present circumstances or prior conditioning might explain what appears to be irrational behavior.”⁵³ Indeed, I argue that Arendt’s own writing on totalitarianism shows remarkable parallels to the philosopher of mind Brian Faye: “To explain an intentional act is to pick out the practical reasoning process which caused it,” argues Faye, “and this process can be illogical and still play its explanatory role. Contrary to rationalism, a commitment to explaining intentional acts by giving the reasons for them does not require that we believe that all actions are rational at some level. Intentional activity is not restricted to the domain

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 478.

⁵² Wayne Allen, “A Novel Form of Government: Hannah Arendt on Totalitarianism”, *The Political Science Reviewer*, (Fall 1986): p. 241

⁵³ M. Andrew Holowchak, *Freud: From Individual Psychology to Group Psychology* (Lanham, MD: Jason Aronson, 2012): p. 129

of the rational.”⁵⁴ It seems, then, that Arendt’s concern with psychoanalysis and Freud’s “unconscious” was less that it posed a threat to human *reason*, but rather our study of *history* and understanding of human *action*. Above all, Arendt sought to avoid any interpretative process which ‘subsumed’ the entirety of human events under a single category. Moreover, recall from our discussion above that Arendt did not claim that the interpretation of history followed a “rational interpretive process that attributes different meanings to established facts, depending on the context or framework within which a scholar works.”⁵⁵ Rather, as Seyla Benhabib and Julia Kristeva has argued, Arendt’s conception of history follows both Benjamin’s notion of fragmentary history as well as the “phenomenology of Husserl and Heidegger and according to which memory is the mimetic recollection of the lost origins of phenomena as contained in some fundamental human experience.”⁵⁶ Thus viewed as a ‘common narrative,’ life, action and thought can only be seen as distinctly human if they are revealed as a ‘memory’ by virtue of a common relation among successive manifestations: narration of history in politics concerns itself with exploding moments in the past in order to grant new meaning to our understanding of the present, constructing an ongoing narrative, irreducible to one set of interpretation.

However, Freud himself employed exactly this method in his analyses of individual ego-history. “Freud used the term *Nachträglichkeit* (“deferred action”) to indicate the way in which events acquired significance through revision, ‘rearrangement in accordance with fresh circumstances . . . a re-transcription.’”⁵⁷ Analysis seeks to uncover those repressed moments in the analysand’s history, and to bring him to recognition of the forgotten forces which have shaped his own subjectivity. For her part, Arendt wagered that through ‘narrative history’ (which she

⁵⁴ Brian Fay, *Contemporary Philosophy of Social Science: A Multicultural Approach* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1996): p. 103. [cited in M. Andrew Holowchak, *Freud: From Individual Psychology to Group Psychology* (Lanham, MD: Jason Aronson, 2012): p. 129.]

⁵⁵ Joan W. Scott, “The Incommensurability of Psychoanalysis and History,” *History and Theory* 51 (February 2012): p. 66.

⁵⁶ Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*, p. 95.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

employed as a tool for professional historiography as well as political memory) we could gradually reveal the moments of ‘repressed’ history – namely those elements of imperialism and anti-Semitism in Europe’s pre-totalitarian era – which have been forgotten and left untold in our common narratives. Similarly, “Freudian theory is skeptical of the evolutionary chronology that shapes professional historians’ presentations, instead attending to the role repression or nostalgia play in the construction of memory, and to the interruptions and discontinuities that characterize the necessarily uneven and often chaotic interactions of past and present in the psyche.”⁵⁸ In the following analysis, therefore, I will show how Freud’s move from individual to collective psychology is reflected in Arendt’s analysis of the relationship between private actor and the body politic: in both cases, the recollection of the lost or repressed origins of trauma and action, which unconsciously shape our discourse in the present, can only be represented through an ongoing narrative with the Other.

Along these lines, one is reminded of Arendt’s attempt to return the “lost” public space, the distinction between private and public – in short, to reveal the forgotten historical moments which brought about its decline. However, this is not to imply that there ever was an “original” political situation, but rather, when tradition is lost, it is only the public space which can restore the “unending discourse among men,” which demonstrates that “there cannot be one single truth within the human world.” When Arendt reflects on The Parable of the Three Rings, she argues that exactly because it is impossible to discern an original, model ring (*Musterring*), it is clear that any interpretation of its power is valid: the very act of interpretation is done out of the realization that had the “genuine” ring actually existed “that would mean an end to discourse and thus to friendship and thus to humanness.”⁵⁹ This perpetual return to political interpretation after the loss

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 67.

⁵⁹ Arendt, *Men in Dark Times* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1968): p. 26.

of the original reminds one of Freud's reading of the unconscious as "a movement of translation without an original, as a process of representation without a 'represented.'"⁶⁰

Placing Arendt alongside psychoanalysis in this way will provide us grounds to identify the aspects of totalitarianism and politics which she may have acknowledged herself, *had* she discovered her own affinities with psychohistory. It is clear that Arendt (unconsciously) saw many of the same structures and elements within totalitarianism for which social-psychology and psychoanalysis have argued; however, she does not answer the fundamental question of *desire*. Thus, I will argue that *what explains the irrationality behind totalitarianism* is its ability to function as an apparatus of success and enjoyment: the subject's unconscious impulses can be transfigured and his desires satisfied, but also, on the other hand, as a curtain blinding his reflection past the sameness of ideology. Just as I will argue that Arendt's political theory suggests a 'subjective *desire* for emancipation and recognition' which can only be satisfied via one's entrance into the political sphere,⁶¹ *there is no reason to doubt that the totalitarian subject would equally desire emancipation in some form in order to free himself (at least consciously) from his loneliness in private life and isolation from politics*. The totalitarian subject, therefore, *desires* totalitarianism along the same lines as the normal political subject, however, this time his feeling of freedom is *false* insofar as it does not belong to him – it is always dependent on the subject's (*enjoyable*) compulsion to imitate the objective, totalitarian ideology.

⁶⁰ Samuel Weber, *Return to Freud: Jacques Lacan's Dislocation of Psychoanalysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991): p. 4.

⁶¹ See: Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1998). Man's freedom is affirmed within the political, Arendt argues. As he moves from the private realm, which is dictated by necessity, to the political realm, the subject affirms his own freedom through speech and action.

II. Totalitarianism's Paradox: Mourning the loss of politics and the *enjoyment* of a 'superfluous' humanity

The most remarkable characteristic of melancholia, and the one in most need of explanation, is its tendency to change round into mania – a state which is the opposite of it in its symptoms [...] All such situations are characterized by high spirits, by the signs of discharge of joyful emotion and by increased readiness for all kinds of action [...] we may venture to assert that mania is nothing other than a triumph of this sort, only that here again *what the ego has surmounted and what it is triumphing over remain hidden from it.*

Sigmund Freud, *Mourning and Melancholia* [my emphasis, J.R.P.]⁶²

In his critique of Arendt's theory of totalitarianism, Jean-François Lyotard has argued that Arendt's account of totalitarianism is "essentially an external one," primarily falling back on a historico-political method. For Lyotard, Arendt subverted her "*real discovery*" of "the origins of totalitarianism" as a psychological force when she located the unique and resistant "onion structure" of totalitarian ideology and organization: sheltering the totalitarian world from the outside, *real* reality, "[t]he onion structure enables the system, by its organization, to be resistant to the shock with which it is threatened by the factuality of the real world."⁶³ Lyotard has suggested that Arendt missed the fact that, "for such a powerful instrument of foreclosure, of forgetting, as totalitarianism to be fabricated, the [Heideggerian] Thing must appear extremely threatening, *the relation of desire to the real must be one of extreme defenselessness.*" In other words, "the reality that needs filtering is not brute fact," but rather "*its degree of anxiety, its quality of attraction and repulsion, its force of excitation.*" This quality of the fact does not stem from its established factuality, but from its eluding repression and crossing the strata of the protective onion."⁶⁴

⁶² Freud, *Mourning and Melancholia*, p. 253-54.

⁶³ Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 1968 ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 1993): p. 132.

⁶⁴ Jean François Lyotard, "The Survivor" in Jean-François Lyotard, *Toward the Postmodern*, p. 157.

However, as Margaret Canovan has suggested, what usually is left out in the literature is the extent to which the forces of totalitarianism indeed dramatically and idiosyncratically shaped Arendt's entire philosophical corpus. In a word, totalitarianism forced Arendt to examine the bounds between the private world of the mind and the public world of appearance. Canovan claims, contra Lyotard, that her thought is consequently "*consistently inward-looking*," always stressing a "commitment to take responsibility for what was happening in the world instead of surrendering in the face of supposedly inevitable trends, and collective fantasies."⁶⁵ Arendt's theory suggests that, in order for totalitarianism to ferment, its "onion structure" must destroy man's inevitable 'desire' to explode the real conditions of oppression and inequality in the social world. For it is only by calling forth these historical moments of rupture that one harkens the political debate which destroys the old and births the new. The Arendtian concept of political *action*, a truly spontaneous and unpredictable facet of humanness, has the capacity to *reveal* the real conditions of oppression, domination, and *lack* present within social life. As she writes in 1958 shortly after her publication of *Origins*, political action and speech are the vehicles through which one reveals the changing conditions in the world: "The human sense of reality demands that men actualize the sheer passive givenness of their being, not in order to change it, but in order to *make articulate and call into full existence what otherwise they would have to suffer passively anyhow* [italics added]."⁶⁶ The concept of the 'human world', for Arendt, is not to serve a particular socially constructed end, but to provide the chance for human beings to use politics to uncover and find new answers to the inevitable and changing forms of domination in social and political life. Humans need to act and speak in the public space to affirm their freedom. *Arendt is thus consistent in arguing that political action arises (to use Lyotard's terminology) because of a fundamental "anxiety" and our concomitant "attraction and*

⁶⁵ Margaret Canovan, *Hannah Arendt: A Reinterpretation of Her Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992): p. 7-11.

⁶⁶ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1998): p. 208

repulsion” with respect to the ‘real’ conditions that disgust and excite - it is this feeling which moves us to act.

Viewed within the broader framework of Arendt’s philosophical oeuvre, she suggests that totalitarianism itself *buries* this subjective political desire to “to call into full existence” those conditions which our conceptualization through language can no longer adequately express.

But if Arendt’s central claim is that totalitarianism buries the subjective political desire to expose unseen conditions of oppression and strife in everyday normative claims, what in totalitarianism actually *blankets* the *repression* of something Arendt sees to be a natural political tendency? In other words, if desire in the political sense is eradicated, *what form does ‘desire’ take in totalitarianism* -- what explains the subjective capitulation to and endorsement of ‘total domination’? To answer this question, we will need to demonstrate Arendt’s implicit linkage between state domination, existing social flows and beliefs, and the individual subject. In what follows, I will consider Arendt’s socio-psychological insights into the subjective capitulation to totalitarianism, and focus on two conditions of Arendt’s analysis. First, it will be important to localize the forces which ultimately led to the subject’s *isolation* and *atomization* from the political space and his concomitant *loneliness* within the private realm, which altogether provided the necessary impotence for totalitarian domination. If we contextualize Arendt’s theory within her broader philosophical thought, it becomes clear that Arendt actually identified in pre-totalitarian Europe a *latent* melancholia with respect to the ‘inability to mourn the loss of political action.’ The psychic consequences of this gradual retreat from the tasks of social and political transformation reveals a tendency towards objectivity and fantastical enjoyment. Second, I will consider Arendt’s appraisal of the bourgeois politics of surplus capital as the essential seed which produced a ‘superfluous humanity’ found in totalitarianism. It is here that I will draw a connection between Arendt’s claim and Lacanian psychoanalysis: because surplus capital is driven by the desire for surplus *enjoyment*, we can uncover the fundamental element of *jouissance* that is lacking in Arendt’s analysis.

Throughout this section, it is important to bear in mind that, for Arendt, while totalitarianism indeed sprang from real socio-political conditions, its “genocidal mentality” emerged from a deeply embedded historical *imaginary*, which was limited to a certain fantasy that refused exposure to the real social experiences of difference and inequality.

It was after all the “genocidal mentality” of totalitarianism which became the driving force behind Arendt’s desire to write *Origins*.⁶⁷ In 1943, after learning about Auschwitz, Arendt writes: “It was really as if an abyss had opened [...] This ought not to have happened. And I don’t mean just the number of victims. I mean the method, the fabrication of corpses and so on [...] Something happened there to which we cannot reconcile ourselves. None of us ever can.”⁶⁸ What could explain the univocal “need for terror” present within totalitarianism? Arendt suggests the masses openly endorsed totalitarianism out of the desire to become the walking embodiment of the Law of History or Nature. Consequently, human spontaneity, unpredictability and plurality had to be sacrificed to a totalitarian collective imaginary: totalitarian terror was *needed*, in other words, to offset the persistent “fear that with the birth of each human being a new beginning might raise and make heard its voice in the world.”⁶⁹

However, in order to understand this “need for terror,” we must first examine Arendt’s argument concerning the psychic ‘preparation’ for totalitarianism. It becomes evident that her contention that the gradual isolation from public politics and the concomitant loss of the ‘protection’ ensured by a common body politic closely reflects a diagnosis of ‘melancholia’, described first by Freud in his essay *Mourning and Melancholia* (1917). This latent melancholia emerged along two planes within the European nation-state: intellectual life and public life. First,

⁶⁷ Ascheim, “Nazism, Culture, and the Origins of Totalitarianism: Hannah Arendt and the Discourse of Evil,” p. 124-6.

