

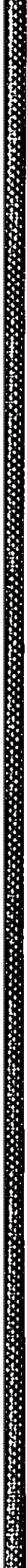
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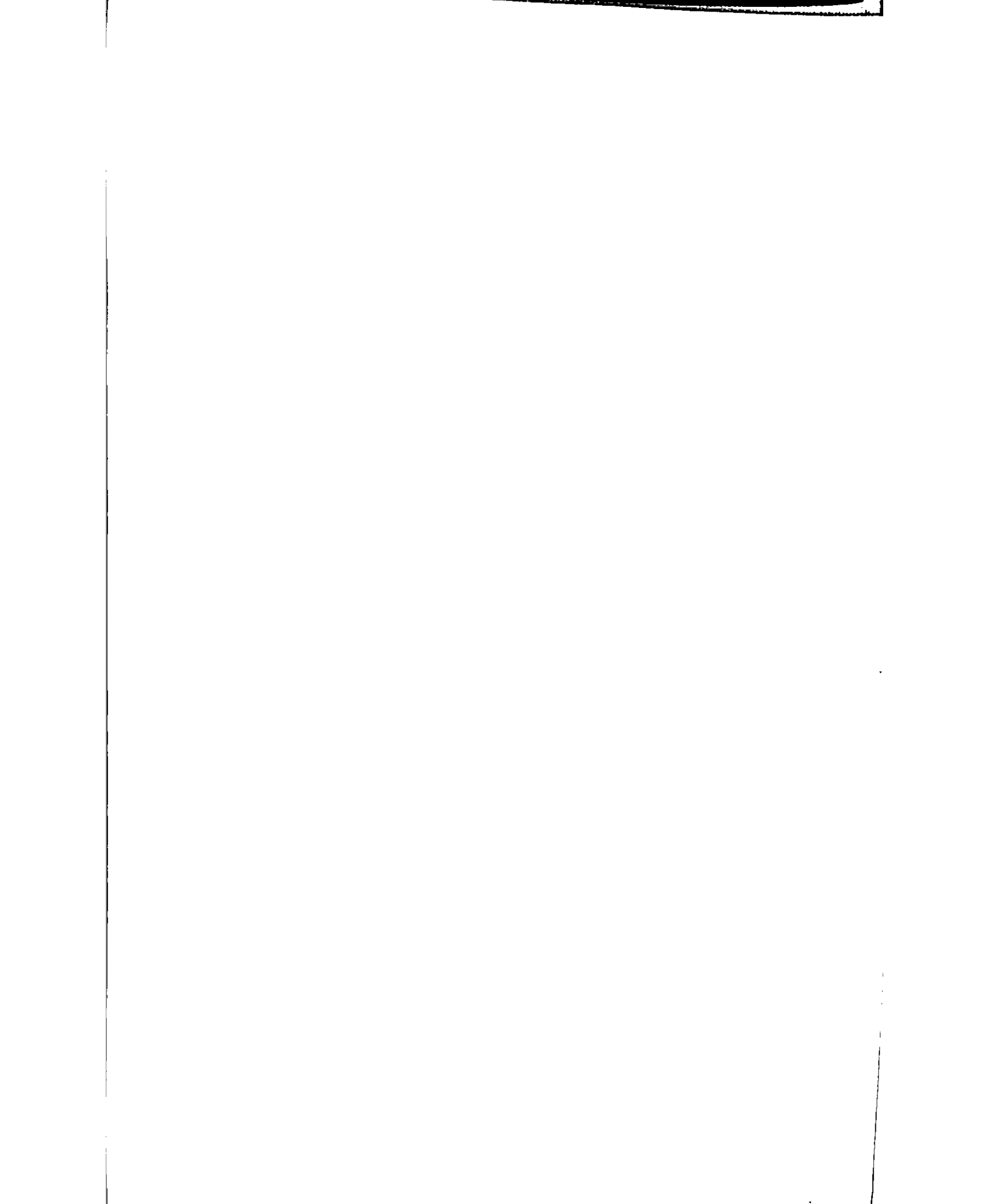
BEING TO THE WORLD:
AN INQUIRY INTO PHILOSOPHICAL IMPLICATIONS OF
HANNAH ARENDT'S POLITICAL THOUGHT

Svjetlana Nedimović

Thesis submitted for assessment with
a view to obtaining the degree of Doctor of
European University Institute

Florence
March 2007

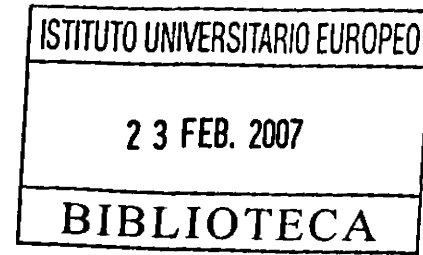






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EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE
Department of Political and Social Sciences



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Hannah Arendt's Political Thought**

Svjetlana Nedimović

Thesis submitted for assessment with a view to obtaining the degree of
Doctor of Political and Social Science of the European University Institute

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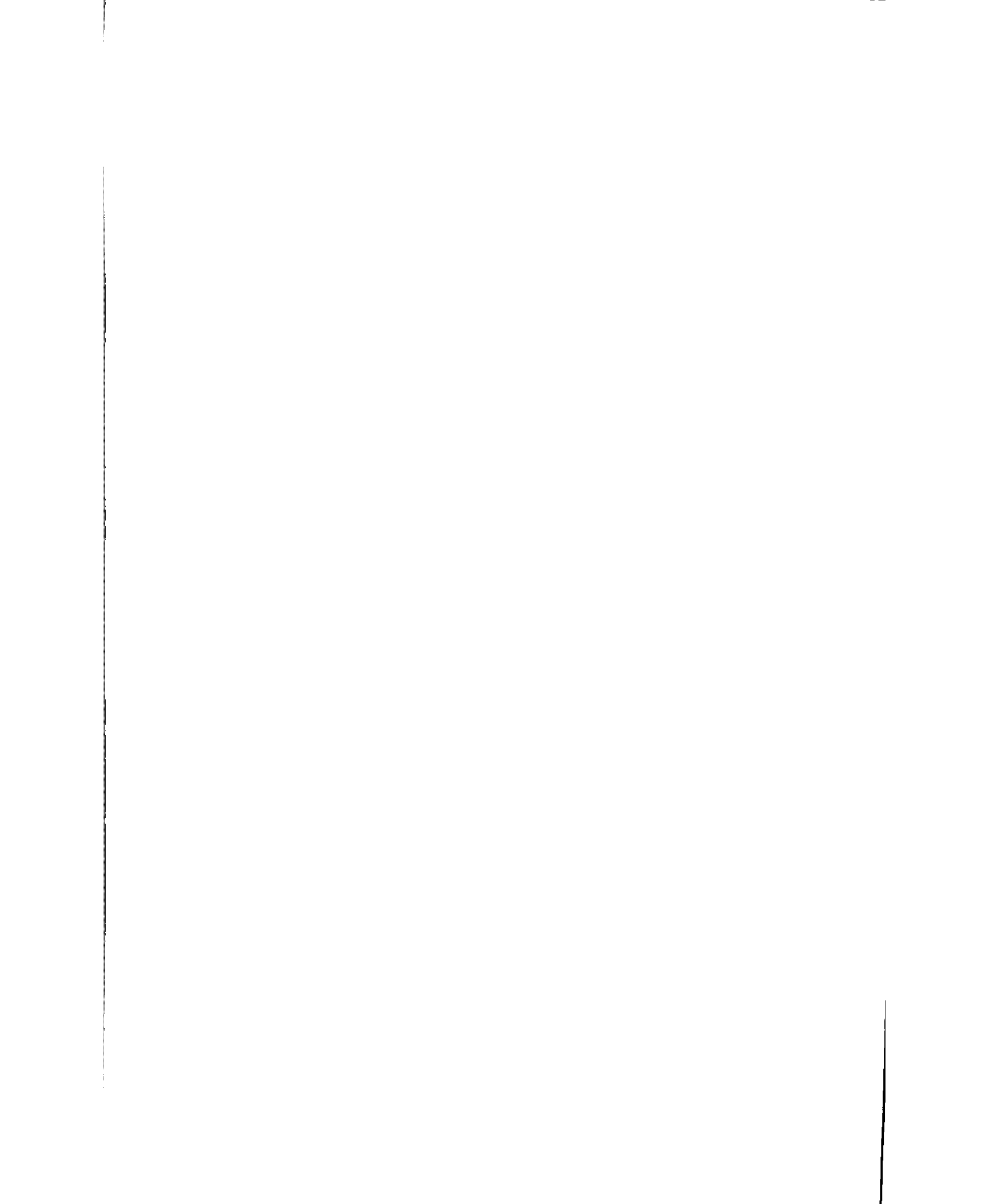
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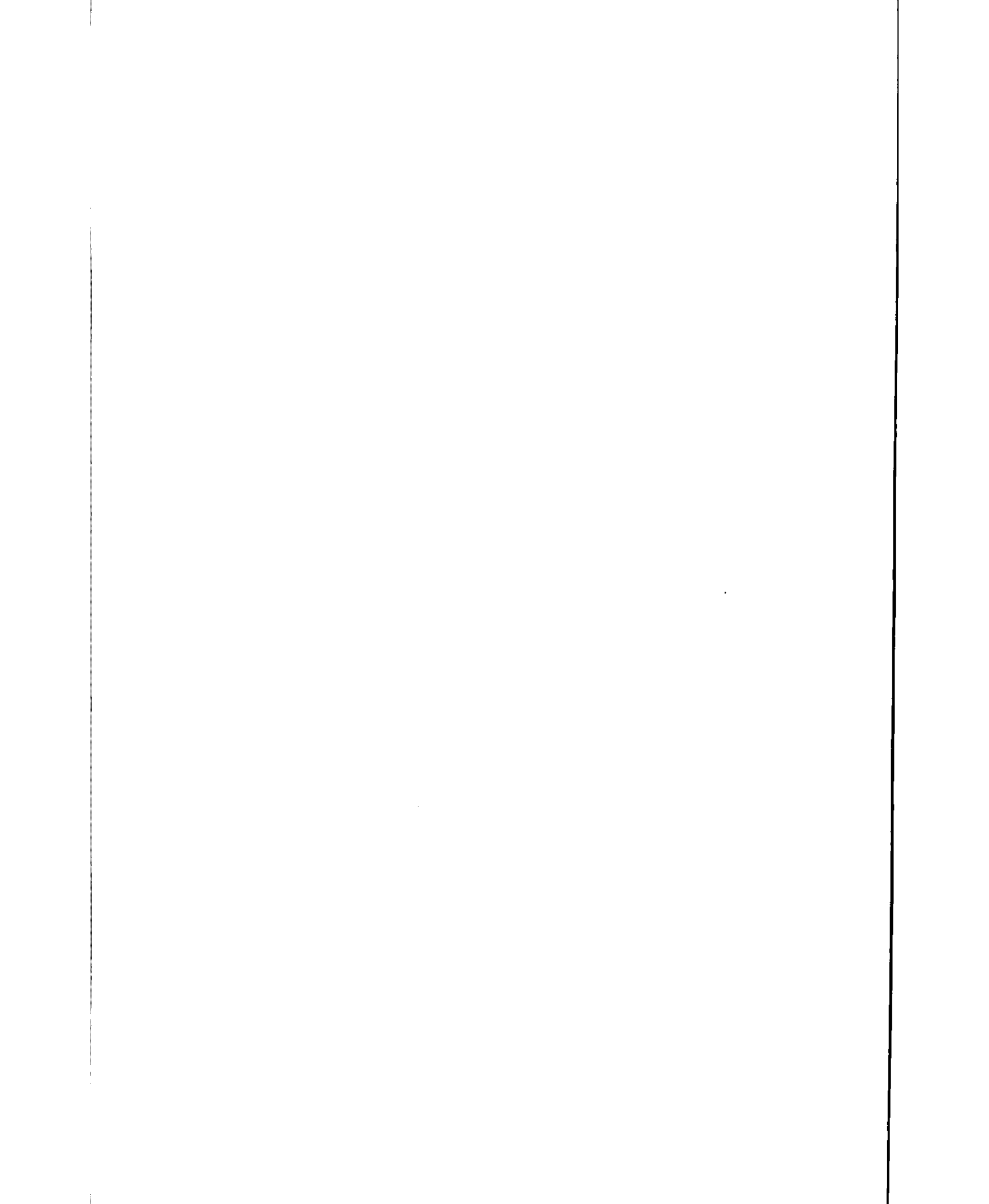
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193-ARE



***To the Bosnians who refused to be 'normal' between 1992 and
1995,
and continue to do so***



The Thanking Thoughts

Even if there were no other reasons, writing acknowledgments alone would suffice to justify the effort of writing a thesis: the joy of recollecting all those moments when one was given understanding infinitely more generous than one's own self-understanding, when one was reminded of all that was beyond the manuscript, ultimately – when one was given a gift of being with others even when the one hardly deserved it or was able to return the gift.