⁶⁸ Hannah Arendt, “What Remains? The Language Remains: A Conversation with Günter Gaus,” in Arendt, *Essays in Understanding*, p. 14.

⁶⁹ Lyotard, *Toward the Postmodern*, p. 156-8.

Arendt indicts the Western tradition of philosophy itself as being the possible precursor to mass-loneliness after thinkers following Plato posited the existence of the ‘few against the many’. At the end of *Origins*, Arendt reminds us of what Hegel famously uttered on his deathbed: “Nobody has understood me except one; and he also misunderstood.”⁷⁰ By insisting that the philosophical way of life was supreme the philosopher consequently lost any connection with the *vita activa* itself. In her “Lectures on the Political Philosophy of Kant” given at The New School for Social Research in Fall, 1970, which would have established the framework of the uncompleted third installment to *The Life of Mind*, “Judging,” Arendt reflects on the meaning of melancholia as the loss of sociability [*Geselligkeit*] with the common world and the resultant feeling of loneliness and desolation. It was in Kant’s theory of aesthetic judgment (*The Critique of Judgment*) that Arendt saw an attempt to *overcome* the melancholia of the professional thinker.⁷¹ Kant was one of the first thinkers to suggest that anyone could experience the life of the thinker, who observes and judges the world. His thought was that the “narrow footpath for the few would become a high-road [for all],”⁷² which means to enjoy the *pleasure* of being an impartial spectator and judge as a “member of a community.” But since the spectator is autonomous and therefore stands apart from the actual course of history, Arendt argues that Kantian political judgment (had he developed such) is wholly aesthetic; that is to say, to judge the beautiful and the ugly is carried out in private and deals ultimately with particulars; however, the feeling or ‘taste’ that overcomes us does not arrive by subsuming the particular under a universal concept (‘All roses are beautiful; this is a red rose; it must be beautiful.’). What grants us *pleasure* in judging, for both Kant and Arendt, is the feeling of

⁷⁰ Arendt, *Origins*, p. 477.

⁷¹ Arendt, *Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy*, ed. Ronald Beiner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982): p. 25. For Arendt, Kant sought to overcome the “deeply rooted melancholy disposition,” which “cares little for what others judge, what they consider good or true [*Selbstdenken*] [...] he is a strict judge of himself and others, and not seldom is weary of himself as of the world [...] He is in danger of becoming a visionary or a crank.” See: Immanuel Kant, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime*, trans. John T. Goldthwait (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960): pp. 55-67.

⁷² Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (cited in Arendt, *Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy*, p. 38).

“approbation,” or the feeling that our taste is in some way ‘universally communicable’. However, the century following the Enlightenment only proved to contradict Kant’s political conceptualization. The steady decline of autonomous political action and the possibility for communicative freedom, which began in the 1870s and lasted until the rise of totalitarianism, in fact only became *manifest* after the fall of Nazism and Stalinism. Arendt posited that the historical time period between the end of the nineteenth century and the first quarter of the twentieth century had foreshadowed the catastrophes of the 1930s, because these years revealed a collection of political bodies in Europe that were “held together only by customs and traditions”: the body politic had run out of justifications for its practices and “The very sources from which such answers should have sprung had dried up. The very framework within which understanding and judging arise is gone.”⁷³

The second precursor to mass-melancholia developed within the sphere of public affairs due to the steady retraction and crippling of a common body politic. To understand Arendt’s thought here, it will be important to clearly define the Arendtian concept of action. In *The Human Condition*, she suggests that action (what she understands to be both deed and speech) reveals the public appearance of an autonomous actor because it is the introduction of the *novum*, the unexpected, within human plurality. Action, as we saw in Arendt’s reading of Kant, cannot be carried out in isolation, but requires an audience of spectators. The possibility for communicative freedom -- to have oneself heard and seen within the world -- sets the stage for public appearance and political action, because it is only then that actors can introduce “their *own* ideas about the possibilities of democratic government under modern conditions.”⁷⁴

⁷³ Arendt, “Understanding and Politics,” in Arendt, *Essays in Understanding*, p. 316.

⁷⁴ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 216.

Arendt suggests, however, that, from the late nineteenth century until the rise of Nazism, the political space was gradually seized and constricted by a newly emerging European bourgeoisie and the growing dominance of xenophobic national political movements. As both Habermas and Arendt point out, bourgeois culture had taken on a new shape by the end of the nineteenth century. With the influence of Enlightenment thought on European politics, the public sphere of the eighteenth and much of the nineteenth century was characterized by rational-critical debate in the salons, clubs and reading societies. Moreover, the public sphere had been thought of as not being limited to the modes of mere production, consumption and labor, or what Arendt and Habermas see as the “dictates of life’s necessities,” which directly opposes the critical action and speech of public politics. Bourgeois, along with all other strata of society, had been conscious of a dichotomous identity, consisting of the private Self (property owner as ‘human being’) and the public Self (*bourgeois* and *homme*). However, when the intimacy of the family unit was foreclosed by the collision of public and private, the public space of open debate and criticism dwindled as it increasingly became the game of social reproduction. The depoliticization of the public sphere resulted in what both Arendt and Habermas have called a “psychological facilitation” of consumer culture in the place of literary and political debate.⁷⁵

The great success of the new bourgeois politics was in collapsing the space between the political realm and the social realm. In effect, the invasion of the private realm into the public space and vice versa meant the eventual loss of the political fabric of plurality and equality. Arendt called attention to the decline of the autonomous individual, the insurgence of the European mob and the concomitant diminishment of shared spaces – alternative or subaltern publics – in civil society. Consequently, large numbers of lonely individuals – those who, due to both economic and

⁷⁵ For Habermas’ account of the disintegration of the public space during the waning half of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century, see: *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, M.A.: MIT Press, 1989).

social upheaval, failed to find a particular social class or group with which to identify – emerged on the scene.

The possibility for the unpredictability and novelty of political action and speech was eventually lost after the focus within the nation-state became increasingly aimed at fostering an *a priori*, psychological picture of what it meant to be a part of the body politic itself – a direct product of European imperialism. According to Arendt, the capitalist-imperialist had never sought dominance within public politics, since the *individualism* of capitalism and imperialism had stood directly opposed to the critical and open debate within politics. The imperialist obsession with capitalist consumerism had been relegated largely to the private spheres of the social labor market. However, with the Stock Market crash of 1873 as well as the already collapsed “divide” between the private and the public, the capitalist-imperialist entered the scene of newly “privatized politics” in order to finance the expansion of capitalist goals which were fused with nationalist ideological pursuits. In other words, public politics readily absorbed an “*internalized* tribal consciousness”, which proved to permeate both political and social life: “tribal nationalism” was to be distinguished from former identifications with the nation-state because it concentrated not on “visible existence, tradition, institutions, and culture,” but on the internal “soul which is considered as the embodiment of general national qualities.”⁷⁶ Politically, it eliminated communicative freedom between a plurality of actors because it “deni[ed] theoretically the very possibility of a common mankind long before it [was] used to destroy the humanity of man.” The gradual retraction of the political space -- that place where one is emancipated from the private world of society and reveals himself as an equal through speech and deed -- made human action virtually meaningless. Instead of the ‘right to have rights’ as an inhabitant within the state, political status merely meant to “embody” a pre-fixed label which demarcated one as ‘naturally’ belonging

⁷⁶ Arendt, *Origins*, p. 226.

to the body politic because of race or nationality. The form of public life and communicative freedom possible within the public space of plurality that had thrived in European salons, theatres and cafes during the 18th century was eventually lost (*even if* groups, such as the European Jewry, had been exoticized and consequently set apart from standard European *social* class-based society).⁷⁷ Consequently, Arendt saw that the space which could potentially ensure the much needed *escape* from the inevitable “inequality present in rulership”⁷⁸ in the private sphere slowly dissipated into the hands of a select few bourgeois imperialists.

The Pan-Movement ideologies that dominated politics in the decades leading up to totalitarianism were, however, only the products of European imperialism. Arendt suggests that, when the bourgeois-imperialist assumed control of politics in the latter part of the nineteenth century, he advanced not only the universal and totalizing ideologies of the Pan-Movements, but also his desire to use politics for the accrual of surplus capital. The bourgeois-imperialist’s “apathy and even hostility toward public life” finally became the winning *ethos* of the nation: “the individual’s success or failure in ruthless competition” and *labor* proffered the mentality that “a citizen’s duties and responsibilities could only be felt to be a needless drain on his limited time and energy.”⁷⁹ The individual citizen consequently no longer felt attached or personally responsible to the body politic. However, the loss of the possibility for autonomous action in the political space, meant that the individual was forced to withdraw from the world of appearances and his relations with the common body politic. This disengagement with the outside world was massaged by the objective mandates of ideology, which gave the illusion of ‘mass political action’, but in fact only *atomized* human communities, thus permanently silencing the “potential space of appearance

⁷⁷ In Enlightenment in Europe, Arendt saw that there was a sufficient space of equality, where equality means for Arendt to be seen and have one’s voice heard as a political equal (to be appreciated for one’s deeds and actions). It will suffice to say that, for Arendt, where there is a space for equality, there is always space for action and freedom.

⁷⁸ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 33.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 313.

between acting and speaking men.”⁸⁰ Any sense of politics was subsumed by the institutions of bureaucratic state domination (rule by ‘no one’) and elite control.

It became impossible to *mourn* the loss of the ability to act in the public realm and to affirm one’s own freedom because the proliferation of European mass society and mass consumption effectively sheathed the real (unconscious) loss of political space. A “coming-to-terms-with-the-past” or “working-through-repressed-memory” (Freud’s *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*) could never be fully accomplished because, as Arendt makes clear, the leveling of a political and public arena destroyed that in which one could potentially scythe through the traumas and losses of political life. Consequently, the same appearance of ego-masochism characteristic of melancholia befell “the psychology of the European mass man”: self-centeredness and withdrawal from the world, a feeling of individual failure, and the weakening of the instinct for self-preservation.⁸¹

Totalitarianism was, for Arendt, fueled by the *unconscious fear of spontaneous human action*. And as she suggests in *Essays In Understanding, 1930-1954: Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism*, “fear” is “precisely *despair* over the *impossibility* of action.”⁸² The latent substructure prior to totalitarianism revealed for Arendt a certain *despair* concerning the ‘loss’ of the freedom-protecting ability to act. Because the subject was unable to overcome this ‘loss’, we are able to say that Arendt actually saw a form of *melancholia* within the masses in the decades before totalitarianism -- “the impossibility of mourning the past presence (and reapplying its force, through new object, to the present self) [...]”⁸³ For Arendt, the melancholic subject must remain fixated on the Heideggerian notion of

⁸⁰ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 200. The ultimate goal of universal, utopian “omnipotence” espoused by the racist Pan-Movement ideologies already assumed the “destruction of plurality,” because its very nature substituted the possibility to appear in public through speech and action for a single ‘unchosen character’, such as race and ethnicity. Because this character was assumed to be a natural, psychological attribute of those worthy of membership within the nation, human plurality became a concept within the nation-state that *must be lost* altogether.

⁸¹ Arendt, *Origins*, p. 315.

⁸² Arendt, “On the Nature of Totalitarianism,” in *Essays in Understanding*, p. 337.

⁸³ Lyotard, p. 146.

human death, unable to cathect new objects within the world and to *'birth' a different being*. The antipode which compels individuals past sameness, however, is the 'law of mortality'.⁸⁴

Life itself, she argues, is grounded in the human miracle of *action* and *birth*, which, "in the ineluctable and natural ruin, would interrupt, begin something new, and be improbable, giving substance to faith and hope."⁸⁵ Lyotard in fact situates his own notion of *enfance* within Arendt's principle of nativity, which is conceptually linked to human change and renewal (something which Lyotard claims resides within all of us). Thus, human birth is radical in that it cannot escape the inclination towards *human action*, which is "the virtue of a redemption -- a virtue I would call *protective*."⁸⁶ Action becomes 'protective', according to Lyotard, because it is able not only to sustain but to give essence and color to human life, interrupting "the ineluctable process of deadening" that was indicative of the very 'sameness and superfluousness' found within totalitarianism. Action saves what is distinct about politics: human plurality and change. We realize our freedom to act in the world through our conscious acknowledgment as an autonomous person, that *individualism is always nestled within the context of, resting upon, as it were, a distinct otherness*. As Arendt writes in *The Life of the Mind* concerning the distinct 'otherness' (the *two-in-one*) necessary for political thinking and action:

In brief, the specifically human actualization of consciousness in the thinking dialogue between me and myself suggests that *difference and otherness* [italics added], which are such outstanding characteristics of the world of appearances as it is given to man for his habitat among a plurality of things, are the very conditions for the existence of man's mental ego as well, for this ego actually exists only in duality [...] The partner who comes to life when you are alert and alone is the only one from whom you can never get away -- except by ceasing to think.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ This conclusion can, therefore, only be gathered by taking into full account of Arendt's overall philosophical corpus and reflecting back on the ways in which totalitarianism deeply affected her later work. The leitmotif of human nativity, birth and action are concepts Arendt developed against the foil of totalitarianism.

⁸⁵ Lyotard, p. 151.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 151.

⁸⁷ Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, p. 187-188.

There is, for Arendt, the “equally impressive evidence for the existence of an *innate impulse* [called] ‘the urge to self-display’ (*Selbstdarstellung*).⁸⁸” We are always *desiring* to project into the outside world the two-in-one within ourselves, what simultaneously binds us to the outside world and leaves the impression of an individual uniqueness in the world. However, if thinking and acting are always contingent upon the Other present in consciousness, it is fair to say that the ego, even in Arendt’s analysis, is not completely sovereign. As Freud famously put it, “Das Ich ist nicht Herr im eigenen Haus.”⁸⁹ While Freud argues that we may not even be aware of the Other contained in the stories we tell ourselves, making us determined by the subtexts present within our unconscious, there is no need to conflate the difference between Arendt’s and Freud’s findings. Both suggest that ‘narration’ is a project of recollection and retrieval, and that one can have access to the distinct otherness in our thinking. For Arendt, the ‘two-in-one’ is an irreplaceable part of the political imaginary because it is only then that men within a political body realize that “not Man but men inhabit the earth.” It is only through the protection of political action that human plurality and the *possibility* to appear in a world composed of others can be saved.

We can finally say that Arendt implicitly identified that the endorsement of totalitarian terror was, in part, due to a certain “incommunicable grief” and melancholia which had plagued the European nation-state in the decades leading up to the political catastrophes of the 1930s. Thus, the loss of the ability to act and speak in political discourse with the Other - “to have oneself heard and seen” - was *thrown back upon the individual*, finally rendering him not only isolated but lonely and forgotten. The lost object subsequently became repressed into the unconscious of the subject, making it impossible for him to realize that his actions were driven by the unconscious despair over the inability to act. In *Mourning and Melancholia*, Freud tells us that melancholic

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 29.

⁸⁹ Sigmund Freud, “A Difficulty in the Path of Psychoanalysis,” in *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works*, ed. and trans. James Strachey, vol. 17 (London: Hogarth, 1974): p. 135-45.

regression, resulting from either the loss of a loved one or a more abstract loss of freedom, fatherland, or ideal, compounds in the sublimation of a feeling of abandonment. Consequently, a loss of interest in the outside world and unjustified loss of self-esteem dominated the ego. As Freud points out, “In mourning, the world has become impoverished and empty, during melancholia, it is the ego itself.” Through an unconscious, narcissistic identification, the subject links his own ego with the now-hated object to which he remains more attached than ever; however, “if the love for the object – a love which cannot be given up though the object itself is given up – takes refuge in narcissistic identification, then the hate comes into operation on this substitutive object, abusing it, debasing it, making it suffer and deriving sadistic satisfaction from its suffering.”⁹⁰ The melancholic, driven by the unconscious inability to mourn the loss of the original object, can only be temporarily satisfied through the defense of narcissistic regression, characterized by the sadistic, *enjoyable* punishing of the original object. Julia Kristeva has aptly characterized melancholia as ‘hidden yet powerful,’ paralyzing the subject through the loss of:

[...] *all interest in words, actions, and even life itself* [but] if loss, bereavement, and absence trigger the work of the imagination and nourish it permanently as much as they threaten it and spoil it, it is also noteworthy that the work of art as fetish emerges when the activating sorrow has been repudiated. *The artist consumed by melancholia is at the same time the most relentless in his struggle against the symbolic abdication that blankets him . . .* Until death strikes or suicide becomes imperative for those who view it as a final triumph over the void of the lost object.⁹¹

It was only in the few years before 1933 that Arendt claims the veil was lifted regarding the subject’s latent despair over the loss of politics and the ability to act. While relative prosperity had befallen Europe, most notably in 1920s Weimar Germany, the Great Depression after 1929 awoke the masses to the apparent realities of the nation-state: “the fall of protecting [economic] class walls transformed the slumbering majorities behind all parties into one great unorganized,

⁹⁰ Freud, “Mourning and Melancholia,” in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XIV (1914-1916): On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement, Papers on Metapsychology and Other Works* (London, Vintage, 2001): p. 251.

⁹¹ Julia Kristeva, *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992): p. 9.

structureless mass of furious individuals who had nothing in common except their vague apprehension that the hopes of party members were doomed.”⁹² The subject’s still looming melancholic “radical loss of self-interest”⁹³ and “perverse self-hatred of the spirit,” had “accounted for the delight with which the elite accepted the ‘ideas’ of the mob.”⁹⁴ In other words, the melancholic condition of the subject left him vulnerable to the seemingly objective ideals and fantasies espoused by the totalitarian imaginary.

To alleviate the feeling of ‘loss’, totalitarianism provided an avenue through which the subject was effectively able to *punish* the original ‘failed and lost’ world of real economic, social and political conditions, which he felt abandoned him in the first place, but this time with a crucial caveat: the responsibility and hate for the lost object is no longer felt as a drain on the conscious ego, but rather is projected onto the imaginary object of phantasy -- ‘the Jew’. Through the work of Julia Kristeva, we have access to the insight that one’s inability to acknowledge the otherness in oneself, which undergirds the political imaginary, will manifest itself in the ‘urge’ to remove oneself from the other - projecting it onto a contrived phantasy concerning the world.⁹⁵ In order for totalitarianism to be successful in its attack against the real world, it must supply the subject with an equally tantalizing phantasy which *conceals* the fundamental ‘loss of world’ and of human action. Thus, narcissism, a sociopathic disorder ranging from the interpersonal to the international level, can be found within totalitarianism, whose imperative is always that ideological fantasy must have absolute supremacy over the wants and needs of the citizenry: the subject’s ego remains impoverished because of the obsessive devotion to the phantastical object.⁹⁶ Here we can use the conceptual analysis of phantasy developed by Lacan in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of*

⁹² Arendt, *Origins*, p. 315.

⁹³ Arendt, *Origins*, p. 316.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 334.

⁹⁵ Kristeva, *Nations without Nationalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

⁹⁶ Mitscherlich, *The Inability to Mourn*, p. 61.

Psychoanalysis. The totalitarian phantasy must conceal the fundamental ‘lack’ of real freedom, action and world (characterized by plurality and spontaneity) and the ultimate impossibility of a whole, ‘utopian’ society: “The place of the real, which stretches from the trauma to the phantasy -- in so far as the phantasy is never anything more than the screen that conceals something quite primary, something determinant in the function of repetition [...] governs our activities more than any other.”⁹⁷ I would thus like to briefly explain how subjective identity would appear in symptoms such as *jouissance* and melancholia, and that mechanisms such as projection and introjection are at work in our relations to others.

To demonstrate this, I propose that we turn to a crucial point in Arendt’s reflections on the dilemmas of the modern-nation state: the encounter with the “non-European Other” through imperialism created unconscious race patterns within the home country. Racism began to undercut the political practices of the nation-state in the latter-half of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. “The ideology which interprets history as an economic struggle of classes,” claims Arendt, “and the other that interprets history as a natural fight of races,” had embedded themselves into the public discourse by the outbreak of Stalinism and Nazism, so that “not only intellectuals but great masses of people will no longer accept a presentation of past or present facts that is not in agreement with either of these views.”⁹⁸ Arendt insists that ‘race-thinking’ was born out of the imperialistic desire for a totalizing national ‘tribal consciousness’, which would distinguish the race of civilized men from ‘the Other’ inhabiting the colonial world. Using Hobbes to explain the theoretical foundation for these ‘naturalistic ideologies,’ Arendt contends that nations began to see one another as tribes, “separated from each other by nature, without any connection whatever, unconscious of the solidarity of mankind and having in common only the

⁹⁷ Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis* (New York: Norton, 1998): p. 60

⁹⁸ Arendt, *Origins*, p. 159.

instinct for self-preservation.”⁹⁹ The race-mentality of imperialism made it possible for the nation-state to build a citizenry based not on common tradition and law, but on the particular psychological condition of race, so, “in the social sphere, nature itself was supposed to supply a title when political reality had refused it.”¹⁰⁰

‘The Jew’ had always existed outside existing social classes in European nation-states. Consequently, he could be easily seen as a figure of difference within society, beginning most notably in the eighteenth century. This difference, according to Arendt, was largely rooted in financial stereo-typology:

This kind of relationship between Jews and aristocracy was the only one that ever tied a Jewish group to another stratum in society. After it disappeared in the early nineteenth century, it was never replaced. Its only remnant for the Jews was a penchant for aristocratic titles (especially in Austria and France), and for the non-Jews a brand of liberal anti-semitism which lumped Jews and nobility together and pretended that they were in some kind of financial alliance against the rising bourgeoisie.¹⁰¹

Weimar Germany from 1924 to 1929 ushered in a period of relative growth and prosperity, which was strengthened by a boom in heterogenous national art and literature.¹⁰² However, to argue that Weimar Germany saw an increase in public political life seems to be false. In reality, the twenties emerged as a cloud of *ignorant bliss*, whereby the prior, unsolved political (and economic) problems entered the years of “stabilization.” Consequently, the individual’s *actual* lost cathexis with the political body itself was effectively concealed by the soothsaying of European mass culture. The *neue Sachlichkeit* of the 1920s produced the unforeseen proliferation of European *mass society*, characterized by the rapid spread of “mass marching columns, huge rallies, great sporting events and mass spectacles in the theatre, as well as of mass production in industry and mass construction

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 157.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 169.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 20.

¹⁰² Detlev J.K. Peukert, *The Weimar Republic: The Crisis of Classical Modernity*, trans. Richard Deveson (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992): p. 164-8.

in the new architecture,” the very function of which was “to generate a huge, choreographed totalitarian spectacle.”¹⁰³ After the economic crisis in Europe following the stock market collapse of 1929, however, the call for totalitarianism emerged as a result of the mass plea for a space which would provide the much needed ‘escape’ from the oppression and inequality sweeping through Europe. Since the body politic itself could not exercise real catharsis, the masses endorsed totalitarian imaginary as the much needed retreat from the outside world.¹⁰⁴ Drawing upon the *latent*, imperialistic ‘race-thinking’ and anti-semitism in European culture, Arendt argues that ‘the Jew’ entered the scene of European society as that which was *wrong* with the new world of mass culture and mass consumption: ‘the Jew’ as financier and shopkeeper symbolized the errant bourgeois capitalism that had polluted politics. In this way, ‘the Jew’ became the ‘answer’ to the human ‘loss’ of the world. With the growing distaste for bourgeois capitalism and spoiled politics, notions which became attached to ‘the Jew’, it became easy for the anti-semitic to depreciate those features of ‘the Jew’ which in fact closely reminded him of his own traits. Because the state had appeared to protect the Jews through their historical financial alliances, the Jews could be easily identified with failing politics and state power:

There can be no doubt that in the eyes of the mob *the Jews came to serve as an object lesson for all things they detested* [italics added]. If they hated society they could point to the way in which the Jews were tolerated within it; and if they hated the government they could point to the way in which the Jews had been protected by or were identifiable with the state.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 161.

¹⁰⁴ Arendt claims that the “*democratic illusion*” had already become manifest for much of the population when the masses of “apparently indifferent people,” i.e. “people who never before had appeared on the political scene” openly endorsed the rise of totalitarian movements. They recognized that the majority of people in the democratically governed nation-state had neither “taken an active part in government” nor felt “in sympathy with one’s own or somebody else’s party.” Indeed, it became apparent that the indifferent masses would openly endorse totalitarianism if it merely gave them a feeling of freedom and security from the inequality and oppression of the social realm, which had hitherto been lost from the nation-state as a result of the gradual retraction of an open political sphere (*Origins*, p. 311-2).

¹⁰⁵ Arendt, *Origins*, p. 108.

It is important to bear in mind here just how closely Arendt understood and diagnosed modern anti-semitism as the lack of mental reflection and as the structuring of the world independent of experiences between groups or classes; while it had no doubt started as a response to original social and political conflicts with Jews themselves (e.g. the Dreyfus Affair), anti-semitism was launched to the degree of abstraction - “the Jew everywhere” could become the walking embodiment of any particular quality now.¹⁰⁶ However, she also finds that what became tied to this withdrawal into fantastical, anti-semitic ideology was the projection of ‘loss’ onto ‘the Jew’. As Julia Schulze Wessel and Lars Rensmann point out, “Although Arendt does not like the term because of its psychological character and connotations, one may say that according to Arendt, the mob *projected* its own condition on the Jews, who were seen as both all too familiar and all too different.”¹⁰⁷ Here we discover the possible parallel between Arendt and Adorno’s thought. Both theorists recognized that the loss of politics and the possibility for action was transferred to ‘the Jew’ as the one who perpetrated this loss. Adorno and Arendt stress the fact that socialized and politicized paranoia must mean the exclusion of reflection in favor for the “psychological quality” of “Jewishness.”¹⁰⁸ That is to say, the indictment of ‘the Jew’ lacks the mediation between

¹⁰⁶ Zygmunt Bauman argues similarly that the anti-semitism endemic to western Civilization was first “the casting of the Jews as the embodiment of ambivalence, that is of dis-order [...] as a dumping ground for all new varieties of ambivalence which later times were still to produce.” But the modern form of anti-semitism was that of the “*abstract Jew*, the Jew as a concept located in a different discourse from the practical knowledge of ‘empirical’ Jews, and hence located at a secure distance from experience and immune to whatever information may be supplied by that experience and whatever emotions may be aroused by daily intercourse.” See: Zygmunt Bauman, “Allosemitism: Premodern, Modern, Postmodern,” in *Modernity, Culture and ‘the Jew’*, eds. Bryan Cheyette and Laura Marcus (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998): p. 148.