Perhaps it would only be fair to transform the acknowledgements into a legitimate and autonomous chapter of any work, in order to bring readers to the understanding not of the author's seemingly solitary labour but of how many human voices were behind and inside the thoughts and the words now attributed to one sole name on the cover. Perhaps that would remind us see how infinite and infinitely profuse the sources of our thoughts are and how thankful we ought to be, without however alleviating one's auctorial responsibility. Therefore rather than wasting this limited space on justifying errors in the manuscript or qualifying my intentions or recapitulating all that could have been done but has not been done here, I prefer to give at least names to the voices that made up this author's world where the manuscript finally appeared.

Intellectually, I have greatly benefited, without necessarily always acknowledging it sufficiently, from Professor Peter Wagner's understanding of this project even before it deserved to be called a project. I am grateful to Heidrun Friese and Christine Chwaszcza for their helpful comments.

My family, and my mother in particular, have stoically suffered the outbursts of my mostly incomprehensible philosophical efforts into the peace and quiet of their everyday life all these years. My Badia 'support net' – Daniela, Volker, Ursula, Falk, Herwig and Camil has indebted me with a fine balance of their sobering common sense and friendly support. Miek's and Sanda's care and intellectual understanding meant a shelter for me wherever they have been, and Mirjana remains my principal reference point at the intersection of thinking and living.

However I have not been able to find words to be given to Anes who has kept my world together for me all this time, and continues to do so, never allowing himself to feel it as what it really is – a weighty burden of sacrifice.

S.N.
Sarajevo, February 2007

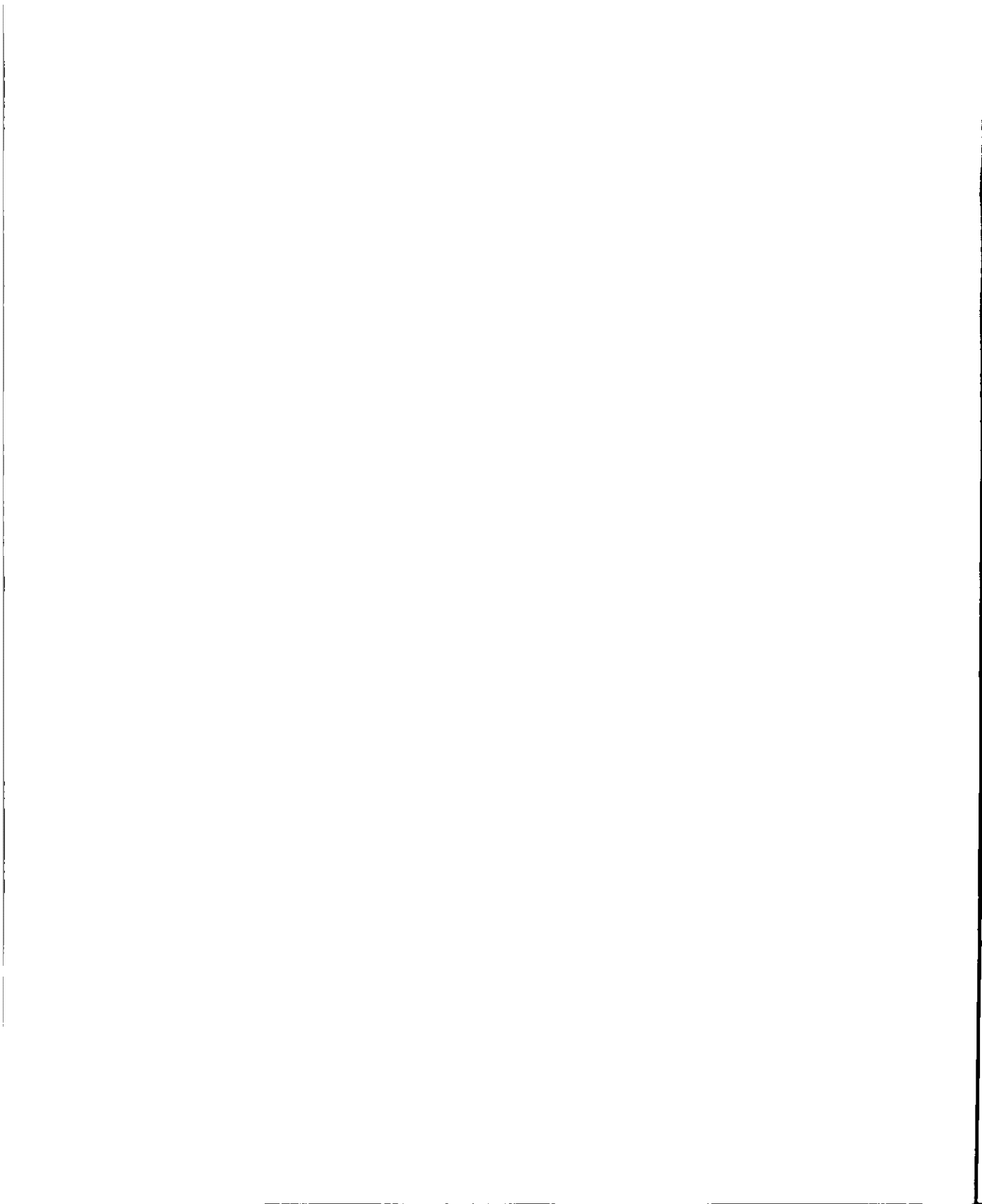
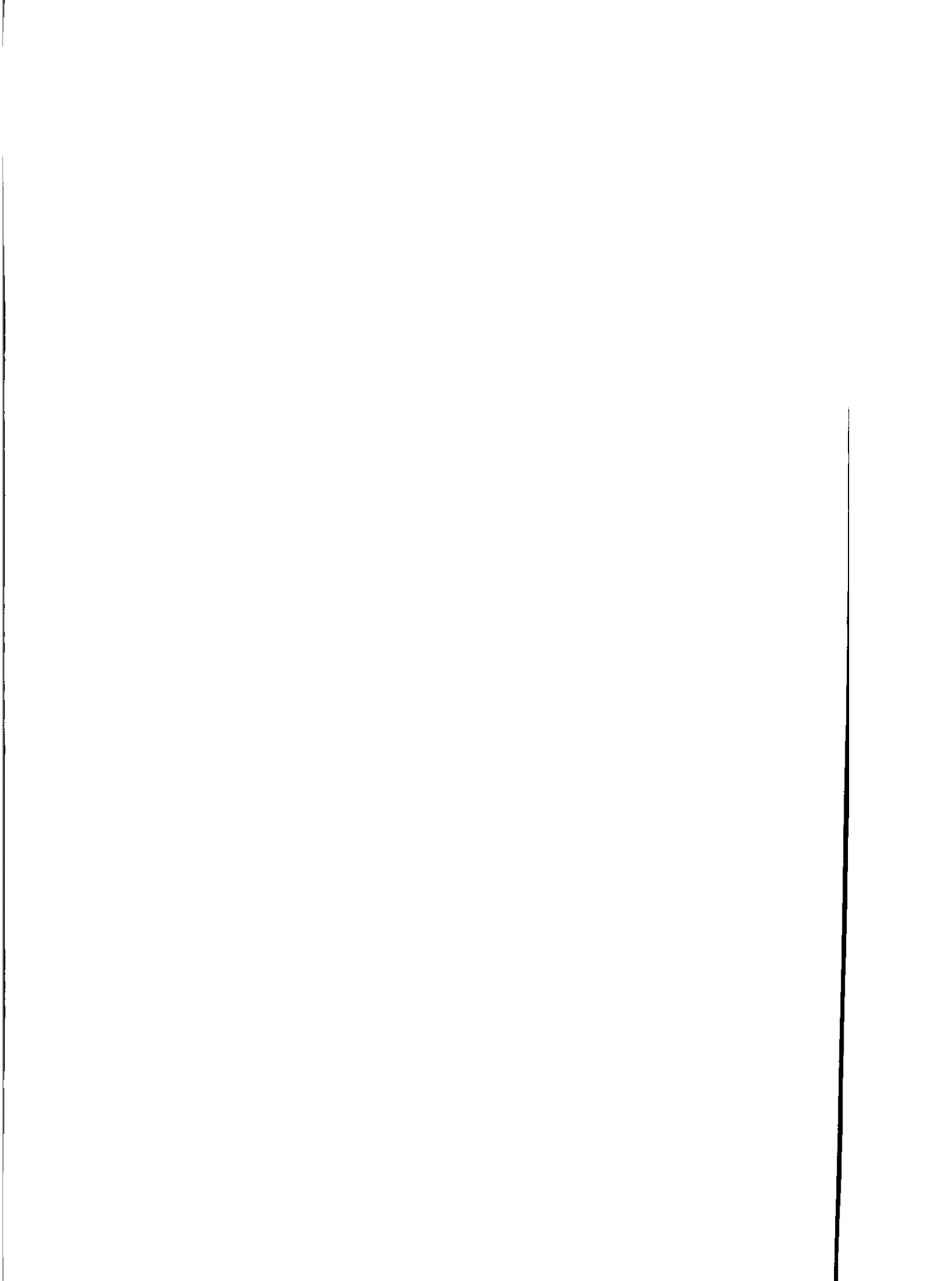


TABLE OF CONTENTS

Summary	3
After Writing, Before Reading	5
Chapter One:	17
Philosophy Beyond Metaphysics	
Arendt's historico-philosophical milieu	17
'Time out of joint'	20
The continuum of tradition from Plato to Marx	27
Historical loss of the political	36
Chapter Two:	43
On the Way to a Different Thinking of the Political	
Arendt's project between the political and the philosophical	45
Of the method: Arendt's embedded idiosyncrasies	51
Institution as action	57
The act of promise as institution	75
Chapter Three:	81
Action as Institution of the New	
Action beyond teleology and performativity	88
The 'second birth'	100
The political existentialism or existentiality of the political?	103
Chapter Four:	116
Situating Mind in the World	
Willing	120
Thinking	127
Judging	136
Chapter Five:	154
Imagining a Beginning	
Representational dimension of imagination	157
Originary dimension of imagination	165
Chapter Six:	179
Being-in and Being-to the World	
Time and Imagination	180
Towards thinking of time	186
Thinking time and being	192
Chapter Seven:	202
Towards a Different Philosophy	
What Remains?	211
Bibliography	215



Summary

The project inquires into Hannah Arendt's thinking of the political in order to develop from it a possible new thread towards a different philosophy beyond metaphysical legacy.