¹⁰⁷ Julia Schulze and Lars Rensmann, “The Paralysis of Judgment” in *Arendt and Adorno: Political and Philosophical Investigations*, eds. Lars Rensmann and Samir Gandesha (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012): p. 209.

¹⁰⁸ Arendt, *Origins*, p. 83. See in particular the section “Jews in Society.” Here Arendt first claims that although figures like Benjamin Disraeli were superficially assimilated under the conditions of society, those of Jewish origin were nonetheless separated from any religious and political empirical realities and labeled as a psychological entity. However, Arendt also points out that “If it is true that ‘Jewishness’ could not have been perverted into an interesting vice without a prejudice which considered it a crime, it is also true that such perversion was made possible by those Jews who considered it an innate virtue.” The “psychologization of ‘the Jew’” as a figure of difference was thus, for Arendt, part of an imaginary conceived by both Jews and the masses of the nation-state.

perception and object and focuses solely on an *a priori* objective quality about him. An unreflected false projection, for Adorno, is thus

[...] the reverse of genuine mimesis and has deep affinities to the repressed; in fact, it may itself be the pathic character trait in which the latter is precipitated. If mimesis makes itself resemble its surroundings, false projection makes its surroundings resemble itself. If, for the former, the outward becomes the model to which the inward clings, so that the alien becomes the intimately known, the latter displaces the volatile inward into the outer world, branding the intimate friend as foe.¹⁰⁹

As the gap between the subject and the object is closed off to mediation, the space is filled by the fantastical image of ‘the Jew’, thus fulfilling a crucial psychological function. Both Adorno and Arendt find that the projection and paranoia characteristic of anti-semitic ideology grew successfully out of a bed of loneliness, isolation and atomization: anti-semitism was tolerated in the social world where Jews actually were submerged; it would work even better in a world where they did not exist at all.

Žižek has illuminated this notion, that the reason for the success of antisemitism in totalitarianism is the use of ‘the Jew’ to create the fantasy of a whole and perfect society. The secret behind totalitarianism is that it fundamentally *needs* ‘the Jew’ in order to disguise the impossibility of a ‘whole’ society based on one race. For Arendt, the reality of the world is ‘plurality’, which can only be fully discovered if one transcends the veil of totalitarian ideology and ascends into the political realm, where freedom springs from human action and never through mechanical, instrumental labor. ‘The Jew’ becomes a necessary fantasy figure because he actually represents the fundamental impossibility of totalitarianism to provide a perfect society void of plurality: without ‘the Jew’ totalitarian society would have nothing on which to base itself. Indeed,

¹⁰⁹ Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *The Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002): p. 165.

“it is as if in the figure of ‘the Jew’ this impossibility had acquired a positive, palpable existence - and that is why it marks the eruption of enjoyment in the social field.”¹¹⁰

However, ‘the Jew’ is like any other fantastical image -- i.e. Latinos, Africans, homosexuals, gypsies, and women -- which have historically been used in societies to give the illusion of a more fulfilled, complete society. Indeed, we must turn to a more fundamental element underlying Arendt’s analysis of totalitarianism, which would explain the totalitarian obsession with ‘human superfluosity,’ the fundamental desire to render any portion of the population, including oneself, useless. The logical end of totalitarian ideology is, therefore, that if each human being is assigned a certain *use-value* according to his role as embodying the Law of History or Nature, then anyone can potentially be eliminated as soon as his value no longer ‘serves the purpose’ of the Law. But who would find *enjoyment* in such a world?

III. *Jouissance* and a Superfluous Humanity: Surplus-Capital, Surplus-Enjoyment, Surplus-People

Hannah Arendt differentiated herself from the majority of the members of the Frankfurt School not only in her disdain for psychoanalysis and mass-psychology, but also in her sharp critique of Marxism, which notably informed much of the School’s philosophical inquiries. She argued that Marxism was one of the first ‘popular ideologies’ embraced by the People which falsely subsumed the whole of history under the guise of economic ‘class-struggle’. For Arendt, the tendency to abstract and subsume particulars under the heading of a universal claim, such as man’s natural proclivity to emancipate himself from the constraints of bourgeois imperialism, had

¹¹⁰ Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (New York: Verso, 2008): p. 142.

become one of the elements rooting totalitarian ideology, because it turned individual human beings into mere cogs in the wheel of history and took politics to be a function of the ruling class.

Moreover, Arendt did not see the nation-state to be a product of capitalism. Marxism argued that the only way the labor alienation within capitalism would be the establishment of a new, proletariat-led state. As Seyla Benhabib has put it, Arendt figured that the nation-state, founded on the tenets of universal equality and the protection of the rights of Man and Citizen, was facing a losing battle to the forces of capitalism and imperialism.¹¹¹ Arendt stresses that the nation-state, or at least its political body, was doomed to fail especially after World War I given the inherent conflict between capitalism's desire for endless accumulation of land and labor and its founding political principle of consent within a stable sphere of speech and action. *There is no need for political consent amongst different-minded citizens if the nation-state seems already to follow its own inherent logic, driven by the "unlimited power" of a particular class of individuals (either the bourgeois capitalists or the proletariat laborers).*

However, in one of her more Marxist-inspired veins of thought, she argues in *Origins* that totalitarianism was not simply a failure of the Enlightenment -- the acceptance of Romanticism and the failure of liberalism. It was rather deeply truncated in the capitalist desire for imperialist expansion which had come to dominate the nation-state. Not surprisingly, Arendt sides with Rosa Luxemburg's Marxist inspired understanding of the structural dynamics governing capitalist expansionism, that capitalism essentially depends upon surplus people and territory to satisfy the desire for surplus value and overproduction. "Capitalism" wrote Rosa Luxemburg,

arises and develops historically amidst a non-capitalist society. In Western Europe it is found at first in a feudal environment from which it in fact sprang – the system of bondage in rural areas and the guild system in the towns – and later, after having swallowed up the feudal system, it exists mainly in an environment of peasants and artisans, that is to say a system of simple commodity production both in agriculture and trade.

¹¹¹ Seyla Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*, p. 79 (see: pp. 77-80 concerning the public sphere and totalitarianism).

European capitalism is further surrounded by vast territories of non-European civilization ranging over all levels of development [...] This is the setting for the accumulation of capital [...] The existence and development of capitalism requires an environment of non-capitalist forms of production [...] Capitalism needs non-capitalist social strata as a market for its surplus-value, as a source of supply for its means of production and as a reservoir of labour power for its wage system.¹¹²

Arendt's agreement with this thesis, which she calls "Rosa Luxemburg's brilliant insight into the political structure of imperialism,"¹¹³ allowed her to see capitalism and imperialism as essential to the widespread acceptance of a 'superfluous humanity' in totalitarianism.

Thus, while Arendt is normally viewed as a direct opponent of Marxist theorists, this fails to recognize her oftentimes overlooked ability to enlist Marxist thought to diagnose totalitarianism. Arendt had detected that it was the bourgeois desire for *surplus capital* which had created the desire for a surplus humanity. I propose that Slavoj Žižek's insights into Lacanian psychoanalytic theory and capitalism can actually grant us the conceptual tools necessary to build upon Hannah Arendt's theory of totalitarianism by answering the question of *jouissance* within totalitarianism. In short, Arendt came close to assessing the linkage between capitalist and totalitarian desire and enjoyment. She extends the Marxist account of capitalism's never-ending process of exploitation of 'surplus-people' to totalitarianism, arguing that capitalist imperialism produced the law that "expansion is a psychological necessity before it is a political device."¹¹⁴

However, if the 'secret' of totalitarianism is, for Arendt, that the subject is being driven by a latent despair over the loss of human action, a fundamental 'lack' of human action and togetherness, would it not seem probable that the same 'enjoyment' in capitalism would provide the same 'enjoyment' to Arendt's lonely mass man? What could explain the *conscious enjoyment* of the subject's open endorsement of fascism, the fact that "within the organizational framework of the

¹¹² Rosa Luxemburg, *The Accumulation of Capital*, trans. from the German by Agnes Schwarzchild, with an introduction by Joan Robinson (New York: Modern Reader Paperbacks, 1968): p. 38.

¹¹³ Arendt, *Origins*, p. 148.

¹¹⁴ Arendt, *Origins*, p. 330.

movement, so long as it holds together, the fantasized members can be reached by neither experience nor argument; identification with the movement and total conformism seem to have destroyed the very capacity for experience, even if it be as extreme as torture or the fear of death.”¹¹⁵ I would first like to situate Arendt’s argument concerning the “banality of evil” within her later contention in *The Life of the Mind* that enjoyment in the world arises through intersubjectivity, through appearing to others. It is here that Arendt’s theory of totalitarianism can be implicitly linked to subjective *jouissance*. In his book *Violence*, Žižek has suggested a similar argument to Arendt’s theory of intersubjectivity, arguing that there is a fundamental feeling that all is wrong as soon as we introduce to ourselves the disjunction existing between what is ‘outside’ of us and our ‘true selves’. This is due to the fact that ‘who we are’ is actually the self which appears to the world outside of us. Žižek crystallizes this point as he reflects on the nature behind Stalinist Communism:

When, in the 1960s, Svetlana Stalin emigrated to the U.S. through India and wrote her memoirs, she presented Stalin “from inside” as a warm father and caring leader, with most of the mass murders imposed on him by his evil collaborators, Lavrenty Beria in particular. Later, Beria’s son Sergo wrote a memoir presenting his father as a warm family man who simply followed Stalin’s orders and secretly tried to limit the damage. Georgy Melenkov’s son Andrei also told the story, describing his father, Stalin’s successor, as an honest hard worker, always afraid for his life. Hannah Arendt was right: these figures were not personifications of sublime Byronesque demonic evil: *the gap between their intimate experience and the horror of their acts was immense. The experience that we have of our lives from within, the story we tell ourselves about ourselves in order to account for what we are doing, is fundamentally a lie—the truth lies outside, in what we do.*¹¹⁶

For Žižek, the ‘internal lie’ is what reifies totalitarianism, because without it, no one would have any level of enjoyment in their existence, in what they are actually doing. It is here that Žižek and Arendt strike a similar cord: “Refusing the same basic ethical rights to those outside our community as to those inside it is something that does not come naturally to a human being. *It is a*

¹¹⁵ Arendt, *Origins*, p. 308.

¹¹⁶ Žižek, *Violence* (New York: Picador, 2008): p. 47.

violation of our spontaneous proclivity. It involves brutal repression and self-denial."¹¹⁷ Arendt argues that in the political realm, action and speech shape one's appearance in the world, thus satisfying his second 'self' -- the public self. Our sense of enjoyment stems from the freedom realized through public appearance and action, and also from the narrative we tell ourselves concerning the appearance of our action in the world (this narrative, at least partially, must come to grips with the reality of the world). But intersubjectivity of course requires the acknowledgment of the Other in order to formulate political judgments. The nature of totalitarianism, for Arendt, is grounded upon *world alienation*, or the *loss of an intersubjectively established world of experience* which would give rise to self identity and a sense of reality. Because totalitarianism cannot exist without this loss of intersubjectivity, any feeling of *enjoyment* in the world must be singly bound to the *mass fantasy* which is shared between individuals: they are no longer joined by a common reality, the world of plurality and action and speech, but rather by self-denial in favor of the 'mass lie' they all seem to share. Enjoyment no longer takes recourse to one's ability to make oneself known within the world, but is reflected through the totalitarian narrative, which could never come to grips with the reality of the world.

However, what is the nature and origin of this 'mass lie' shaping the totalitarian imaginary? Arendt provides the answer in her Marxist analysis of capitalist desire for surplus capital which eventually gave birth to the totalitarian desire for surplus people. The feeling of atomization, isolation and loneliness experienced by so many citizens in Europe after the failure of the First World War was, according to Arendt, spearheaded by an increasingly prevalent bourgeois, imperialist politics of superfluous capital. "Superfluousness" is the word of choice for Arendt because it connotes feeling that "everything is possible." Although Arendt uses the term liberally to describe the conditions of domination of imperialism, capitalism and totalitarianism, she does

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 48.

not explicitly note the terms loaded overtones of *jouissance*, whose French connotation is already imbued with the feeling of “overflowing.” In *The Life of the Mind*, however, we do receive an idea of how Arendt may have understood the transcendent quality of surplus in her discussion of Nietzsche’s “overcoming”: “Surplus, according to Nietzsche as well as to Marx (the sheer fact of a surplus of labor left over after the requirements for the preservation of individual life and of species survival have been met), constitutes the *conditio-per-quam* of all culture.”¹¹⁸ *Enjoyment* in the surplus, in the *overcoming* of the merely apparent state, grows from the fact that the surplus itself is seemingly unending, that it is a Becoming *not aimed at a final state*.

In imperialism this meant the “never-ending” accumulation of capital; however, in *both* imperialism and totalitarianism there emerged the common drive to own and control inferior peoples. When surplus value was expanded to include ‘human capital’ in imperialism, it made for the first time widespread the pathos that “they are superfluous and expendable” or, similarly, “human beings exist as objects” vis-à-vis the nation and Truth of imperialist race ideology. Arendt attempts to reveal the false universalization espoused by imperialist ideology, to show that the interest of the class of imperialists was behind the so-called ‘universal’ human interest of *tribal consciousness*.¹¹⁹ The new guiding principle of the nation-state was that human beings, namely those of the colonial world, were superfluous in the universal expansion of unlimited and superfluous power and capital. The enjoyment of life within the nation-state, undergirded by communicative freedom and public action, was given up for the surplus-enjoyment of superfluous power and capital, which was raised up as a universal law:

Occasional warnings against the *Lumpenproletariat*, and the possible bribing of sections of the working class with crumbs from the imperialist table, did not lead to a deeper understanding of the great appeal which the imperialist programs had to the rank and file

¹¹⁸ Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, p. 169.