Arendt's notion of human existence as always necessary doing to the world rather than just being is read here from her understanding of man as beginning. It is argued that, as such, it uncovers the existentialist dimension of Arendt's work, by and large neglected in Arendtian literature, while also influencing Arendt's understanding of the political as working freedom out of necessity and taking up of existence. This ultimately constitutes the unexplored contribution by Arendt to contemporary ontology; If ontology is to overcome and move beyond its metaphysical roots, it must ask political questions as the fundamental philosophical questions since it concerns the being that is always necessarily (in) doing.

This reading of Arendt's project is founded upon the parallels of her thought with Heidegger's work that proceeds in the same philosophical direction.

In order to understand and develop the implications of Arendt's thinking of the political in that direction, the project engages with Arendt's work on the source of action, which is interpreted here as a conceptual effort to overcome the metaphysical dualism of world. Arendt's theory of mind is analysed in relation to two fundamental principles of action, plurality and freedom, in order to argue that none of the three mind faculties – thinking, willing, judging – can generate action. The theory is then expanded through reference to the fragments on imagination in Arendt's writing, elaborated and developed in dialogue with Heidegger's and Castoriadis' work on the concept of imagination.

Developing the concept of originary imagination as the source of action from these intuitions in Arendt's thought, the project uncovers the ontological fundament of opposition of Arendt's work to Heidegger's philosophy and establishes the ground to assert that Arendt's work offers an opening to post-metaphysical philosophy. While Heidegger's project is arrested by the notion of Dasein as being-in-the-world, unable to transcend givenness of existence and finally affirming it, Arendt puts forth the notion of human existence as primarily being to the world, always bringing about the new and resisting the givenness. This notion of human existence suggests that the fundamental questions of ontology ought to be political questions, the questions of doing rather than being.

After Writing, Before Reading

The romantic fascination produced in the pure state by the first sentences of the first chapter of many novels is soon lost in the continuation of the story: it is the promise of a time of reading that extends before us and can comprise all possible developments. I would like to be able to write a book that is only an *incipit*, that maintains for its whole duration the potentiality of the beginning, the expectation still not focused on an object. [Calvino, 1998:177]

That which is a dream of a novelist, translated by Calvino into a fascinating literary experiment, is however a curse of the student of philosophy in the present day, and perhaps has been so even since the beginnings of philosophy. To write a book that would not be only a promise of itself but its proper self, the book that would not always end at the beginning - that is a fable of the Golden Age of philosophy, which of course may never have existed.

Hence the difficulty of writing an introduction to the books of beginnings, such as this one. For the reader, introduction is woven of those words before *the* words; yet to the writer, those are the words that follow after the words proper, the substance, had been written. In the case of a book such as this one, that is a series of beginnings at best, this means that a beginning needs to be written to all those beginnings to follow, assuming them ended - a paradoxical situation indeed.

So perhaps the best beginning of the beginning to the beginnings may be to compare this manuscript to the cited Calvino's literary experiment - the book made of the beginnings of stories spiraling one from the other. The philosophical spiral here is woven of several narratives: the narrative of the political as action, the narrative of action as enactment of freedom through new beginning which in fact is taking up of existential givenness, the narrative of the source of action understood as beginning and, as a thread connecting all these narratives, the dialogue between Arendt and Heidegger on the meaning of existence. This dialogue culminates, somewhat unexpectedly, in the opening towards a different philosophy or philosophy beyond its metaphysical legacy.

It could be argued therefore that the project has two pillars - one philosophical and the other political, corresponding to two principal questions: *What could be the path for philosophy beyond metaphysics*, and: *What is the position of the political in human existence*, which must also be read as: *What is it that we do through the political?* The

architrave that unites the two is Arendt's understanding of human existence through freedom to change (in) the world. This understanding pervades and underlies Arendt's notion of the political, pointing to the opening of philosophy towards political philosophy, which then ought to be considered the first philosophy or philosophy that poses the fundamental questions of contemporary human condition. The intention is not to explore in detail and in depth all the facets of Arendt's work and her engaging with various philosophical and historical sources of her own thinking, but to look at it by dwelling at the intersection between the philosophical plane and the political plane of her project.

In a *nuce*, it is an attempt to read, from the work of one thinker – Hannah Arendt, the meaning of the political as that which emerges from the meaning of human existence, which is defined as freedom to do to the world, and then to derive thereof a way to think philosophy anew by contrasting this reading of existential meaning with Heidegger's understanding of existence. Freedom is thus the notion central to both philosophy and the political, both thinking and acting, and is therefore central to this project as well. Freedom is here not understood in the sense of negative freedom [Berlin, 2002]] but in the sense of freedom to do, which Berlin terms positive yet Arendt considers the only meaningful freedom in the context of political affairs.

To Arendt, the ultimate political manifestation of this capacity is the 'miracle of beginning', the act of founding a polity not as an edifice but as a living sphere of the in-between, the common space in the sense of experiencing plurality irreducible to solid institutional frameworks. Through the concept of the act of beginning there emerges Arendt's notion of community-in-action, without assumption of any (transcendental) foundation to it, but also in denial of understanding its primary unit as sovereign self, the self that is the only master of his actions. Arendt's political world equals to men acting in common, exposed to the openendedness of action from which they cannot be shielded by the arrest of action but only through the institution of promise-action, as the word invested in the futurity of the common world. Arendt's understanding of polity as a living entity, dependant not so much upon the institutional structure as upon the continuing beginning, corresponds to the theory of the political thus defined.

Thereof follows Arendt's definition of the political based on understanding both political life/activity and institutions through freedom of men in the world and among other men. Such understanding of human plurality directly contradicts modern politico-theoretical conceptualization of political life as a consequence of constraints imposed upon men by (biological) necessity, the failing of nature to be remedied through political order. The political thus conceived by Arendt is inscribed in the existential potential of being as a human, and it is enacted in history through living together which takes the form of concern with and for the world, the concern which renders the world changed in ways unpredictable, uncontrollable, unexpected and ultimately - infinitely diverse.

Freedom enacted through political acts is inscribed into men through the fact of birth, the appearance of the unnecessary that interrupts automatic processes in nature and breaks the silence of universe, to begin the new anew. By being an initiating insertion into the automatic movement of nature, man is endowed with the capacity to *do* a beginning, to break into the course of events and do what could be but needn't have been. This constitutes the capacity for action, *the* political mode of active life. Namely, through beginning, man who herself is a beginning takes up the fact/givenness of natality and reworks it into the act of beginning, which relates her to the world and other men not on the ground of passive commonality of shared origin or shared space or simply coexistence but through active commonality of the beginning begun commonly, among men. This is the idea of man as a being that is not created through his own will and whose being does not equal mere being, extending in time and occupying space: human being is in taking up of the givenness of being. As such, it resonates Heidegger's understanding of *Dasein* or existence and reveals that Arendt's concept of action is unmistakably marked by its existentialist dimension, both in contrast and in addition to the Aristotelian and Nietzschean conceptual dimensions noted in Arendt's thought of action.

The debt to Heidegger's fundamental ontological dynamics of thrownness and resoluteness of being also sets Arendt's political thinking aside from both classical and modern political theory, as it captures a deeply modern ambiguity of interplay between necessity and freedom: politics is neither about freedom only nor about necessity only, but about reworking of necessity into freedom since birth is both affirmed and taken up through the second birth in action. If therefore a genealogical niche is to be found for Arendt's political thinking in philosophy then it is German existentialism.¹

¹ The other side of the focus of the existentialist reading of Arendt on Heidegger's presence in her work is however the question of Jaspers' (conspicuous) absence. Both were her teachers and both are considered by Arendt to belong to German *Existenzphilosophie* which is characterized by the idea of existence understood through freedom from the given yet within the given. In her early essay on philosophies of existence [EIU], Arendt explicitly rejected Heidegger's philosophy as yet another solipsistic philosophical dead-end and related the future of philosophy, if there was to be one, to Jaspers' Socratic concept of 'truth in communication,' attributing at the same time Heidegger's political fiasco to the inadequacy of his philosophy. It must therefore be asked, would it not be interpretatively (more) legitimate to read Arendt's 'political existentialism' or 'existentialist political' from her relating to Jaspers, rather than to Heidegger?

Arendt's ambivalent relationship with Heidegger's philosophy however cannot be resolved in either blunt rejection or blunt acceptance. It simply cannot be resolved, as the whole of Arendt's work constitutes a dialogue with Heidegger's work. To enter a dialogue means that a certain common ground is accepted, and this common ground – such as the concepts of the world, thrownness, essence in existence and others – is used as the field off/for confrontation. This is not to say that there would not be any conceptual common ground between Arendt and Jaspers as well, just as there is that between Jaspers and Heidegger, given the common conceptual framework of existentialism. But while the ground between Jaspers and Arendt is rarely visited by Arendt, the ground between Arendt and Heidegger is the fundament of Arendt's entire project.

Arendt has over the years grown away from Jaspers through realization, as Canovan pointed out, that his concept of communication has a more developed private than public

Arendt's political philosophy is however not (only) about interpretation and appropriation of Heidegger's philosophy, although his thought is silently but intensely present, at times as a conceptual guide – at times as a contrastive reference. In a certain sense, and with extreme philosophical precaution, this work attempts to situate Arendt's political thinking within the philosophical horizon opened by Heidegger's question of the Being of beings, against the background of exhausted metaphysical tradition. It is however primarily about Arendt's departure from Heidegger's attempt at overcoming tradition, in the direction unforeseen and unforeseeable to Heidegger, the direction which goes beyond his horizon to open up a new one, erasing the borders between philosophy and thinking of human affairs. For this reason, this is not a project on Heidegger nor a project on Arendt as a 'political Heidegger' that would deny originality of Arendt's thinking.

At the same time, the manuscript here does offer a rather peculiar repositioning of political philosophy on the map of philosophical concerns as a whole, but also in relation to the sphere of inquiry understood as political philosophy proper. Since the rise of scientific approach to the study of political sphere,² political philosophy has found itself in a somewhat awkward position with regard to its subject matter, while the very subject matter of its inquiries also placed it – as Arendt believed – in an awkward position within the whole of philosophy,

potential while Heidegger's concept of the world is actually more useful for her project, which remained deeply political all throughout. [Canovan, 1995:263] Canovan also points out that, while Arendt's already mentioned early essay on philosophy of *Existenz* (1946) foregrounded Jaspers as the philosopher whose thinking never ceased to dialogize with experience, in contrast to Heidegger whose philosophy got stranded on his inability to see *Dasein* beyond self, her later essay on the *Concern with Politics in Recent European Political Thought* (1956) presented a radical retreat in Arendt's interpretation of German existentialism. There Arendt concluded that Heidegger's concept of the world and not Jaspers' concept of communication might be crucial for overcoming the divide between philosophy as a solitary activity and politics as predicated on plurality.

In other words, contrasting these two philosophies on the plane of the private/public dichotomy reveals that Jaspers might have been involved with philosophy in a way that brought him close to Arendt, away from the philosophical contempt for the manyness of men and towards celebration of plurality but his thinking developed in a direction more ethical than political. Arendt however moves in the political direction and hence Heidegger's concept of world as the public rather than interpersonal is a concept closer to her. In this movement, Heidegger's project for Arendt's project is both *the 'friend'* and *the 'foe,'* as it itself encapsulates the most profound ambiguity of the state of contemporary philosophy: its fundamental self-doubt, its effort to overcome its own defining core – metaphysical tradition, and its continuous falling back upon that tradition in a series of failed attempts. Hence the dialogue between them, through Arendt's works, as any dialogue between rivals who however speak the same language proves much more lively and fruitful than the dialogue between, essentially, intellectual kins, such was the one between Jaspers and Arendt.