¹¹⁹ The new Law of the nation, which bridged the abyss between nationalism and imperialism, whose tenets, according to Arendt, had always “preached and boasted of their being ‘beyond the parties,’ and the only ones to speak for the nation as a whole,” was tribal nationalism and racist ideology (*Origins*, p. 153).

of the party. In Marxist terms the new phenomenon of an alliance between mob and capital seemed so unnatural, so obviously in conflict with the doctrine of class struggle, that the actual dangers of the imperialist attempt -- to divide mankind into master races and slave races, into higher and lower breeds, into colored peoples and white men, all of which were attempts to unify the people on the basis of the mob -- were completely overlooked.¹²⁰

Essential here is the two-sided situation between the masses and the elite capitalist Other ruling the government. In her writings concerning Marx, Arendt finds that it was Marxist philosophy which instigated the proliferation of a “*laboring consciousness*” within the burgeoning industrialized mass-society of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. By emphasizing individual labor as the one and only way of differentiating oneself within the world, all other forms of life, most importantly for Arendt being political action and speech (which require the companionship of human plurality), were viewed as non-essential to the making of a whole society. In other words, Marxism proffered a particular mentality that was not *necessarily* particular to an economic class, but to those who *labored*: the laborers could conceptualize their own superiority to those who did not - the imperialist bourgeoisie. That this “consciousness” of labor infiltrated the masses of the nation-state several decades before the rise of totalitarianism, Arendt conceives that the masses’ distaste for bourgeois surplus capital sprang alongside the elite’s simultaneous surplus-enjoyment of surplus capital. When the imperialist bourgeoisie assumed control of politics, Arendt points out that politics came to be dominated by the very paradoxical principle governing capitalism: *mere* enjoyment in the politics of the nation-state was given up for a feeling of “*overcoming*,” the surplus-enjoyment that emerged out of the *endless* surplus-capital accumulation.

It is important to note that Arendt’s analysis understands that the same pathos present within capitalism’s surplus-value and surplus capital was at work in fascism’s appraisal of a superfluous humanity. However, as Slavoj Žižek points out, *Marxism did not come to terms with the eternal homology within capitalism, between surplus-value, “the ‘cause’ which sets in motion the capitalist process of*

¹²⁰ Arendt, *Origins*, p. 152.

production,” and *surplus-enjoyment*, “*the object cause of desire.*”¹²¹ Thus, we need to go further in our analysis to discuss what Arendt did not; that is, the actual *forms* of capitalist and fascist ideology command a similar, concomitant *enjoyment* that was actually the subjective *object of desire*. The notion of “superfluous men” conceptualized from surplus capital can, then, be transferred to the Lacanian notion of “surplus enjoyment.” This would finally answer our original question for Arendt: how could the subjective sympathy towards and even ‘enjoyment’ of the totalitarian project be explained?

In his seminar “The Ethics of Psychoanalysis,” Lacan developed the concept of surplus-enjoyment or, more appropriately, *surplus-jouissance*, whose French meaning retains the sexual connotation. The pleasure principle, according to Lacan, is the law that commands one to ‘enjoy as little as possible,’ since there is only a certain level of pleasure from a given object which can be extracted, after which one transgresses into pain. However, we are constantly seeking to press this boundary, attempting to obtain more pleasure; however, the result is the renunciation of actual pleasure in exchange for a certain amount of pain. To understand surplus-enjoyment, Žižek elaborates this point apropos of Coca-Cola as “surplus-enjoyment personified.” Coke itself does not seem to supply us with any particular use-value - i.e. its taste is not *directly* pleasing or satisfying, like water serves to quench our thirst:

The unexpected result of this feature is not that, since Coke does not satisfy any concrete need, we drink it only as a supplement, after some other drink has satisfied our substantial need - rather, it is this very superfluous character that makes our thirst for Coke all the more insatiable: as Jacques-Alain Miller put it so succinctly, *Coke has the paradoxical property that the more you drink the thirstier you get, the greater your need to drink more - with that strange, bitter-sweet taste, our thirst is never effectively quenched.*¹²²

Žižek reminds us that “Lacan modelled his notion of *surplus-enjoyment* on the Marxian notion of *surplus-value*,” since the very paradoxical logic of capitalism is that we renounce the actual

¹²¹ Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, p. 54.

¹²² Žižek, *The Fragile Absolute - or why is the christian legacy worth fighting for?* (New York: Verso, 2000): p. 22.

use-value of an object, ignoring the capitalist relations of production in favor of the *surplus* which yields our enjoyment:

[...] it is not a surplus which simply attaches itself to some ‘normal’, fundamental enjoyment because enjoyment as such emerges only in this surplus, because it is constitutively an ‘excess’. If we subtract the surplus we lose enjoyment itself, just as capitalism, which can survive only by incessantly revolutionizing its own material conditions, ceases to exist if it ‘stays the same’, if it achieves an internal balance. This, then, is the homology between surplus-value - the ‘cause’ which sets in motion the capitalist process of production - and surplus-enjoyment, the object-cause of desire.¹²³

In other words, it is the *form* of the object itself which acts “as a motivating force driving us to obey its command,” instead of a set of positive reasons. The “spirit of sacrifice” in capitalism ensures its perpetual movement: we give up enjoyment (the enjoyment provided through mere use-value, satisfying a need or lack, i.e. drinking water to satisfy thirst) so that we may transgress its limits and find the surplus-enjoyment.

However, as the imperialist capitalist ethos of surplus-capital took control of the politics of the nation-state in the decades leading up to totalitarianism, the masses’ developed an increasing distaste for bourgeois capitalist politics, since it became clear that it was only the bourgeois Other who could actually relish in surplus-enjoyment. The worker in capitalism “never enjoys that surplus product: he or she ‘loses’ it. The work process produces him or her as an ‘alienated’ subject, simultaneously producing a loss, (a). The capitalist, as Other, enjoys that excess product, and thus the subject finds him or herself in the *unemiable* situation of working for the Other’s enjoyment [...]”¹²⁴ Just as we saw earlier that Arendt recognized the paranoid projection of ‘loss’ of politics and the ability to act within the world onto the figure of ‘the Jew’, she understood further that ‘the Jew’ finally became identified with the corruption and failure of bourgeois capitalism. We can finally say that totalitarianism sold its ideology through the following formula:

¹²³ Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, p. 54

¹²⁴ Bruce Fink, *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995): p. 96

have the same surplus-enjoyment of the bourgeoisie but in a world free of capitalist competitive class-struggle; renounce the mere use-value of yourself, surrender yourself to ideology and the state, and find the surplus-enjoyment in a surplus humanity.

Thus, we find the same internal logic behind totalitarian ideology that exists within capitalism, which are both rooted in a “giving up” of mere enjoyment in the search for “never-ending” surplus: Fascism commands “Obey, because you must! In other words, renounce enjoyment, sacrifice yourself and do not ask about the meaning of it - *the value of the sacrifice lies in its very meaninglessness; true sacrifice is for its own end; you must find positive fulfillment in the sacrifice itself, not in its instrumental value*: it is this renunciation, this giving up of enjoyment itself, which produces a certain surplus-enjoyment.”¹²⁵ In other words, we may give meaning to Arendt’s otherwise vague expression – “expansion is a psychological necessity before it is a political device”¹²⁶ – in claiming that ‘enjoyment’ in the sacrifice, in search for surplus-enjoyment, was the psychic condition imperialist capitalism brought to the nation-state. With the failure of bourgeois capitalism in the nation-state – its widespread corruption in state-politics and the economic failures after the Stock Market Crash of 1929 – totalitarianism ‘filled the gap’ in the subject’s search for surplus enjoyment: ‘expansion’ for *surplus capital* was replaced with ‘expansion’ for *surplus-people*. With surplus-people as an answer to the “command” of ideology, totalitarianism could provide a means to surplus-enjoyment.

IV. Subjectivity, Desire and Emancipation: Hannah Arendt’s Politics

So far we have examined the fruitful linkage between Arendt’s socio-historical analysis of totalitarianism and psychoanalysis. The gradual paralysis of the political sphere -- the lost

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 89.

¹²⁶ Arendt, *Origins*, p. 330.

connection with the common world of public politics and the resultant withdrawal from the world of experience and appearances -- explained, for Arendt, the subject's active role in the constitution of the totalitarian project. While Arendt proposed that the dwindling public sphere and lost connection with the world of politics created the mass-experience of loneliness and isolation (what she calls "world alienation" in *The Human Condition*), I have argued that Arendt's thesis closely reflects a mass-melancholia – the inability to overcome the lost object of the nation-state as a protector of political freedoms. Indeed, this line of argumentation is necessary if we want to understand exactly to what extent the 'political unconscious' identified by Arendt actually played a role in the active call for totalitarianism.

Exactly because she chose to ignore this relationship, we must demonstrate exactly 'how' the subject became weakened and was left vulnerable to oppressive domination, even to the point of obscene *jouissance*. To this extent, it has become clear that the subject was unable to mourn the lost world of public freedom: as a result, the subject's ability to enjoy the bilateral relationship between the intimacy of the private with the commonly created world of public equality and action was slowly squeezed into the unilateral *jouissance* of the 'closed-circuit' private world. Indeed, the subject could only cope by relishing in the fantasies of an 'individual-based' world -- superfluous material gain and individual labor.

In effect, Arendt implicitly shows us that, if one considers the nature of the public space in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it is necessary to include in this picture the move away from public life and the universal concern for communicative freedom to the privatized, capitalist business of superfluous *jouissance*. However, I have tried to show that while Arendt herself attempted to draw the connection between surplus capital and surplus people, this linkage can only be properly explained by taking into account the psychic mechanisms constituting the *private Self*, isolated from the public space of action and rebirth. Even Arendt herself identified that

the depersonalized “private Self” was the emerging symptom of mass society and an already eroded public space vis-à-vis a burgeoning social sphere of inequality. However, Arendt was again in no place to make such a claim explicitly, since such pre-political “ugliness” was, for her part, “unappealing.”¹²⁷ We must, then, show how both elements emerged out of a common *desire* for surplus-enjoyment. In capitalism, by giving up the *use-value* of an object, the capitalist buys into the fetish of the object itself, which promises to give the capitalist ‘more and more’ superfluous happiness (recall the Coke example). Such enjoyment, however, comes at a price: the capitalist remains perpetually ‘thirsty’ for more superfluosity. For Arendt, the same ethos emerged within imperialism, which not only was driven by the desire for useless wealth, but also for superfluous people. As in capitalism, imperialism held that, it was no longer good enough to enjoy the *value* of an individual human life for the nation-state, since public politics meant that men were viewed according to their own actions, and the use-value of their deeds and words was to realize human freedom in concert. Groups of men were imbued with an *a priori* fetishistic quality of tribal nationalism, whereby ‘more and more’ *objectified* men could be amassed (treated like commodities) exactly *because* it produced the feeling of surplus-enjoyment. In the final analysis, totalitarianism itself first emerged so powerfully because it was able to draw upon the subjects weakened state as being isolated from the common body politic. However, more importantly, the particular type of enjoyment totalitarianism engendered sprang from an already present principle within capitalism and imperialism: the *limits to enjoyment* which the boundedness of the nation-state commands could be superseded by the feeling of *perpetually increasing enjoyment* within the “onion-like structure” of the totalitarian imaginary¹²⁸.

¹²⁷ Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, p. 34-35.

¹²⁸ Joan Cocks [*Passion and Paradox: Intellectuals Confront the National Question* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002)] argues that Arendt shares with Rosa Luxemburg (*The Accumulation of Capital: A Contribution to an Economic Explanation of Imperialism*, 1913) the notion that the endless attempt “to scramble for raw materials, labor, and markets [functions] as a key starter ingredient in the witches’ brew of modern nationalism, imperialism, and violence.”

By articulating and rendering explicit the unspoken, unwritten (shall we say unconscious) psychoanalytic categories within Arendt's theory of totalitarianism, I would like to extend this study to elements within Arendt's larger discussion of political life, suggesting that Arendt's political theory draws specifically on the notions of emancipation, freedom and intersubjectivity. In particular, I will argue that Arendt's account of these concepts widens our notion of the political *because* the way in which she employs them is fundamentally informed by the same unspoken psycho-social introspection. However, first, let us clarify Arendt's premises for why exactly the political space is so precious and yet so fragile.

Arendt learned from totalitarianism that political actors come together because they want to act and speak, because they all want equally to be seen and heard within the world. Politics is not to bring about a particular *telos* or Spirit, but to make manifest the common desire for communicative freedom – which is not the ability to choose (*liberum arbitrium*) but rather the ability to birth new and unpredicted beginnings within the real sphere of human plurality – which would otherwise be silenced in the private realm.¹²⁹ She makes a sharp distinction between public political life and the social and private spheres. Whereas the latter is regulated by the functional, obligatory and biological life-sustaining activities of work and labor, the former guarantees the subjective emancipation from the inevitable oppression and inequality of the social sphere.