² This development characterizes the whole of philosophy: "Since the 17th century, the real task of philosophy has been to mediate this new employment of man's cognitive and constructive capacities with the totality of our experience of life." [Gadamer, 1977:3] Jaspers also notes the need to distinguish the task of philosophy from that of science as "[p]hilosophy has from its very beginnings looked upon itself as science, indeed as science par excellence," the position contested with the rise of modern science which "made their greatest strides in the nineteenth century, largely outside philosophy, often in opposition to philosophy, and finally in an atmosphere of indifference to it." [Jaspers, 1951/2003:147]

allocating it the place of a philosophy improper, or impure philosophy that concerns itself with the ephemera of human doing.³

That Hannah Arendt is taken for a guide in thinking the political through acting would not be contentious either for 'Arendtians' or for those unpersuaded by her works. Hannah Arendt is a thinker who thought the political as action in most of her works, action taken as that which is the essential of politics without being its essence, itself non-essential, the ultimate contingent. Arendt's theory of the political is in fact a theory of political action, the thought of the dynamism of politics. But to build the work on the renewal of the project of philosophy around Hannah Arendt's political theory begs questions on at least two accounts.

Firstly, it has been said that crucial for this project will be the notion of freedom, understood as central to the understanding of both thinking and acting. But it is clear already from the above brief outline of Arendt's critique of philosophical tradition that Arendt finds philosophy fundamentally hostile to both the notion and phenomenon of freedom. Secondly, and consequent to Arendt's understanding of her own project as directed towards redemption of political thinking from philosophy and retrieval of ordinary freedom, it appears counter-intuitive to read Arendt's work as a contribution to the project of philosophy.

Arguably therefore, this work violates Arendt's understanding of her own work as primarily concerning the political. This project can thus only partly be equated with the method of Gadamer's 'hermeneutic reflection' in "bringing of something to a conscious awareness." [1977:38] If it is to be considered valid however it is methodologically much more indebted to Heidegger's approach to understanding and interpretation, articulated in his own interpretation of Kant: "Every

³ It must however be noted here that Arendt's reading of the tradition of political philosophy is not always entirely balanced. One cannot help observing that, rather than a battle between the thinkers of freedom and the thinkers of order, history of political philosophy can be depicted as a long line of attempts to define the dynamic relating of the two, freedom and order/necessity, often in attempt to devise the ideal order but against the background of specific historical situation which placed one or the other, freedom or order, into danger. This historicization of political thought, as proposed by Wagner [2001] in terms of oscillation between the norm and the challenge, affirmation and questioning, would correspond much better to Arendt's sensibility as an author who wrote of the political by writing of specific historical examples. But as many other authors who purport to challenge the existing or rather, the prevailing paradigm, Arendt overstates the critical interpretation in order to disclose the gravity of the problem which characterizes her own historical situation – the situation of the endangered capacity for freedom, with the sphere of freedom ebbing away before the danger of totalitarianism. Arendt's reading of the historical course of political philosophy is thus deeply imbued with the drama of the political moment of her writing, the drama of the loss of freedom. I have therefore followed the route of Arendt's interpretation closely and without much interference, allowing her criticisms to bring to light her own project, as the route itself is more telling of Arendt's direction than of the actual writings and ideas, that of course being more of a rule than exception in philosophy.

interpretation must necessarily use violence." [1929/1997:141]⁴ What this violence means is reading philosophy not for what it says but where it points to:

But with any philosophical knowledge in general, what is said in uttered propositions must not be decisive. Instead, what must be decisive is what it sets before our eyes as still unsaid, in and through what has been said. [Heidegger, 1929/1997:140]

Heidegger hopes to rescue such 'violence of interpretation' from arbitrariness, on the ground of 'the power of an idea that shines forth' when interpreter ventures beyond the said. What Heidegger is actually saying is that, while examining the propositions remains philosophically valid, interpretation truly happens only through the excursus into the implications of a work, by following them through and through to read not what the work *signified* but what it *means*. This is that 'audacious' task of which Heidegger speaks: "entrusting itself to the concealed inner passion of a work in order to be able, through this, to place itself within the unsaid and force it into speech." [1929/1997:141]

Following this 'inner passion' of Arendt's work is the only possible route in this case, since Arendt never explicitly and systematically engaged in setting a new path for philosophy, as Heidegger had done in his early project of fundamental ontology and then followed that task through to his later works concerning the task of philosophy and investigation of thinking.⁵ Philosophy in other words has *never* been Arendt's project. But it is the intention of this manuscript to investigate how, by reading and writing the political, Arendt opened up the limits of philosophy, the opening that would become particularly meaningful later on in the works of Nancy on freedom as the nonessential essence of existence [1988/1993] and ethics as the only possible fundament of ontology for a being whose existence is, in essence, *praxis* as comportment and relating [2005].

This work therefore seeks to enlarge the ground that Arendt herself claimed for her discussions and explorations: relating of philosophy and politics as derived from relating of thinking and acting. This venture, while its trails pervade all of Arendt's thought, judging by her early essays from 1940s,⁶ moves to the foreground of Arendt's late - and last

⁴ For the sake of accurately following the historical development of Heidegger's thought, all bibliographical references to Heidegger's works here contain both the year of writing and the year of publishing of the copy used for quotations. Where it was possible, as in the case of *Being and Time*, pages cited refer to the numbering in the original publications.

⁵ The early works referred to here are primarily *Ontology - Hermeneutics of Facticity* [1923/1999], *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* [1929/1997], *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* [1929/1995], *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* [1927/1982] and *Being and Time* [1927/1996].

⁶ "No sooner does she formulate either side of the dilemma, however, than she qualifies it and tries to find some way of mediating between two sides that will allow her to avoid choosing between them." These Canovan's words [1995:264] testify to Arendt's life-long concern with the relation between philosophy and politics was Margaret Canovan.

- works, mostly but not exclusively in response to Eichmann trial and the question which Arendt took up in its aftermath: the question of the source of political action in the 'life of the mind.'

In this sense, one could speak of two principal experiences constitutive of these two (interconnected) strands in Arendt's thought, thinking and acting. In the earlier period, this is totalitarianism, which generates the concern with the recovery of politics whose "raison d'être is freedom, and field of experience action." [BPF, 146] Namely, Arendt does not consider her age 'post-totalitarian,' which would imply that totalitarianism is exhausted and its disappearance from historical stage irreversible. Returning to the phenomenon of totalitarianism, over and over again, for Arendt meant the only way to avoid the trap of, or the fall into 'post-ness,' which assumes all that is behind closed, finished, depleted, while paradoxically, it continues to hold the present in captivity of that *behind*:

It is in the very nature of things human that every act that has once made its appearance and has been recorded in the history of mankind stays with mankind as a potentiality long after its actuality has become a thing of the past. [E], 273]

This passage suggests that when returning to antiquity, alongside critical revisiting of the roots of modernity and the landmarks of the Modern Age, Arendt is not involved in a nostalgic journey to some fictional Golden Age. Ultimately, Arendt does not believe that she and her contemporaries, as well as those to follow them, will ever enjoy the luxury of one monolithic past upon which to rest hopes of return, recovery and restoration. There can be only pieces, many missing, some perhaps superfluous, so the recovery of such discontinuous past can only be a discovery, or disclosure, of the present to itself. Arendt's acceptance of her position as being placed within a gap is best explicated in the preface to the collection of essays *Between Past and Future*, a metaphorical title that does not suggest a presence but simply a space or void in-between the two non-presences, thus strongly counter-arguing the criticisms put forth against Arendt's political thought as inspired and lyric prose, which however offers only nostalgic and unhelpful gazing into the past.⁷

Canovan's analysis follows Arendt's deepest dilemma from her earliest works to the last one which apparently signaled Arendt's return to philosophy: "Could it be [...] that there is some incompatibility between philosophy and politics built into the nature of each activity?" Canovan concludes that Arendt's own thinking, though continuously and infinitely uncertain on this specific matter, can be seen as an exercise in political thinking, a particular species of thinking that unites the opposites by remaining in the world and with experience, in understanding that thought was needed "in order to articulate and preserve [the] experience." [1995:274]

⁷ D. Villa discusses two of the most refined readings of Arendt's writings on modernity: Benhabib's *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt* [2000] and Kateb's *Hannah Arendt: Politics, Conscience, Evil* [1984]. While the two critiques differ considerably, in correspondence to the different position which the two authors occupy in a wider debate between communitarians and liberals, they however share an important failure to grasp the rich ambivalence of Arendt's relationship to modernity, as Villa points out. [Villa, 2000:207-8]

By contrast, the meaning of Arendt's communings with the past, the one remote as the one immediate, springs from her conviction stated above, that historical events do not die out but 'stay as a potentiality.' This urges her to think through totalitarianism, what brought it about, what allowed it, and how it may still be with us as an unobservable tendency to resign our freedom in favour of orderly, automatic functioning of our world. How to retain the capacity to act and how to build the 'spaces of freedom' that not only allow but also inspire acting in its transformative and renovative dimensions, this induced what Arendt considered the most urgent task of all thinkers: the questioning of thinking and acting, the two fundamental modes of man's existence, in the light of those historical experiences which seemed to have rendered both thinking and doing meaningless.

Later on, however, Arendt's thinking enterprise is motivated by the insight into Eichmann trial, which drives Arendt to inquire into the relationship between faculties of mind and active life. The trial to Eichmann, whom Arendt finally and controversially diagnosed with near to absolute thoughtlessness, and the fact that the Final Solution did happen in many places but *not* everywhere, brought home to Arendt the question of the sources of action in relation to mental faculties. In a certain sense, it is the same question as that which propelled the earlier, more explicitly political stage of her work, only now posed inwardly. 'Spaces of freedom' external to us, placed in the world that is essential for acting as changing of the world, although we owe our capacity for action to the existential fact of our birth: Is it this paradox that can help us account for the cases when 'spaces of freedom' sink into the dark of suffocating, anti-political regimes, but the capacity itself is retained and, more importantly, employed? The capacity is a potential but it does not provide the impulse, and if the world does not encourage action either, where does the impulse to act come from? Following through this question, and understanding action in Arendt's terms as the bringing about of the new into the world, one reaches another question: How can the existing and present reality ever be broken through, where does the new come from? Reversing the question, one finds oneself faced with the possibility that there can be nothing new, only reinterpretation of the existing. This is the inevitable question of what allows us to awaken our capacity for action freely, since to say that we act simply because we own this capacity to change and initiate, just because our birth has been such rupturous novelty, is almost like saying that we act out of necessity, that we are necessarily free. While this may be an existentially meaningful and indicative paradox, conceptually and analytically it is insufficient and empirically, in terms of political *praxis* - it is potentially perilous.

This is not relevant exclusively for the moments of political apocalypse such was the rule of the Third Reich. In her insights, Arendt does speak of very particular, critical even, historical moments, seized or missed, the implication being of a moment coming out of nowhere, befalling upon an actor in the situation of crisis, when a decision has to be made to prevent the total eclipse of history. Yet, as it was to become clear to

her during Eichmann trial, "great temptations are easier to recognize and thus to resist, for resistance comes in heroic terms. Contemporary dangers begin with trivial and insidious steps." [Neiman, 2002:301] Investigating human mind to discover what allows one to escape the dangers of everyday inertia that sedate man's capacity to change the world around her and immerse her into indifference, that inspires Arendt's last writings.

This side of Arendt's motivation is explicitly political, and the writings of which the *Life of the Mind* is composed do constitute a legitimate part of Arendt's political thought. But there is also the other side, her conviction that life of the mind and life of action must be entwined if life in its entirety is to have any meaning, not *per se* but in relation to the world and for the world. The project of thinking thus must itself be restored in order to help restoration of the political as the sphere of active life. In other words, *The Life of the Mind* is approaching the same problem of action but from a different angle, from the angle of thinking or from within mind, rather than the world.

Yet the argument that validates this interpretation of Arendt does not necessarily justify the decision to base the project such as this one on Arendt entirely. One question cannot be escaped at the incipit: Why Arendt, why not those other authors such as Nancy, also Castoriadis, Žižek and, inescapably, Derrida who trace the path into a different philosophy and then walk it as well? It seems like preferring an unnecessary detour to a direct route.

While the question is a valid one, it however does not invalidate the project. Namely, the specificum of Arendt's thought for an inquiry into new philosophy lies precisely in the emphasis of philosophical enquiry displaced, relocated, from subjectivity to the world or rather, to the most political preposition *to* which relates and ties together man and the world. Subjectivity here must not be equated with individuality nor with the 'spectre of Cartesian subject,' as Žižek vividly depicts the central problem of all Western philosophy. [Žižek, 2000] It stands here for any entity of which it is spoken in terms of is-ness, as being, whether it is being-in or being-with or only being, by contrast to existence in terms of relating to the world in the form of doing *to* it. In other words, this is about philosophy beyond being.

If philosophy as a thinking project is to acknowledge that its question, *the* question, must now concern the sphere of becoming and that the question of becoming must not again be "subverted by being" [Caputo, 1987:13], then thinking itself must be dislocated into the sphere of becoming, of movement, away from the substantiveness of Being, or being, and the necessity of absolutes, to the playground – often also battleground – of possibilities and contingencies, such is the sphere of the political.

This specificum of Arendt's thought thus becomes a wellspring of a different 'first' philosophy or ontology, inescapably political.

Ontologically, man is free and freedom is the meaning of human existence. But crucial for understanding how Arendt's project is different is the preposition *to*, which must always follow mentioning of ontological freedom, not only always attached to it but being an integral and inseparable part of freedom which brings into ontological horizon the thought of another existence, the world. It is freedom therefore not as a condition or state of subject but freedom as action by 'subject' *to* the world. Man is to be understood therefore not through his *is-ness*, his being, but through his doing. By bringing the new into the world, the new which just as well could have not appeared and yet it did through the act of freedom, man does and does-to, to the world, not only *is*. Arendt therefore constructs an ontological triangle which in its core is political, if/when the political is understood in terms of acting into the world.

That Arendt can be seen as offering a different wellspring of philosophy, political ontology that is, does not imply that Arendt entirely escapes the ontopolitical.⁸ Her thought of the political, her conceptualization of it is propped upon one fundamental ontological preposition – Augustine's postulation that man is a beginning so that there can be a beginning, in other words: that man presents a newness to the world and is thus capacitated to do the new to the world. Following partly Heidegger's fundamental ontology, where time is ontologically the earliest and therefore *a priori* to all beings, not in the sense a seed is prior to a tree, which would be ontic/phenomenal priority, but in the sense of time as the condition of and for understanding of all beings and relating to them [Heidegger, 1975/1982:325], Arendt reads the meaning of man from time. Yet the meaning of man is not located in any of the three modes of temporality, nor in their totality as a horizon nor in the perception of time, but in specific, active relating to time. This is embodied in the moment of rupture that is man's birth as well as man's doing. Man is not in time but time is from man who is a beginning that can begin, and beginning always spells change to the world and time course.

Arendt therefore may be making an ontological statement as part of her thinking of the political, insofar as one defines ontology not as „science of being“ but the quest for the meaning of existence located by Heidegger within the very existence, yet at the same time she uncovers the political core of any such quest for meaning: the necessary presence of the world in and to which human existence does, even by bare appearance. The meaning is therefore not derived from relating of existence to itself (whatever the self – singular/plural, individual/collective, one/other) and not from acting out either but in acting *into* the world.

⁸ Though ontopolitical is here a clear reference to Connolly's term, it should not be understood as implying that of which "fundamental presumptions fix possibilities, distribute explanatory elements, generate parameters within which an ethic is elaborated, and center (or decenter) assessments of identity, legitimacy, and responsibility." [Connolly, 1999:2] Rather, it is a minimalist ontological fundament that inspires the reading of the meaning and significance of political experiences though it does not entirely pervade nor does it dictate them.

This project thus travels from asking a political question of how to think the political, to demonstrating that the only meaningful way to ask philosophical/ontological questions today is to ask questions of the political. In other words, if the new philosophy is philosophy beginning and ending with the questions arising from the fact that human being exists in the world by changing it, then the proper foundation of such philosophy must be (the) political itself.

* * *

The uncovering of the philosophical layer of Arendt's thought proceeds here through several stages. First two chapters thus seek to portray the philosophical ambience and construct the genealogical tree of Arendt's inquiry, positioning her work in relation to the tradition of philosophy while focussing especially on the relating between political philosophy and philosophy, which Arendt reads as a continuum of oblivion of the political.

The following stage is centred on Arendt's thinking of the political as principled on freedom, conditioned on plurality and manifested as action in the sense of novelty (Chapter 3). The persistent conceptualization of action as novelty out of nowhere, unpremeditated and bursting out of nothing already existing, however poses for Arendt a specific problem of the source of action. Thus Chapter 4 traces Arendt's inquiry into the life of the mind, exploring what she found and what she could not find in the three mental capacities that form her Kantian-inspired scheme of mind.

Contrary to most of Arendtian or Arendt-related scholarship that reads her final work on, tentatively speaking, philosophy of mind as a sort of build-up towards the climax in judgment, this project will attempt to show that neither of the three mind faculties identified – thinking, willing, judging – generates action but that the source of action rests in the capacity that underlies, pervades and interconnects them, the capacity of imagination. To develop this argument however the interpretation in Chapter 5 moves beyond Arendt, following but feeble voices in a fragment of hers on imagination where, just as in the incomplete work on judgment, Arendt revisits Kant and in this revisiting of Kant's notion of imagination, implicitly revisits Heidegger's interpretation of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*.

Heidegger's reading of Kant foregrounds imagination as the intrinsic bond between intuitions and concepts, between receiving the outside world and understanding it, the root and source of all knowledge but at the same time a mysterious faculty, uncontrollable, sensory as much as intellectual and intellectual as much as sensory. Complementary, Arendt's fragment on imagination, also based on Kant, shows it to be a mediating faculty of representational power. The representational power of imagination enables the exercise of enlarged mentality, which is essential for the workings of judgment.

However, separate and unreferred to in this fragment, there are Arendt's intimations of a different power of imagination, its originating power as the root of man's ability to overcome givenness without escaping the reality but seeing beyond it. This originary imagination, conceptually developed here from Arendt's intuitions and intimations in dialogue with Castoriadis who wrote extensively on imagination as political faculty, is the inward wellspring of man's freedom from givenness and from the dictate of reality, without the denial of that reality, the wellspring from which Heidegger shunned away as did Kant.

In Chapter 6, the roots of this mental power of imagination are explored in the dialogue between Arendt and Heidegger. In the writings of both thinkers, more explicitly in Heidegger's work, the root lies in temporality but the two conceptualizations of temporality are opposed: Heidegger's *Augenblick* that affirms and beholds on the one hand, and on the other - Arendt's moment of beginning when the world changes. The latter is then (Chapter 7) interpreted as an opening to a different philosophy beyond metaphysics, philosophy that is grounded in ontology but ontology which develops from a political core.

**Chapter One:
PHILOSOPHY BEYOND METAPHYSICS**

The opening segment of this inquiry into Arendt's contribution to philosophy of the twentieth century recounts Arendt's dialogue with the prevalent tradition in philosophy, rooted in Plato's work. Her critical interpretation is firmly historically contextualized: she diagnoses philosophical tradition as inadequate for intellectual encounter with the historical situation of totalitarianism and its aftermath. Furthermore however, Arendt's critique purports that philosophy from its beginnings has been hostile to freedom and suggests that this may even be an intrinsic antagonism, rendering philosophy inherently incapable of conceiving of freedom without aspiring to suffocate it. Being such, philosophy could therefore give birth only to political philosophy which understands politics as instrumental activity, harnessed for non-political ends, the activity predicated on the principle of order as opposed to the one of freedom.

Arendt's historico-philosophical milieu

The philosophical milieu of the European inter-war period in the 20th century, when Hannah Arendt was entering philosophy as her area of study, was saturated with the air of uncertainty and change, while still lingering on the verge of chaos generated by the First World War, which did not cease to haunt the cultural and sociopolitical realities of post-war Germany. This was at least how the state of philosophy was communicated to the young student by her two mentors, Karl Jaspers and Martin Heidegger.

In the shadow of the traumatic experiences, there emerged a distinct new 'Weimar Culture' which gave voice to the discontent of the generations that were staggering out of the First World War. This culture was marked by the "rejection of the vulgar, material, bourgeois pursuit of comfort and profit," [Bourdieu, 1991:9] echoing something of Rousseauian critique of civilization and feeding on the craving for action against the general apathy: "Any Action that displays an identifiable shape must be preferred over hesitation and irresoluteness." [Gumbrecht, 1997:258]

The air of change in philosophy however was felt much earlier: the post-war transformation(s) can therefore be traced to the 19th century when the role, place and method of philosophy were subjected to re-examination and questioning by philosophers such as Nietzsche, Kierkegaard and Marx, who, in Arendt's interpretation, probed the hitherto untouchable foundations of philosophical traditions. [BPF, 26-27] In Jaspers' reading, more than philosophical tradition was at stake:

By the middle of the nineteenth century men began to feel that an end had come and to ask themselves whether philosophy was still possible... An extreme thinking became possible, which questioned everything in order to penetrate the profoundest source, which shook off all encumbrances in order to free the vision for an insight into existence... [Jaspers, 1951/2003:137-138]

The shift of the focus in cognitive frameworks certainly contributed to this re-examining, finally culminating in challenge to the legitimate place of philosophy. Namely, modern scientific investigation, based on empirical methods and subjected to strict laws of verification, claimed the space traditionally occupied by philosophy, rendering its truths reached through reflection and contemplation feeble and unconvincing:

The body of professional thinkers, whose claims have been threatened since the end of the nineteenth century by the growing ability of the natural sciences to reflect upon their own processes, and by the emergence of social sciences aiming to appropriate the traditional objects of reflection, remains in a state of permanent alert against psychologism and, especially, positivism, which claims to confine philosophy within the limits of an epistemology. [Bourdieu, 1991:43]

However, the roots of the crisis in philosophy reach even deeper in history of philosophy. While the First World War undermined the myths of Enlightenment and historical progress, Heidegger, not unlike other thinkers of the time, recognized in the events of the 20th century not the actual causes of the collapse but historical occurrences which exposed the 'powerlessness of European mind' and the 'frailty of tradition' that for long had called for radical transformation of thinking frameworks. [Pöggeler, 2005:81, translation from Bosnian by SN] In a brief essay on *Existenzphilosophie*, Arendt elaborates a similar argument and traces the crisis of philosophy and her contemporaneous attempts at reformation back to Kant, when the time-old fundament of philosophy was removed: the coincidence of essence and existence, of that which is thought as real and of that which appears. [EU, 168]