Citing Dante at the beginning of her chapter “Action” in *The Human Condition*, Arendt argues that the political space of appearance enables the disclosure of the subject through action and speech, or that “nothing acts unless [by acting] it makes patent its latent self (*Nilhil igitur agit nisi*

Moreover, the corrosion of the public space was carried out by the bourgeoisie who exploded the contradiction between the boundedness of the European polity and the unboundedness of capital: “Arendt sees the bourgeoisie as capturing the state and undermining the national community, morally and territorially, through forsaking the public business of the nation for private profit all over the globe” (p.47).

¹²⁹ This conception of power starkly contrasts, for example, Max Weber's understanding of power (*Macht*), whereby many individuals, not necessarily in concert, set out to realize a set goal. Political power for Weber is defined not through communicative, concerted action between a plurality of men, but rather by how effective certain groups are at carrying out their ends, regardless of the level of public opposition [see: Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization* (New York: The Free Press, 1947)]

tale existens quale patiens fieri debet.)”¹³⁰ The *political act* is the ‘*public symbol*’ that demonstrates the actor’s “human passions which set it in motion,”¹³¹ his strength and desire to risk and begin an initiative whose consequences are boundless within the community. The public space of appearance, “where men are together in the manner of speech and action,” *is not guaranteed by necessity* (like the private sphere), but is only *potential*: the power that is created between acting men can decay and disappear when politics, for example, becomes dominated by single private matters of the social sphere (such as was the case before and within totalitarianism). Therefore, *power* is the single element of the political space which so vastly demarcates it from the social and private: human power cannot exist by itself within a single individual in isolation, but “springs up between men when they act together and vanishes the moment they disperse.”¹³² The power that arises *through* political action may originally spring from the deed of one individual; however, its *propensity* for power is only due to its mutually shared significance as a story within the “web of human relationships.” That is to say, while the isolated man can only be strong, the man who acts in concert shares in the power that “can only be actualized but never fully materialized.” It is not the materially strong in politics who have power, but the men who ‘act’ together in order to resist oppression who represent “one of the most active and efficient ways of action ever devised.”¹³³

¹³⁰ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 175. In the last sentence of *De Monarchia* “Arendt is transforming Dante in the process of quoting him. By subtracting an *i* from *patiens* and thereby arriving at *patent*, she turns one of the great pleas for an utterly nonplural politics into an exposition of plurality as ‘the condition -- not only the *conditio sine qua non*, but the *conditio per quam* -- of all political life’ (HC, p. 7). The opening of the self presupposes another self to whom it opens, and this other self must be in some man an equal, not a divinity, since otherwise it would be inappropriate to speak of an opening [...] Arendt’s insistence that human beings first appear in the world through action may best be understood as the ‘making patent’ of a ‘latent’ self who is biologically born but must be continually reborn to make its appearance in the world” [Susannah Young-Ah Gottlieb, *Regions of Sorrow: Anxiety and Messianism in Hannah Arendt and W.H. Auden*” (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003): p. 162].

¹³¹ Here Arendt quotes Montesquieu (*Esprit de lois*, Book III, ch. 1), who she argues was more concerned with the actions human laws would inspire. For Arendt, who considers action as a force which forces open all limitations and cuts across boundaries.

¹³² *Ibid.*, p. 200.

¹³³ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 201. The communicative action model that Arendt proposes emerges in the following form: “Power corresponds to the human ability not just to act but to act in concert. Power is never the property of an individual; it belongs to a group and remains in existence only so long as the group keeps together.

I would like to suggest that part of the reason why Arendt believes men *are inclined to* transgress the social and private into the political sphere is fundamentally informed by the *desire* for emancipation and recognition. Actors *desire* the political, in other words, because the social world commands an immense repression of passions and self-expression; only the public space of politics promises the universal communicative freedom necessary to oppose the oppression and inequality of the private realm. For Arendt, the emancipatory power of politics enables new beginnings, “the confrontation of communicative power with the means of force of a coercive but impotent state apparatus.” Moreover, emancipation arises out of the mutual recognition between the Self and the Other, when equality is established out of intersubjective thinking. As Jürgen Habermas has suggested regarding Arendt’s understanding of the communicative generation of power,

When revolutionaries seize power that lies in the streets; when a populace committed to passive resistance confronts alien tanks with their bare hands; when convinced minorities contest the legitimacy of existing laws and organize civil disobedience; when the ‘pure desire for action’ manifests itself in the student movement – these phenomena confirm again that no one really possesses power; it ‘springs up between men when they act together and vanishes the moment they disperse.’¹³⁴

One may still ask, why is action and, moreover, communicative freedom necessarily limited to the political realm (and not the social)? Said another way, why should the actor be motivated to enter the public realm *in order to act*. Arendt’s answer rests in her contention that actors are motivated by “the desire for pure action.” Let us consider the following dilemma concerning power with which the actor is confronted before his entrance into the public sphere of politics: in the social and private realm, one may act, but in doing so, can only display personal strength which is relatively minimal compared to the greatness and power *actually* desired; in the political sphere, one may act

When we say of somebody that he is ‘in power’ *we actually refer to his being empowered by a certain number of people to act in their name*” [italics added].

¹³⁴ Jürgen Habermas, “Arendt’s Communications Concept of Power,” in *Hannah Arendt: Critical Essays*, eds. Lewis P. Hinchman and Sandra K. Hinchman (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1994): p. 218.

with one's fellows, but in doing so, realizes a power which is greatest as soon as it escapes him – power in concert. Moreover, Arendt argues that not only do we seek emancipation from the oppression and repression of the social sphere, but we also desire an emancipation from ourselves in that we want to project and 'display' the Self *for* the Other (*Selbstdarstellung*). In the end, the actor ultimately senses an utter feeling of incompleteness, a lack of emancipation and recognition. Only by satisfying this lack would he finally be granted the feeling of human power, but this is only possible within the public space of human equality which exists necessarily vis-à-vis the Other.

If one can only become conscious of the origin of one's sense of 'lack' from within through the political act itself, what does Arendt have to say regarding the nature of 'the act'? Within Arendt's theory lies a fundamental tension regarding how the 'act' plays itself out in politics insofar as it leads to a sense of 'rebirth' and overcoming. We encounter first the political act of heroic, radical greatness. However, we also understand the act to be conditioned by the symbolic norms and customs of one's world and aimed at expressing understanding. In his book, *The Political Philosophy of Hannah Arendt*, Maurizio Passerin d'Entrèves has concisely produced this very dualism in Arendt's concepts of action and the public sphere:

Different assessments of Arendt's theory of action can be explained in terms of a fundamental tension in her theory between an expressive and a communicative model of action [...] Communicative action is oriented to reaching understanding and it is characterized by the norms of symmetry and reciprocity between subjects who are recognized as equal. Expressive action, on the other hand, allows for the self-actualization or the self-realization of the person, and its norms are the recognition and confirmation of the uniqueness of the self and its capacities by others.¹³⁵

Expressive action, then, is concerned with the "great and memorable deeds" of a republican elite, whose actions are what instigate the endless narratives within politics shared between citizens. The political act is to 'realize' the Self *for* the collective. The second, however, follows the associative political model, whereby ordinary citizens enter into the political realm as equals, acquire the

¹³⁵ Maurizio Passerin d'Entrèves, *The Political Philosophy of Hannah Arendt* (London: Routledge, 1994): pp. 84-85.

capacity to act and judge by constituting the body politic's plurality. However, as I see it, this dichotomy is indeed one of the most revealing clues to why Arendt's understanding of the political act is both *communicative and expressive*. As Seyla Benhabib puts it, "It is not only that we are the subject matter of the stories of others but also that we discover who we are and come to know ourselves for ourselves through the words and deeds we engage in, in the company of others."¹³⁶

For my argument, I will offer an interpretation of this tension in Arendt's understanding of political action by enlisting psychoanalysis to argue that Arendt's theory is best described in terms of an *intersubjectively constituted narrative politics*. This can be defined as the network of individual acts which are transformed into a single event through narration: a common social imaginary that is persistently evolving within the every changing and unpredictable "web of relationships and enacted stories." This web is realized by persons whose identity is simultaneously for the Other as well as for the Self. As they realize their own autonomy, then, they must realize the Other's, as well. Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis conceptualizes not only our sense of 'lack' before the political act is realized, but, more importantly, why our sense of enjoyment is fulfilled through political action, i.e. our sense of *empowerment* that springs from the 'act' itself. The *desire* for emancipation and self-recognition for and by the Other, however, may even become repressed into the unconscious until it is fully articulated and realized within the public sphere.¹³⁷ With the rise of the social within politics, the depersonalizing modes of mass society threaten to eliminate the possibility for political action. In a 1954 lecture Arendt made clear the modern assault on

¹³⁶ Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*, p. 126.

¹³⁷ I take my cue from Bertrand Russell, who argues in his 1950 Nobel Lecture, "What Desires Are Politically Important?": "All human activity is prompted by desire. There is a wholly fallacious theory advanced by some earnest moralists to the effect that it is possible to resist desire in the interests of duty and moral principle. I say this is fallacious, not because no man ever acts from a sense of duty, but because duty has no hold on him unless he desires to be dutiful. If you wish to know what men will do, you must know not only, or principally, their material circumstances, but rather the whole system of their desires with their relative strengths." Arendt quite similarly argues in her book *On Revolution* that the Founding Fathers in their engagements in politics were not so much inspired by a sense of duty as they were prompted by a desire for public freedom and political action, which granted them the ability to distinguish themselves amongst a collective of equals.

political action: “The world’s central problems today are the political organization of mass societies and the political integration of technical power.”¹³⁸ For Arendt, the ‘totalitarian shadow’ always looms over politics when the social world aims to destroy the public space of human equality, where men may not only emancipate themselves from their feeling of inequality and oppression but also where they feel at home in the presence of the Other, *for whom they act and speak*.

In order to do this, I will once again argue for the linkage between the Freudian psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan and Hannah Arendt. Pairing two thinkers as different in thought and style as Lacan and Arendt is admittedly an arduous task. Especially as we now turn to Arendt’s politics, which she went to great pains to argue must be distanced from the intimacy of family life, this would seem at first rather impossible. However, I think there is proper justification for doing so. First, as Dolan argues in his well-articulated piece concerning Arendt and Lacan’s analogous understanding of political identity, both thinkers offer *non-substantialist* views concerning the Self and its involvement with the collective.

In particular, both Lacan’s concept of a subject of the unconscious that emerges through ‘the disclosure of the other,’ and Arendt’s concept of the ‘disclosure of the agent in speech and action,’ involve a refusal of the attempt to anchor identity in a secure ground, nature or referent that would be immune from the finitude and and ambiguity stigmatized by traditional metaphysics but affirmed as ‘the only world’ by each of these thinkers.¹³⁹

Similarly, Lacan and Arendt refuse to sketch out a theory that promises infinitely greater equality and rational progress. Instead, both tend to focus on the uniqueness and individuality of actors, stressing universal equality in terms of ‘humanness’. Both point out the radical identity of difference exhibited by each actor. This identity, then, is one both constituted by the individual Ego, but it is also shaped by our acknowledgment of the universal Other existing in our world. For this reason, the identity of actors is what shapes the plurality of the outside world, because identity has the potential to assume a multiplicity of incalculable appearances. Third, like Lacan, Arendt

¹³⁸ Arendt, “The Threat of Conformism” in *Essays in Understanding*, p. 327.

¹³⁹ Dolan, “Political Action and the Unconscious: Arendt and Lacan on Decentering the Subject,” p. 332.

argues that the Other is at the heart of our formation of universal ideals and judgments. For Lacan's part, the ideal 'images' of the Self and the world are constructed based on one's fantasy of what Others would want, drawing on the collective symbols and customs one has encountered. Likewise, Arendt argues that our faculty to judge and act are in many ways shaped by the Other, whom we internalize as our thinking partner, since it is he who we must face when we leave the quiet confines of the private realm.

For Arendt and Lacan, it is only through our discourse with the Other that we can come to an understanding concerning the nature of our actions. For Arendt, it is only in the presence of "acting men" that we may become fully aware of "that which always consciously or unconsciously is directly engaged in action," and "come to terms with what irrevocably happened and be reconciled with what unavoidably exists."¹⁴⁰ Arguing that if we want to come to understand what underpins our everyday actions, Lacan argues that "it is only once it is formulated, named in the presence of the Other, that *desire* appears in the full sense of the term." In other words, one is not 'driven' to enter into the public space and politics, neither is he driven to psychoanalysis. Both politics and psychoanalysis are seen as modes of discourse which "reveal" aspects of the agent that would otherwise remain hidden. Thus, we are not necessarily required to realize our desires through either the political space or psychoanalysis: indeed, we may always consciously elect to repress whatever desire we may have to emancipate ourselves from oppression or the desire to be recognized within the world. For Arendt, the public space is woven by the fragile human artifice of human relationships and communication, which suggests that politics is always in jeopardy of collapsing since the tides of society may bring about its very capitulation. If we are to understand Arendt correctly, then, we must say that when one speaks and acts in the public realm, he is articulating a fundamental desire, Lacan's *désir* and Freud's *Wunsch*, to have himself heard and have

¹⁴⁰ Arendt, "Understanding in Politics," in *Essays in Understanding*, p. 322.

himself seen after being silenced within the private sphere and oppressed within the social sphere. This is on par with Lacan's interpretation of psychoanalysis which he sees as the only *place of discourse* which can 'bring desire into existence' the realization that all "Man's desire is the desire of the Other,"¹⁴¹ the *political space*, for Arendt, is where man comes to terms with the fundamental lack from within, a lack of Other – he wants only to be recognized by the Other. But finally, Lacan argues that since we desire recognition, "The *object* of man's desire [...] is essentially an *object* desired by someone else."¹⁴² Similarly, for Arendt, *what* we desire (the content) is what we think the autonomous Other also desires – the political right to be seen and heard within the collective Otherness.