Kant's project of human autonomy in matters of pure as of practical reason and his denial of mind's capability to prove the existence of divine presence in the world left man "cut off from the absolute, rationally accessible realm of ideas and universal values and left in the midst of a world where he had nothing left to hold on to." [EU, 169] Just as modern European secularization undermined the foundation of the supreme political and ethical authority, so did philosophical system of Kant undo the grounds of transcendental philosophy within which it was placed. Paradoxically therefore, as Jaspers notes, though Kant's project was so deeply imbued with trust in human reason, it in effect marked the limits of reason and exposed in its very fundamentals the *locus* of mystery, [Jaspers, 1935/2000:105] suggesting thus that our reason is grounded in something unknowable to itself: "there are two

sources of human reason (which probably spring from a common, but to us unknown root)..." [Kant, 2003:18]

This turbulence of foundations that came haunting the 19th century was well depicted in Hölderlin's poem *In Socrates' Time*, where the poet exposes how all pillars of judgment, that is – all sources of authority, crumbled – divinity, sovereigns, 'wise men.' Men are left to themselves, who are nothing but a 'generation of vipers! cowardly and lying.' What the poet calls for, what could bring guidance in such dark times is "a hero or wisdom." [Hölderlin, 1998:317]

While the turmoil therefore did start earlier on, it was the nineteenth century philosophy that disclosed the 'end of tradition' and inability of philosophy as it had been known hitherto to cope with 'new problems and perplexities' of the world. [BPF, 27] When Nietzsche exclaims that God is dead, he announces the death of the transcendental absolute that however is not only a core of European philosophical tradition but is also built into the foundations of European political and social order, as the source of political and ethical authority. Thereafter there remained only a gap in place of divinity, and philosophies of those three thinkers singled out by Arendt – Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Marx, were therefore unfolding in awareness that the fundament on which the philosophical enterprise could rest could be found nowhere and in nothing. [Jaspers, 1935/2000:21]

Philosophy was thus brought to a dramatic encounter with itself, its position and its role, in the work of these three great thinkers of the nineteenth century. Clearly, although the historical and philosophical situation of these three thinkers was very similar, their responses were very different. Jaspers analyses more closely Kierkegaard and Nietzsche as the negative of their age, arguing that their role was in exhausting that age in order to overcome it but they never did overcome it positively, by creating the new. [1935/2000:15] Not only that they did not want followers, as Nietzsche insisted, but they could not have any in that enterprise without a goal or direction. Of the three thinkers of the 'end of tradition,' it was only Marx who had a clear vision of the new project of philosophy and worked towards it.

But in fact, regardless of the presence or absence of specific programmes, irrespective of the difference in their approaches and directions of inquiry, all three philosophical enterprises transmitted to the twentieth century philosophy a new, unmediated comportment towards past or tradition and the focus on action. In terms of tradition, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, as much as Marx, urged questioning of the legacy in *unlimited reflection* [Jaspers, 1935/2000:15] which performs radical return to the sources, radical questioning therefore of 'vehicles' of transmission of these sources to their age. And just as Marx's project most unphilosophically celebrated labour, the efforts of the other two philosophers culminated in the Other of contemplative thought – in Kierkegaard's leap counter and despite reason, and in Nietzsche's will to power. Thus, unlike the quoted poet who calls for wisdom or hero,

philosophy of the end of the tradition points to wisdom as coming only from a hero. In Nietzsche's words, this hero is a 'warrior' and, in contrast to the tradition of truth acquired through either contemplation of ideas or meticulous scientific gathering of axioms, wisdom is to be conquered.⁹ The hero here however must not be understood as any superior individual but the one resisting and fighting against the givenness in all absurdity of existence.

In his genealogy of radical hermeneutics, John Caputo recognizes in this movement of philosophy beyond its tradition an attempt at restoring "the original difficulty of life, and not betray[ing] it with metaphysics." [1987:1] Lightness of metaphysics is the lightness of ordered, explicable and *essentially* meaningful world, the consolation of the core of *Being* undisturbed by the chaos of *becoming*.¹⁰ Against this venerable philosophical tradition of "turning the world into a frozen *eidos*, stilling its movement, arresting its play, and thereby allaying our fear," [Caputo, 1987:12] there is – through Kierkegaard and Nietzsche primarily – gravity of the new philosophical questioning, which begins and ends with historicity of human being, its irremediable incompleteness and infinite becoming, that is – infinite changing. The legacy of the nineteenth-century philosophy is therefore the understanding that the project of philosophy can continue only through overcoming of metaphysics and that this overcoming entails a return from obsession with contemplation of essences to the thinking of historical existence. With the three thinkers of the nineteenth century, there finally ends the philosophical tradition which "from Plato to Hegel was 'not of this world'." [BPF, 23]

'Time out of joint'

Thus the new movements arising within philosophy in the twentieth century are not happening "in a vacuum... Thinking is no longer regarded as some neutral exercise in cognition but an intervention in the 'lived world' of history and society." [Kearney, 2003:4] What the philosophers of the interwar period were looking for, in responding to the new condition of disillusionment, was in fact philosophy itself, its renewal and revival through the retrieval of its sources in the thinking of existence. [Pöggeler, 2005:89] Philosophy in the aftermath of the First World War thus started seeing itself as "a *different thinking*, a thinking that, in knowing, reminds me, awakens me, brings me to

⁹ "Carefree, mocking, violent - this is how **wisdom** wants us: she is a **woman**, all she ever loves is a warrior..." Nietzsche, 1994:72

¹⁰ Caputo's distinction between gravity and lightness of being is here employed as ontological derivation of Arendt's distinction between freedom and necessity. Arendt's critique of philosophy, as will be argued here, is based primarily on her reading of philosophical tradition as a continuum of attempts to either banish it altogether or at least subjugate it to perpetual order. Freedom thus understood spells peril of the unpredictable and uncontrollable, in that sense aggravating being. Lightness by contrast is the lightness of harmony and order in the world. Caputo's distinction is particularly valuable as it points to the link between Arendt's and Heidegger's understanding of the fundamental problem of philosophical tradition – the oblivion of freedom that is essence of existence. [Nancy, 1988/1993:23]

myself, transforms me." [Jaspers, 1937/1995:12] It is thinking that engages thinker, who thinks by interacting with that which is thought. Philosophizing happens in the state of 'being gripped' by philosophizing:

[W]e shall never have comprehended these concepts and their conceptual rigor unless we have first been gripped by whatever they are supposed to comprehend. The fundamental concern of philosophizing pertains to such being gripped, to awakening and planting it. [Heidegger, 1929-1930/1995:7]

The most influential school of thought in Germany in the interwar period that took up the two-fold task – of overcoming tradition through involvement with existence or, in Heidegger's early terminology, facticity – was phenomenology that was by then developing in the existentialist direction through the teaching of Heidegger. Existentialist phenomenology was the school that originally shaped Arendt's philosophical milieu.

The defining theme of this predominant philosophical discourse was the theme of authenticity pursued at two levels – as the authenticity in thinking existence, through uncovering of the sources from underneath the philosophical tradition and on the other hand, the authenticity of existence itself through seizure of its originary possibilities. Authenticity is defined through the dynamics or rather, tension between the limitations of human existence, embodied equally in the constraints of particular historical community upon being as in the constraints from within existence itself which is lived by an unchosen oneself in the unchosen world, and on the other hand – the potential, inscribed into human existence, to transcend those limits and retrieve the meaning of existence through resolute acting.¹¹

The Second World War however brings about another turn in philosophy, a watershed as Jonas refers to it:

From the heaven of eternal thought, contemplation – unnerved – descended to the Earth with its conflicting forces and intervened in the course of affairs. Noble abstention from events of the day was a thing of the past. Politics and society became the dual focus of philosophical interest. Moral engagement permeated theoretical investigation. [Jonas, 1996:49-50]

¹¹ The notion of resolute action in diverse ways relates to *Grenzsituationen*, ultimate or border-situations of human existence which embody both limitations on and potentials for authenticity. Although these ultimate situations cannot be reduced to death, they often are associated with death. In this sense the new philosophy communicates with the legacy of the First World War, visible also in artworks of the period, when the only meaning of existence was seen as emerging from the encounter with death. Death is interpreted as illuminating the meaning of life: "It had got me at last. At the same time as feeling I had been hit, I felt the bullet taking away my life. [...] As I came down heavily on the bottom of the trench, I was convinced it was all over. Strangely, that moment is one of very few in my life of which I am able to say they were utterly happy. I understood, as in a flash of lightning, the true inner purpose and form of my life." [Jünger, 1920/2003:281]

Though Jonas in this citation is not necessarily fair to the changing spirit of philosophy in the interwar period when he locates the 'fall from Paradise' of contemplative thought only in the aftermath of the horrors of the Second World War, he faithfully captures the shift of philosophical focus. In the place of philosophical tradition, there remained nothing to challenge, except perhaps the roots of the challenge itself, that is - the interwar revision of philosophy, which at the time created an opening but also, through Heidegger as its most prominent representative, neared dangerously the ideological matrix of annihilation.

The difference between the interwar generation of philosophers and the post-war generation lies in the fact that the irreparable break with tradition for the latter came as a real event, not as a 'thought-event' but as a burst of historical reality, incarnated in the phenomenon of totalitarianism, which was the ultimate of experience and the incomprehensible for thought, unbecoming to any of the traditional philosophical frameworks. [BPF, 14]

In the face of this truly alien experience - properly so, as a not-worldly event, insofar the world in which it happened had no framework within which it could place what was happening to it, in order to understand it and deal with it - Arendt may well have been formulating the task of this new generation of thinkers when she wrote:

The destructive distortions of the tradition were all caused by men who had experienced something new which they tried almost instantaneously to overcome and resolve into something old. [BPF, 29]

Arendt reads in this situation impossibility of any return, as both political actors and political thinkers have entered the 'time out of joint.' [RJ, 28] The question is what happens at the time when the present can no longer rely on the experiences of the past, when the present becomes disconnected, floating, uprooted, which is what happens at the 'time out of joint.' In the time out of joint, a straight and meticulously paved path from the present into the past and back is no longer visible: once the bond to tradition has been broken, there remain only scattered fragments which the present would then read in the light of its own reality. [LM/I:212] The remaining past exists in fragments, the parts of which at least some can be collected. There cannot be a return to them but they can be brought forth into the present from the "sea-depths," to employ Arendt's metaphors, where they were buried. The process of "pearl-diving" for the fragments of the past reveals however that what can be recovered from the sea-depths is never that what sunk but something else. It is not the past as it was when it was the present but past as appearing in and to the present of the pearl-diver:

[T]he process of decay is at the same time a process of crystallization, that in the depth of the sea, into which sinks and is dissolved what once was alive, some things 'suffer a sea-change' and survive in new crystallized

forms and shapes that remain immune to the elements, as though they waited only for the pearl diver who one day will come down to them and bring them up into the world of the living – as 'thought fragments,' as something 'rich and strange,' and perhaps even as everlasting *Urphänomene*. [MDT, 206]

But the fact that the past, fragmented or not, continues to speak to the present cannot be equated with having a tradition. This *having* does not correspond to *possessing* but rather to bearing in order to hand over, as one is always a bearer rather than the owner of tradition. In the tradition there rests the power of that which is underlying everything else, which *is* beneath all fluctuations and turbulence. But this *beneath* of the way things are in the world has been pulled from under the world at the time which slipped out of joint. Namely, Arendt's reading of this line from Shakespeare does not take her along the lines which drove Derrida's inquiry into time as temporality, but to time in the sense of the specific moment in history. [Derrida, 1994:18] It is clearly the world, in this age, stood on its head that she grapples with, the world in "this condition of being internally broken apart (disjointed) in the sense of being in disharmony with our own values, or off-center with regard to our own principles and institutions." [Brown, 2001:154]

What is therefore the *time out of joint*? The time that slips out of joint primarily connotes the state of chaos and disorder. However, while this first layer of interpretation does not run against the grain of Arendt's phrase, it tends to harden somewhat the fine fabric of meaning.