If we are to argue for the re-interpretation of Arendt's political theory in light of the above psychoanalytic reading, we must recognize that 'desire' in its true sense is, however, rooted in fantasy and imagination, and that the intervention of reason is simultaneously the critique of fantasy. Thus, if our desire for emancipation and recognition is to be satisfied within the political realm by acting and speaking in the presence of the Other, in what way does reason interact with desire in order to motivate our will to act politically? We must concede that, Arendt's understanding of desire itself is rather antiquated. Taking her cue from the ancient Greeks, she argues that desire is can never be a part of the "free political act," in which case "we could have always left undone what we actually did – something not at all true of mere desire or of the appetites [...] or the sheer force of wanting something close at hand may override any considerations of either Will or Reason."¹⁴³ However, in response, I argue that this view fails because, while a free act most certainly must be informed by reason, what behaves as the 'basic sparkplug' of action, which is often hidden from conscious observation, is the element of desire I

¹⁴¹ Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book 2: Seminar XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (New York: Norton, 1998): p.235.

¹⁴² Lacan, "Some Reflections on the Ego," *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, 34 (1953): 11-17.

¹⁴³ Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, (see: 'Willing'), p. 5

have described. Indeed, the problems of private desires and how people fulfill their desires in social contexts bleed into the arena of politics and collective action. Desires cannot completely be quieted in our discourse with others, but, indeed, it is through politically directed action and speech that we may come to terms with (make conscious) what we desire the most (the Other) and simultaneously our own underlying human identity, which is shaped by both the collective and our Self.¹⁴⁴ In order to map out the content and ramifications of political desire, it is necessary to find in Arendt first a theory of *imagination* and a theory of *intersubjectivity*, and demonstrate how these faculties are irreducibly connected with human desire. Whereas Arendt has linked imagination and intersubjectivity to human reason, I will show that what she fails to recognize even in her own writing is the implicit desire for the Other in politics, the desire to be recognized by the Other in reciprocal discourse.

First, Arendt's theory of imagination can be found in her lectures concerning Kant's aesthetic philosophy. She differs herself from thinkers such as Jürgen Habermas in claiming that political judgment is not purely cognitive (i.e. judgments are valid due to the fact that we have preconditions for such). Rather, for Arendt, imagination exists in virtue of its proclivity towards 'free-play', which "considered in its freedom -- nothing compels us to consider it as such -- is not bound to the law of causality, but is productive and spontaneous, not merely reproductive of what

¹⁴⁴ I would further argue that this approach 1.) remains faithful to Arendt's original intention in her studies of the mind, "If there is anything in thinking that can prevent men from doing evil, it must be some property inherent in the activity itself, regardless of its objects" (*Life of the Mind*, "Thinking", p. 180). For Arendt, if one wants to understand what it means to think, this requires understanding that all thought is shaped (both consciously and unconsciously, or as she prefers, skirting the psychoanalytically inflected terminology, "unconsciously conscious") by the difference that is inserted within me through Otherness, which necessarily exists in and outside me. However, I argue 2.) that this approach goes further in understanding the linkage between thinking and committing evil acts. As Lacan contends in his essay, "Kant with Sade," there may well be a link between the sublime, disinterested a priori theory of judgment produced by Kant and the unrestrained, pleasurable violence of evil. As I see it, we cannot limit ourselves to the realm of pure thought when we address politics. There is not sufficient justification for why desire should *not* be added to our overall calculus of political action. We must come to terms with the fact that 'desire' necessarily plays a crucial role in human thinking and willing. It is only if we are conscious of the many ways in which desire may affect our actions (both politically and when politics has crumbled) that we may be able to harness desire and its effects, always remaining cognizant of our inevitable encounter with the Other, who exists both within and without us.

is already known, but generative of new forms and figures.”¹⁴⁵ Arendt’s notion of imagination is deeply informed by her own experience with totalitarianism, which appeared as a radically new concept and seemed to shatter all other notions of political understanding. She thus considers it important to leave room in any understanding of imagination for the unpredictable, non-experienced and non-imagined concepts of mind.

Arendt argues that our faculty of imagination fundamentally grounds our sense of judgment. Modeling her argument closely after Kant’s aesthetic theory of judgment, Arendt argues that political judgment is open to the same “free-play” as the imagination, thus not limiting it to pre-established laws or categories. When we judge, we judge as spectators within a much larger community, the *sensus communis*, as distinguished from *sensus privatus*.¹⁴⁶ The *sensus communis* for both Arendt and Kant are important, because it is what governs the sphere of human speech and action. This presupposes that in virtue of the *sensus communis* the symbolic world of language exists between men. When we express our own ‘taste’, which is “this ‘community sense’ (*gemeinschaftlicher Sinn*), and sense means here ‘the effect of a reflection upon the mind,’”¹⁴⁷ to the rest of the world, our imaginative reflection is formatted ‘not only for me but also for the Other.’ Arendt argues that while the ‘it-pleases-or-displeases-me’ seems to only concern the private ‘taste’ of the individual ego alone, it “is actually rooted in this community sense and is therefore open to communication once it has been transformed by reflection, which takes all others and their feelings into account.”¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ Knauer, “Motive and Goal in Hannah Arendt’s Concept of Political Action,” p.163.

¹⁴⁶ Arendt astutely points out that by using the Latin term, Kant indicates here something different than unreflective adult prudence: an extra sense—“like an extra mental capacity (German: *Menschenverstand*)—that fits us into a community.” As Kant put it, “a sense common to all [...] a faculty of judgment which, in its reflection, takes account [...] of the mode of representation of all other men,” [Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, §40, cited in Arendt, *Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy*, ed. with an Interpretation Essay by Ronald Beiner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992): p. 70-72].

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

Thus, when we judge something as beautiful, following Kant, our pleasure arises from the fact that our taste is sociable (the feeling of *approbation*). In our aesthetic judgment of the beautiful and our political judgment of politics the pleasure derived from judging does not spring from personal satisfaction, but rather because judgment itself ‘permits’ us a feeling of pleasure. That is to say, by actively defining a new representation from the particular, we are *pleased* by our ‘duty’ to ‘represent’ the *sensus communis* in our judgment. In a lecture entitled “Some Questions of Moral Philosophy,” Arendt reflects on the sense in which our political imagination involves a “speaking through the Other”:

The more people’s positions I can make present in my thought and hence take into account in my judgment, the more representative [my judgment] will be. The validity of such judgments would be neither objective and universal nor subjective, depending on personal whim, but *intersubjective and representative*. This kind of representative thought, which is possible only through imagination, demands certain sacrifices; Kant says, ‘we must so to speak *renounce ourselves for the sake of other* ...’ [We] are considerate in the original sense of the word, we consider the existence of others and we must try to win their agreement.¹⁴⁹

What is interesting about Arendt understanding of imagination and judgment is that it closely resembles Freud’s concept of the reality principal. For Freud and Arendt, the ‘mature’ individual¹⁵⁰, seeks pleasure, but is no longer “governed by the pleasure principle, but obeys the

¹⁴⁹ Arendt, “Some Questions of Moral Philosophy,” in Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment* ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken, 2003): p. 141

¹⁵⁰ Here one is reminded that both Freud and Arendt are children of the Enlightenment: the term maturity or “Mündigkeit” refers to Kant’s seminal essay, “Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung” (1784). For Arendt, those who fail to consider the Other in their political judgments have yet to recognize the fact that as radically dependent creatures, freedom and power are concepts which only exist “in concert.” In the private sphere, an individual may be strong and exercise his will over others, but no one is ever in such circumstances free; such a man only sees himself as *animal laborans* and *homo faber*, which only provides him with an essentially *instrumental reasoning*. Arendt goes to great pains to demonstrate that it is only by appealing to the intersubjectivity present within politics that men can realize human freedom: men are only free as political “equals” within the plurality that exists between people. Freedom, for Arendt, as we will discuss later in this paper, does not exist simply in the absence of obstacles (negative freedom) or the subject’s ability to choose amongst a set of possibilities (*liberum arbitrium*). Rather, Arendtian freedom springs up between men in virtue of the critical and reflective multiplicity of opinions in politics which may bring about unforeseen historical ruptures and transformations: “...the freedom to call something into being which did not exist before, which was not given, not even as an object of cognition or imagination” (see: What is Freedom? in *Between Past and Future*, p. 151).

reality principle, which also, at bottom, seeks to obtain pleasure, but *pleasure which is assured through taking account of reality*, even though it is pleasure postponed and diminished.”¹⁵¹ Arendt argues that “taking account of reality” means looking towards the ‘realm of approbation’ within the world. In other words, our pleasure now stems from the *universal communicability of our judgment*. In the end, while Arendt herself never did express it, her sense of the political imaginary indeed implies the desire for recognition by the Other in politics. That is to say, if sociability is necessarily part and parcel to our understanding of judgment and individuality, there must consequently exist a subjective *desire* for the Other and his recognition in the *Umwelt* within our political imagination.

However, in order to identify properly this implication for Arendt’s political theory, I propose that a critique of Arendt and Kant’s understanding of imagination and judgment can actually reveal that, first, desire is an irreducible element to the political imaginary and, second, that desire is not a “pathological” element of our thinking. As Žižek and Lacan have pointed out, there is in Kant’s aesthetic theory a “duty to judge,” which seems to share the same ‘pleasure’ as sadism. By “pronouncing the judgment that defines our duty,” by judging the particular in order to assign it to a certain universal maxim, we “elevate an object to the dignity of the ‘Thing’ (Lacan’s definition of sublimation).” In other words, the fundamental critique of Arendt’s theory of political judgment is rooted in the idea that in saying it is one’s ‘duty’ to judge as a disinterested spectator and without the interference of *personal desire or pleasure*, inventing the universal-obligatory dimension, one paradoxically encounters the

perverse attitude of adopting the position of the pure instrument of the big Other’s Will: it’s not my responsibility, it’s not me who is effectively doing it, I am merely an instrument of the higher Historical Necessity... The obscene *jouissance* of this situation is generated by the fact that I conceive of myself as exculpated for what I am doing: isn’t it nice to be able to inflict pain on others with the full awareness that I’m not responsible for it, that I merely fulfill the Other’s Will.¹⁵²

¹⁵¹ Freud, *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, p. 444. (my italics, J.R.P.).

¹⁵² Žižek, “Kant And Sade: The Ideal Couple,” *Lacanian Ink* 13 (Fall 1998): pp 12-25.

In other words, by arguing for the repression of “pathological” desires in our judgment, Arendt and Kant fail to recognize the possibility for a *loss of responsibility* in political imagination and judgment: the Kantian subject says to himself, “It is my duty to judge this object, and I am only speaking *through* the Other’s will in my own particular judgment.” The subject subverts the fact that present within his own political imagination is the “non-pathological” *desire of the Other*, which would mean that one is not speaking *through* the Other as his imagination actually ‘desires’ what the Other desires. *He must acknowledge, therefore, that he is fully responsible for translating the particulars and forming a judgment that not only the Other wants, but that he wants as well.* For Lacan’s part, there is a way around this, which would conceivably leave Arendt’s otherwise remarkably well-thought out theory of judgment intact.

In short, Lacan asserts the necessity of a ‘critique of pure desire’: in contrast to Kant, for whom our capacity to desire is thoroughly ‘pathological’ (since, as he repeatedly stresses, there is no a priori link between an empirical object and the pleasure this object generates in the subject), Lacan claims that there is a ‘pure faculty of desire,’ since desire does have a non-pathological, a priori object-cause – this object, of course, is what Lacan calls *objet petit a*.¹⁵³

In a word, this would involve recognizing that our faculty of desire is, like our faculty of reason, “pure” in that action is always governed by the *a priori* ‘little object’ of the *imaginary order*. Consider, for example, the voyeur who sits behind a curtain and fantasizes about the figure on the other side. As soon as the screen is lifted, he may well discover the reality of his desire, that the figure was actually a ‘hairy man’. However, the ‘reality’ is that the voyeur does actually desire the Real thing framed by the veil, the Thing, which actually *is* the Other. While we may tell ourselves that what we want is X (the fantasy), what underscores and motivates our desire is the real Other: what we desire is really the desire of the Other. The *objet petit a*, is produced from the original relationship with the Other in order to compensate for the Real of the situation – for the “symbolic castration” (i.e. it is really a hairy man).

¹⁵³ Ibid., p. 25.

Now to apply this example to Kant and Arendt's conception of judgment, by extracting from the particular object a universal claim, what is 'contingent' is the content of the judgment, i.e. 'the fantasy'. We become unaware of the fact that we have elevated the object to a sublime, fantastical object, which in turn supplies us with *jouissance*. It is not that desire is "pathological." On the contrary, even in our judgments, we cannot resist but to escape the 'lack within the Other' (the Real of the Other) so that we may 'enjoy' our fantasy. We must recognize that what undergirds our political imagination and faculty of judgment is always the desire for the Other, for his recognition. Lacan has shown us how the *objet petit a* of a particular group (e.g. the Jews) indeed can play a decisive role in politics and ideology. If we fail to realize that the use of *objets petit a* is to 'fill the gap' in politics, of some particular loss, with the aim of repressing it and controlling it, politics may very well lose its 'unpredictable' nature. While Lacan argues that the *objet petit a* is only apprehensible through psychoanalysis, this object may be exposed just as well through the discourse within politics. By submitting our judgments to the infinite plurality which constitutes the space of equality known as the body politic, no one judgment remains superior to the other. Indeed, the underlying fantasies regarding the Other can only be exposed within the infinite critical discourse between dissimilar persons in politics. As Samuel Weber comments concerning Kant's reflective judgment, we cannot ignore our projection of the knowledge we desire into the object at hand. Indeed, our projects are never made entirely innocently. Weber proposes that "Perhaps what we should try to think about are ways not so much of escaping from it, as of putting it into play; in this case, however, it might just be *criticism* that turns out to have a leading part."¹⁵⁴

As a final point, I would like to show how Arendt's thesis in *The Life of the Mind* – that the subject is split between immediate self-certainty and its representation in language and discourse

¹⁵⁴ Weber, *Return to Freud*, p. 182 (my emphasis).

with ‘the Other’ – reveals Arendt’s realization that the Self’s identity exists both personally as well as *for the Other*. Namely, in order to appear in the public space of plurality we must decenter primary narcissism and realize the “two-in-one,” that we are all radically dependent creatures.

Consider the following justification from Arendt concerning the nature of the ‘thinking dialogue’ which exists within the Self,

difference and otherness, which are such outstanding characteristics of the world of appearances as it is given to man for his habitat among a plurality of things, are the very conditions for the existence of man’s mental ego as well, for this ego actually exists only in duality. And this ego—the I-am-I—experiences difference in identity precisely when it is not related to the things that appear but only related to itself.¹⁵⁵

That is to say, Arendt argues that we must consider simultaneously the ways in which both the Other and the Ego are intimately intertwined within the Self insofar as they both constitute a distinct aspect of our conscious deliberations. Through public discourse we internalize the multiplicity of opinion and will that constitutes the collective Other in politics. However, when we return to the quietness of contemplation, the only one to keep us company is the internal conversation between myself and “the viewpoint of the Other.” Arendt follows Kant’s contention that thinking is undeniably tied to communication with the Other: “we think, as it were, in community with others to whom we communicate our thoughts as they communicate theirs to us.”¹⁵⁶ Similarly for Lacan, conscious thought is intimately bound with the desire of the Other through an unconscious discourse between me and the Other. This most certainly seems to carry significant political weight. Let us consider Lacan’s following justification for why man not only desires to be recognized, but in his discourse unconsciously articulates *the desire of the Other*.

If desire in the subject must pass through the defiles of the signifier [...] it must be posited that man’s desire is the desire of the Other.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁵ Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, (see: “Thinking”), p. 187.

¹⁵⁶ Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, p. 230.

¹⁵⁷ Lacan, *Ecrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2006): p. 525.

This what I mean by my formula that the unconscious is the *discours de l'Autre* (discourse of the Other), in which the *de* is to be understood in the sense of the Latin *de* (objective determination): *de alio in oration* (completed by: *tua res agitur*).

But we must also add that man's desire is *desir de l'Autre* (desire of the Other), in which the *de* provides what grammarians call the 'subjective determination', namely that it is *qua* Other that he desires (*the true significance of human passion*).¹⁵⁸

The upshot of Lacan's argument here is that, the discourse with the Other is internally contained within the unconscious – it is inseparable from our psychic processing. But most importantly, in our conversation with the Other, we desire most what the Other lacks, since “*desire is an effect* in the subject of the condition that is imposed on him by the existence of discourse.”¹⁵⁹ Politically speaking this means desiring emancipation and freedom. Much like Plato and Socrates, Arendt's fear concerning desire was that it never did take into consideration a universal concern for the Other, but was singly bound to the egoistic pleasures of the body. However, through Lacan's insightful analysis of the Self, we can clearly see that the Other is part and parcel to the content of our own desires (whether we consciously know it or not!). This approach allows us to finally see that desire, in Lacan's account, follows unpredictable and unforeseeable directions – just as Arendt argues that human action is “unbounded” and unpredictable. However, desire is anything but egoistic. It is a perpetual quest for knowledge by taking into account the already constituted field of viewpoints within the collective, a “constant Becoming” that can only thrive within the political space of emancipation and mutual recognition.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 690.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 525.

Conclusion:

It would be a mistake to read Hannah Arendt from the perspective of pure political philosophy or political science. For her part, she rejected this title on the grounds that philosophy tended to focus on the single man instead of his relationship within the collective. She writes in *The Human Condition* that her thought falls best under the broad umbrella of political theory for this very reason that "men, not Man, live on the earth and inhabit the world."¹⁶⁰ When one reads Arendt's writing, one quickly realizes the rich fabric of interpretative approaches and analytical mechanisms employed by Arendt. As with any great author, his or her ability to be applied to a variety of situations and to stand up to the test of never-ending criticism is one of the greatest markers of intellectual brilliance.

This thesis has in many ways departed from the mainstream literature concerning Arendt's politics, and has instead aligned itself most closely with the works of Julia Kristeva, who has been the first to provide us with a psychoanalytic reading of Arendt's own life as a woman as well as of her understanding of identity and politics. In arguing for a rapprochement of Arendt's thought with psychoanalysis, it has been necessary to demonstrate not only that Arendt was fully immersed in the psychoanalytic theories circulating through her friend circles in The Frankfurt School, but also, what is most surprising, remained silent to the fact that her understanding of discourse and hermeneutic in politics as a form of "narrative" actually reminds one of the never-ceasing interpretation within Freud's unconscious. Much like the narrative that takes place between analyst and analysand, the story that springs from the political space is not meant to uncover an "original truth" concerning politics, as many philosophers have notoriously done throughout Western history. Rather, the point is to articulate in speech the "repressed" moments of trauma and action

¹⁶⁰ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 7.

which have ultimately constructed the present situation. In this way, Arendt along with Freud see that the process of narration is never immune to the inevitable interpretative process, all of which reveals a “lost” phenomenological substratum. The role of politics as well as the relationship between the analyst and analysand is to bring one to the point of gladness and comfort in exposing those hidden moments that shape subjectivity, and to rejoice in one’s ability to overcome the very oppressive forces which have acted as a bulwark to his own freedom.

By presenting Arendt in this light, it has been possible to ask Arendt difficult questions concerning the implications for the “loss of the public space” and the concomitant decline in political intersubjectivity, recognition and freedom. The central thread that runs throughout this thesis has been, acknowledging Arendt’s own parallels with psychoanalytic theory, in what ways can we construct a reading that takes into account the tremendous importance of desire, which so demonstrably is part of our political decisions and motivations? First, I have attempted to show that as Arendt describes the gradual retraction of the public space of politics in the latter half of the nineteenth century, much as Jürgen Habermas did in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, she points to a certain melancholia, or the inability to mourn the loss of political emancipation and recognition, understood in Arendtian terms. Concomitantly, the subject was isolated from the common world of intersubjective relations which would have granted meaning to political action; instead, he was left to the dark confines of whatever private social sphere to which life’s game of luck may have assigned him. The inability to act, to be seen and heard in public, was an essential factor in the subject’s open sympathy towards totalitarianism.

We also saw how Arendt employed the figure of ‘the Jew’ as a figure of difference. In this case, she even describes how the Jew gradually became a target for transference and projection of all of the failures and “losses” the melancholic subject had endured until then. In other words, in order to escape the brutal assault on the ego, instead of accepting the “loss” and opening himself

up to reconstruction with the Other through mutual discourse, the subject retreated into the world of objectivity, seen as the racist nationalist ideology which solidified latent ideas concerning the Jew into a concrete reality.

As Freud articulated in *Mourning and Melancholia*, “The most remarkable characteristic of melancholia, and the one in most need of explanation, is its tendency to change round into mania.”¹⁶¹ What had behaved as the primer for the acceptance of totalitarianism had been the sense of political isolation brought on by melancholia; however, what Arendt saw as the object which was secretly provoking the “genocidal mentality” was the desire for the Jew as a figure of difference, as the solution to the sense of failure and “loss” in politics. Moreover, the sense of “mania,” or the immense proclivity towards radical action, was fueled by a fundamental sense of desire which has arisen within the nation-state starting when capitalist imperialism initially entered the scene of politics. For Arendt, the fact was that the desire for surplus value created the desire for surplus men. I have shown in this thesis how this latent desire functioned as the new unobtainable object, Lacan’s *objet petit a*. Thus, whereas the “figure of the Jew” was the outward manifestation of desire, what undergirded the psychic terrain of the subject in totalitarianism was a basic desire for surplus enjoyment, which expressed itself in the following formula: “Surrender yourself to the command of ideology! Do it not for yourself or for the sake of humanity but for the sake of the command itself!” Recall that surplus enjoyment in capitalism arises from the “giving up” of pleasure for a moment in order to *exceed* the pleasure principle in search for the surplus: the enjoyment is in the “never-ending” superfluous excess which persists to drive the subject’s desire for “more.” Likewise, imperialism developed through the understanding that entire groups of men, seen as commodified objects, are superfluous in the face of nationalist ideology. Here the command was the same: “Forget about your own actions in relation to other men. What matters is that you

¹⁶¹ Freud, *Mourning and Melancholia*, p. 253-54.

surrender yourself to the “tribal consciousness” of the nation!” Arendt wagered that when politics became the handmaiden of imperialist ideology, the notion of “superfluous men” was elevated to the level of a national object, and became synonymous with the already entrenched idea of capitalism of “superfluous capital.” Ultimately, it was the failure of bourgeois capitalism, which had hitherto dominated the privatized game of politics, that led the subject to deny ‘surplus capital’ in return for “surplus people.” Totalitarianism brought together in a crystallized form the forces which had been latent in European politics and culture since the latter half of the nineteenth century: Because the subject was unable to mourn the loss of politics, his feeling of individual failure and disappointment could be transferred to ‘the Jew’, only this time, this object of transference was elevated to the national level in a reified *form* of that which had always undergirded imperialism all along – the command to enjoy “surplus people.”

In the final section of this thesis, I have extended my analysis to Arendt’s overall conceptualization of politics. Arendt’s ‘fragile’ public space of politics is rooted in the fundamental desire for emancipation and recognition from the Other, something which exists phenomenologically within the unconscious. In other words, following the destruction of the public space under totalitarianism, Arendt saw that it was necessary to “return” not only those “lost” moments of trauma which had precipitated Nazism and Stalinism, but also those precious moments of human action and togetherness in public politics. This was never to imply a certain “answer” to how politics should function. Rather, Arendt sought to return the subject to that “never-ceasing conversation” that goes on in politics between men, whereby endless criticism and debate propels the “political narration” that binds the Self to the Other in the collective.

Arendt indeed approached, albeit not explicitly, but unconsciously, the question of desire for emancipation in politics, the space where my ‘desire for the Other’ can be most (but never completely) satisfied. This solves the question we had for Arendt’s political constellation: why is

the subject propelled to enter into the public space of politics? For her part, Arendt may have sought to avoid the “naturalistic fallacy” employed by Hobbes and Locke, which posited that men “should” enter politics based on a posited conception of the natural state of human beings. Since she expressed such great disdain for those philosophers and psychologists who subsumed the entirety of the human condition under a particular “metaphysics,” she argued that there was no “original position” for either man or politics. Rather, what we are left with is Arendt’s concepts of imagination and intersubjectivity, both of which are fundamentally informed by the “free play” *with* the Other in discourse, both within and without the Self. Prior to one’s entrance into politics, one feels a tremendous “lack” in the sense that my conversation with the Other in intersubjective thinking and imagination must be externalized, and that the internal dialogue which occurs from within must be informed by the symbolic discourse with the Other outside the Self. The point, therefore, contra Arendt’s initial contention, is that *desire is not an undirected pathological egoism* but rather is informed by and directed towards the Other’s desire. It is an inescapable aspect of the human condition that cannot be simply suppressed by the strong hand of reason. On the contrary, there is justification to believe that both reason and desire operate on different levels but dichotomously in our judgments and political actions. If we recall Plato’s *Phaedrus*, where the soul is guided by two horses – the black horse of desire and the white horse of reason – the point is that we should not do away with passion and desire which in many cases drives us towards a particular object, but rather should be tamed by reason so that we may have the “right desires.” However, this is still not quite the case as I have suggested above. Desire itself is already directed ‘towards’ the Other’s desire (a direct reflection of symbolic discourse); reason then is not seen as a “horse tamer” since the “content” of desire may fluctuate and change without permission from reason. That is to say, we may be entirely unaware of what *actually* is behind and compels our motivations and actions (as was the case in totalitarianism)! Rather, it is by submitting our

judgments (which necessarily consider ‘representatively’ the Other within the *sensus communis*, since the Self is composed of Other and Ego) to the criticism within the collective plurality of politics that I may realize the ‘content’ of my desire and, consequently, come to know myself. The political space of discourse, much like the conversation between analyst and analysand, provides us with a sense of ‘overcoming’ to the extent that we are able to ‘work through’ the hidden contents of our speech and action. Ultimately, it is by speaking and acting in politics that we can come to terms with “an uncovered past” and the forgotten moments in our history which compel our desires and actions.

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