If medical denotations of the phrase are to be followed, to be out of joint indicates a state of a head slipped out of its socket, whereby the limb is left with the impulse of movement but no power to effect it, since the bonds got broken, and one part of the mechanism is cut off from another. One line of interpretation of this detachment could refer to the concept of modernity understood as rupture itself, the gap opening up when the bond to tradition has been broken and the past has ceased to instruct the present and foretell the future. In this most basic interpretation, echoed in much exploited Koselleck's paradigm of the void gaping between 'spaces of experience' and 'horizon of expectations,' [Koselleck, 1985] modernity appears as a free-floating epoch, the age of transition from the past, to which it no longer relates, into the future which it cannot imagine, in the sense of imagining as not so much making present, planning, reckoning with that which is absent, but as envisioning. For, future is not or no longer simply absent present, future has become absolute absence, with no glow in the dark to suggest what may emerge from the unknown. When the past ceases to inform the present, it is as if one end of the joint is mortified, insensitized, and there can be no movement of the joint as a whole.

The head has slipped from its socket but the limb and even the entire body does not fall apart, and the time out of joint persists, twisted and cracked but lingering. On the one hand therefore, modernity is the case

of certain malfunctioning, characteristic of any illness. To bring the condition of modernity into the same semiotic constellation with the condition of illness evokes Nietzsche's diagnostic writings, whence the late modern idea of the 'sickness' of mankind springs. But there the semblance between two frameworks, two critiques of modernity – Nietzsche's and Arendt's – reaches its limits. For, in another possible dimension of interpretation, the slippage of the head out of the socket retains a certain quality of abruptness, it evokes a critical condition, suddenness of emergency demanding an instant and decisive response. By contrast, insisting on the *time* out of joint, Arendt retains the extensive character of this particular state of crisis; the critical moment persists, acquires lastingness, involving a certain habituation of the limb to its malfunctioning. In other words, it is necessary to distinguish *time out of joint* from the state of crisis, which is what is done in Derrida's analysis of the same phrase:

[W]hat Derrida calls the out-of-jointness of time is crucially distinguished from a notion of a time in 'crisis.' The former indicates a more subtly corrosive condition than the latter; it suggests a time that is wearing badly; a time whose languages have grown thin or hypocritical, whose practices have grown hollow, whose ideals are neither realized nor perhaps any longer suited to the age. [Brown, 2001:154]

Modernity is thus caught in transition without power to actually transit out of the void between the two points it no longer touches, past and future. In other words, after- or post-modernity is modernity that cannot transit outside itself nor can it render the flow of transit meaningful by resorting to available historical and philosophical frameworks of understanding:

The leftover of the past is historical consciousness itself; post-moderns understand themselves as dwellers in the prison house of our contemporaneity/history/historicity... Post-moderns inherited historical consciousness, but not the self-complacency of the grand narratives.¹² [Heller, 1993:VIII]

Continuing this reading in the idiom of medicine, the response to the time out of joint would have to be swift but the healing process would necessarily be protracted, requiring immobilization and, most intriguingly, starting with – a return to the previous position, with the head pushed back into its socket forcefully and no less painfully than the slippage itself was. In a way, healing itself involves another break. It is therefore not a reversal of modernity that appeals to Arendt. That is for Arendt one option that must inevitably remain out of reach for the moderns not only because all that modernity is points to the broken thread of 'the continuity of past,' [LM/I:212] but because the return to tradition would imply 'much more than the re-ordering of a world that is

¹² Heller's diagnosis remains valid although the accent can be placed equally strongly on *moderns* as on *post*.

'out of joint'; it implies the re-establishment of a world that is past.'
[EU, 435]

The way out therefore leads through the other, second break which is the disclosure of tradition in its harmfulness. Namely the possession of and by tradition has turned into haunting by Derridian specters, the past that refuses to recede into nothingness. [Derrida, 1994] Only, it is not the fragments misunderstood, open, disturbed and disturbing that continue to wrinkle what could be the smooth surface of the present but the traditional understandings of the world which threaten to appropriate and subsume the new experiences totally, to force them into old moulds. And Arendt contends that old moulds of political philosophy are not only obsolete but are in themselves harmful. Against them, genuine experiences of the past, as those of the present, must be preserved. [GTNT, p.13]

We can no longer afford to take that which was good in the past and simply call it our heritage, to discard the bad and simply think of it as a dead 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. This is the reality in which we live. And this is why all efforts to escape from the grimness of the present into nostalgia for a still intact past, into the anticipated oblivion of a better future, are vain. [OT, IX]

Encounter with the past was also the first step taken by Hamlet, to whom rightly belongs the phrase 'time out of joint' in the sense Arendt uses it, in setting his world 'right.' It meant both the disclosure of past and its recovery, neither of which entailed or could entail return.

In terms of philosophy therefore, 'time out of joint' is a challenge to traditional philosophy and an opening towards philosophy as thinking in the gap. The historical moment thus understood is what Arendt considers her position proper, the gap in between past and future, not even to be called the present as it is a gap, therefore an absence, and that is where she locates her intellectual project. The project is not, or not only, in thinking about the gap, which could easily entail thinking towards the closure of the gap, but thinking *in* the gap, acceptance of the gap as the proper place of living as a human in this particular historical window. As Villa observes, however, Arendt is not deceived by the potential of the opening, always already potentially self-destructive:

[S]he is keenly aware of how the energies of modernity, which initially open the possibility of a groundless politics, wind up intensifying the paradox inherent in every revolutionary founding or spontaneous political action, namely, that the moment of 'clearing' in which a space of freedom emerges is also the beginning of its disappearance. [Villa, in Calhoun and McGowan, 1997:200]

In this effort, Arendt can be associated with the generation of German thinkers such as Löwith, Levinas and Jonas, all educated within German academic circles in the interwar period and mostly driven into exile. This circle by and large revolved around Heidegger and his project, yet all of its members remained in a somewhat displaced condition throughout their life, and particularly so in their work. The displacement had as much to do with their physical departure from their homeland, language and culture as with this 'watershed' that opened an abyss where once the ground of their thinking stood.¹³ Though the similarity of their condition did not result in similar thinking projects, certain proximity in their primary and principal concerns cannot be overlooked. All these disciples of Heidegger, in contrast to their teacher, place *Mitsein*, not *Dasein*, at the core of their inquiries. All of them engaged in constructive enterprises, their thought permeated with the awareness that all ground had been shattered by then and, unless they were to stand passively above the gaping abyss, they needed to build, anew.

Hannah Arendt however remains an odd one out in this group. Unlike the others, she never regarded herself as a philosopher and even specifically rejected affiliation to that field,¹⁴ which she continuously critically scrutinized in her work, rarely restraining from expressing her uncompromising suspicion, even something of an irony, towards those 'professional thinkers.' [LM/I:13] That led Taminioux to liken her to the 'Thracian' maid who ridiculed Thales' inability to "see what lay at his feet" in his absorption by the abstract and transcendental. [1997:1] She was educated in theology and philosophy, yet she abandoned them for political theory. At the same time, her political theory holds more in common with historical observations and explorations of Machiavelli than with her contemporaries who pursue scientific methods in their inquiries. Finally, her own project openly cast into doubt not philosophical tradition but the very validity of philosophy as a project, diagnosing as she did totalitarian tendencies of philosophy in the lectures on Karl Marx and the Western philosophical tradition.

That been said, Arendt's thought of the political and of freedom is however pervaded with revisiting of the conceptual sources that defined the intellectual ambience of her studies: the philosophy proper in other words, and the thought of those 'professional thinkers,' most notably her teachers Heidegger and Jaspers but also her own academic

¹³ Validity however cannot be denied to the argument that this 'watershed' or break point may have been only a culmination or eruption of the defining feature of modernity, that "impossibility to give any one superior answer together with the inevitable persistence of the questions." [Wagner, P. 2001:10] The two readings of this event, in intellectual as well as political history, are however not in discord insofar philosophical modernity before the Second World War is dominated by the quest for *the* answer, yet different understandings of philosophy only begin to flicker through the cracks in the canvas, while the Second World War disturbs this quest, bringing into the forefront of philosophical effort, arguably desperate and doomed, questioning with no hope for answers absolute and final.

¹⁴ From Arendt's interview with Günter Gaus: "What Remains? The Language Remains," here quoted from Baehr, 2000: 3-4.

generation. However historico-political reality is not a mere setting for Arendt's thinking, which results in the 'situated thought' [Kearney, 2003:4], it is not a scenery in the background or an ambience but it must be *that* which is thought, in other words – the material for thinking and the substance of thought. In that sense, her work owes more to Marx than to Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. The debt is more than a consequence of Arendt's and Marx's disciplinary affiliation.¹⁵ To Marx, overcoming of tradition is not an act of thinking, it is not at all a matter of philosophy, but an action in historico-political reality.

The continuum of tradition from Plato to Marx

For Arendt, however, the concern with Marx is wider than his thought and constitutes the point of entry into the whole of Western tradition of political philosophy, which can no longer be perceived as neutral and detached from historical motions. Of all her works concerning relationship between philosophy and politics,¹⁶ the piece on Marx puts forth the strongest claim: that there is a continuum of philosophical project from Plato to Marx with regard to politics and that this continuum of tradition can be related to totalitarianism through Marx's contribution, which exposed the ultimate anti-political implications of the mainstream political philosophy from antiquity.

In the essay *Karl Marx and the Western Philosophical Tradition*, a piece written in the early 1950s,¹⁷ Arendt explores Marx's vision and importance of Marx's project for the entire philosophical tradition insofar the project seeks to re-direct philosophical concern with eternity of ideas towards examination of concrete historical reality. Marx's turn consists in his challenge to the traditional philosophical preference for contemplation. He was the first philosopher to concern himself with historical victory of *animal laborans* and the rise of labour, that traditionally lowest of human activities. In a nutshell, for the first time in history of philosophy, a form of active life was held in higher esteem to life in contemplation.

Arendt recognizes in the profound challenge of Marx' philosophy to traditional philosophical discrimination of *vita activa* an opening for the possibility of unguided thinking, whereby action came to be seen as not the opposite of thought but its 'real vehicle.' [KMTWPT, 318] This sparked off 'the great chance to look upon the past with eyes undistracted by any tradition, with a directness which has disappeared from Occidental reading and hearing ever since Roman civilization submitted to the authority of Greek thought.' [BPF, 28-29]

¹⁵ According to Arendt's reading, while all three thinkers stand at the end of the tradition, Marx marks the end in the field of political philosophy specifically.

¹⁶ See particularly the lecture *Philosophy and Politics* (EIU), essay on *The Concept of History* (BPF) and *The Human Condition*.

¹⁷ The essay was published only posthumously but Arendt's thoughts from this piece flowed directly into her arguments in *The Human Condition*, contributing especially to the phenomenology of *vita activa*.

Marx thus re-defines the task of philosophy, which no longer exhausts itself in contemplative interpretation of reality. Philosophy begins to liken the modern science insofar it equates knowing and making: the only valid understanding of reality is that which is made through intervention into it. The meaning of historical reality is a product, it can only be fabricated not revealed. Through this turn, Marx performed the last reversal of hierarchy of active and contemplative life within the Occidental philosophical tradition, which started with Plato: "tradition [which] began with the philosopher's turning away from politics and then returning in order to impose his standards on human affairs. The end came when a philosopher turned away from philosophy so as to 'realize' it in politics." [BPF, 18]

Why Marx is read by Arendt as the 'great chance' becomes entirely comprehensible only in the light of her life-long problematization of Plato's philosophy and its threads, weaving their way through the entire fabric of Western philosophy, modern as classical. Arendt's understanding of Plato's legacy is partly informed by her insistence on certain historical dimension of his philosophy, its indebtedness to one particular event which marks the opening of the chasm between philosophy and politics and sets the dynamics of their relationship throughout the Western tradition. The event is the death of Socrates from the hand of Athenian *polis* in which Arendt recognizes the death of non-Platonic Socratic thought in philosophy.

Arendt's inquiry into the thought and life of Socrates does not concern so much the historical person of Socrates but Socrates as an *example*, therefore neither particular nor general but the particular that has acquired validity for other particulars, become something of a guide or, to employ Arendt's analogy, a schema.¹⁸ In Arendt's interpretation, Socrates as an example is that Socrates before Plato's reinterpretation or Socrates outside Plato's thought, who never declares himself the knower of the truth but insistently keeps the position of 'midwife' to the opinions of others. His thinking moves in the historical realm of *polis*, not in the sphere of eternal and absolutes, outside humanly instituted and shaped time and space for humans. Unlike Plato, Socrates or rather, Arendt's Socrates is not concerned with revealing the Truth but trueness of diverse *doxai* to themselves. [PP, 81] While this Socrates appears to us solely through the writings of Plato, Arendt contends that the death of Socrates the man heralds the death of the figure of philosopher in and of the public place, only this figure was destined to vanish not simply due to the doings of the foes to the historical

¹⁸ As a schema, the particular historical person acquires exemplary validity, loses as irrelevant the traits that defined it as a person, loses the depth and totality of an inhabitant of historical place and time, and becomes an epitome of one virtue or vice, something of a metaphor in flesh and blood of a principle or notion, allowing us to recognize through the relation of likeness or association in other events or persons, even without general rules, those principles and notions as such. Historical person that has crystallized into example is a material repository of a certain quality, trait, a paradigm therefore. [R, 143-144]

Socrates but to the distorted memory of his horrified and disillusioned friends and disciples.

Arendt contends that the entire tradition of political philosophy thereof develops in the shadow of the conflict between philosopher and *polis*, the shadow thrown by the death of Socrates. But the conflict itself derives from elsewhere than the specific historical event, the 'elsewhere' which is essential to classical philosophy as Arendt understands it. What Arendt is trying to do by foregrounding the story of Socrates is therefore not 'psychologizing' of Platonic turn in philosophy. Nor is she explaining away a conceptual problem through reference to historical examples, irrespective of the scope of their bearing on the thought of the period. The example of Socrates here marks the climax of conceptual tension between philosophy and politics, an eruption of subterranean.

Arendt reads Plato's philosophy as inversion of Homeric architecture of the world, where men inhabited perhaps dramatic and perilous earth but only the souls of the dead dwelled in the most profound of all darkneses. With all the pain and suffering due to the mortals, life retained the light or the hope of it. To equate the world of senses with the world of shadows and to elevate the sky of ideas to the position of the only true and real world, as Plato did, meant to abandon that fascination of pre-Socratic Hellas with deeds and concerns of humans. From then on, tradition instructed philosophers not to take seriously *polis*, meaning in effect the world as a whole. [KMTWPT, 312-313] In Plato's words from the *Republic*, to be removed from politics was a precondition of all philosophy which seeks to near the absolute:

... The man whose mind is truly fixed on eternal realities has no leisure to turn his eyes downward upon the petty affairs of men, and so engaging in strife with them to be filled with envy and hate, but he fixes his gaze upon the things of the eternal and unchanging order. [500 c-d]

Arendt's lecture on relationship between philosophy and politics thus concludes with a portrait of philosopher in perennial retreat from *polis*. But the same year however Arendt sketches out another lecture, for the American Political Science Association, published as *Concern with Politics in Recent European Philosophical Thought*. Here Arendt attempts to understand why philosophers, despite their contempt for politics, continued to venture into the realm of human affairs and what answers philosophy has been offering in response to originally political problems.

The withdrawal may thus not be the withdrawal of philosopher from the world of human doings but rather the denial to *polis* of entry into philosophy. The archetype of philosopher is not Heraclitus who withdraws from *polis* altogether: It is Plato who withdraws from politics to recreate both politics and *polis*. Philosopher is thus not a hermit but the one who creates "a political cosmos out of political chaos." [Wolin,1960:8] Through philosopher as its creator, *polis* constitutes the

only bond between eternity and human time, a historical incarnation of the divine idea. Platonic restoration is thus a restoration of the link between the eternal and the ephemeral and not a return to the timeless unity among man or rather, men, cosmos and divinity. Vision of the political space as man-made cosmos thus became a vision of redemption from chaotic vibrations of history and return to what is imperishable in human being:

In the early days, man's descent from the mythical timeless present is followed by the emergence of politics as an attempt at restoration of order among men through overcoming of historical existence, equated with disorder and chaos. [Gunnell, 1987:15]

Plato did depict the sphere of human affairs – all that belongs to the living together of men in a common world – in terms of darkness, confusion, and deception, which those aspiring to true being must turn away from and abandon, if ever they are to reach the clear sky of eternal ideas. [BPF, 17] In Plato's allegory, however, philosopher does return to the cave.

The return of philosopher to the cave must take place for he is a man, born of men to live among men, in Aristotelian understanding of men as neither beasts nor gods, hence incapable of being unless being among their own kind. The figure of the returning philosopher is a tragic one: he is the one who has seen the light and can neither find his way in the darkness of the cave nor can he, being human himself, stand alone outside the cave, as light as it may be there. Nor, ultimately, can he convince the cave-dwellers of the shining brightness outside the confines of the cave. Although philosopher should bring the light of eternal ideas to the 'unwise,' Plato strongly advises against the illusion that the blind will ever see. That of which philosopher brings back merely a glimpse, an intuition, threatens his life when offered to those who will never know and never understand, and whom this unattainable wisdom at best frightens, at worst – enrages. The rage is more often than not directed against the bearer of wisdom, which was what unfortunate Socrates experienced.

Philosopher's existence among men is trapped in this paradox, which Plato attempts to resolve by submitting politics to philosophy. He refuses to renounce the chaotic space of public affairs in favour of the unwise yet does so not for the sake of the public realm itself, but for the sake of philosophers, in order to create a place where Socrates as the epitome of philosopher, "the man who is to care for the soul" could live. [Patočka, 1996:88] The gap which opens between those who have seen and those who have not seen cannot be but unbridgeable, and the only space remaining for philosophers is the space they create themselves by imposing their ideas upon the world as its measures and standards: "The ideas become the unwavering, 'absolute' standards for political and moral behavior and judgment." [BPF, 110] Ideas become a mold into which human world and human affairs must be compressed,

to receive its shape and meaning from this mold as a piece of clay would.¹⁹

This 'shaping' of human doing and 'iron-casting' of political framework as creation of space for philosophy is, of course, a simplified though rather dramatic and lively account of Plato's philosophy. But what Arendt is endeavouring to communicate through this account is in fact the time old narrative of philosophy's fear of freedom. She further suggests that the fear must be traced back to Platonic distortion of the fundamental Hellenic experience of political doing. For "the purpose of eliminating the character of frailty from human affairs," [HC, 226] that is – in order to arrest the mutability of historical reality by introducing the lasting order, and in order to submit the uncontrollable in human doing to perpetual control, Plato spells out a new task of philosophy in regard to politics: the making of order. Platonic political philosophy must therefore be understood in terms of designing a perfect model of relations and norms in a community and the imposition of this model upon a given historical community:

Escape from the frailty of human affairs into the solidity of quiet and order has in fact so much to recommend it that the greater part of political philosophy since Plato could easily be interpreted as various attempts to find theoretical foundations and practical ways for an escape from politics altogether. [HC, 222]

Hence if the tragedy of philosopher ever since Socrates' time has been the inescapable and dangerous misunderstanding by the *polis*, the tragedy of the political in philosophy lies in the ages long attempt of Western philosophical tradition to subsume all political action, in all its unpredictability and openness, and thus freedom itself, under absolute standards reachable and comprehensible only through philosophical contemplation.

The political project of classical or, as Arendt terms it, *traditional* political philosophy therefore aims at containment of the political as embodiment of the principle of action and new beginning, in favour of the political as the principle of necessity of human sociability. Politics is born as a response to this 'unfortunate' necessity. To do politics implies to manage and administer, to execute and apply, while action originally defined in terms of new beginning, of opening most unpredictable outcomes, is either altogether banished from this sphere or reserved for rulers only:

Traditional political philosophy, therefore, tends to derive the political side of human life from the necessity which compels the human animal to live together with others, rather than from the human capacity to act, and it tends

¹⁹ "Hence, philosophy was more than an intellectual endeavor in which certain Greek individuals excelled; it was a symbolic form which expressed definite experiences of order in opposition to the *polis*. The tension between the Hellas of the poets and philosophers, and the *polis* to which they were in opposition, was the very form of Hellenic civilization." [Voegelin, 1957/1980:169]

to conclude with a theory about the conditions that would best suit the needs of the unfortunate human condition of plurality and best enable the philosopher, at least, to live undisturbed by it. [EIU, 1954/1994:429]

Escaping, exiting, retreating (of philosophy) – all paradoxes insofar they appear through not-appearing, they are not tied to the presence but paradoxically are-in-absence. In this sense, the entry of philosophy into the sphere of politics as an escape from politics would constitute a paradox of escape that is. Philosophy however resolves the paradox of entering as exiting by reinterpreting what is entered, politics itself, so that it is not in the end philosophy that escapes but it is politics that retreats, through its re-conceptualisation and re-interpretation.

Contrary to the defining Hellenic experience, Hellenic philosophy after Socrates attempts to degrade politics to a response to the necessity of human condition, not that which is the space proper of human freedom, not the capacity for action but a direct effect of a biological fact, which compels men to share a certain space. The task of philosophy in this sphere becomes the design of the best order that will leave philosopher undisturbed in the true realm of freedom, the realm of contemplation.

In modern philosophy, however, the notion of eternity and political order as an image of cosmic harmony crumbles irretrievably in the whirls of history. What comes to take the place of eternal political order, as Arendt reads modern political philosophy, is the idea of programmed future, or future as the play/battleground of politics, in the context of historical progress. [Koselleck, 1985:278-279] From chaos, there emerges the thought of political order in terms of perfectly controllable, automatic process. The reign of contemplation over life of action therefore collapses with Marx, who removes philosophy from contemplating into making. The Truth cannot be revealed to static and passive spectator but it lies in the power of actor to make it.

The idea of making the meaning drives Marx to re-conceptualise history, which he performs still in the vein of Hegel's philosophy of history as coherent, continuous and progressive process,²⁰ but no longer does history appear as a process rushing into the open, even if it is the openness of fulfillment. Marx's idea is the idea of finite history:

[T]he process of history, as it shows itself in our calendar's stretching into the infinity of the past and the future, has been abandoned for the sake of an altogether different kind of process, that of making something which has a beginning as well as an end, whose laws of motion, therefore, can be determined... [BPF, 79]

²⁰ "Marx's leap from theory into action, and from contemplation into labor, came after Hegel had transformed metaphysics into a philosophy of history and changed the philosopher into the historian to whose backward glance eventually, at the end of time, the meaning of becoming and motion, not of being and truth, would reveal itself." [BPF, 29]

The historical flow of events retains nothing of its serendipitous trajectories, it is one grand pattern explicable only within the framework of the law of (dialectical) motion, the motion which is driven by the force of human labour, an activity defining of humanness of humans. Whatever appears in historical reality, argues Marx, appears according to the immutable laws of historical process: it appears because it *had to appear* – not because a man, any man, willed it so. If history is subjected to law, then historical events are products of necessity not freedom. The events are made in harmony with the law and made to fit the predetermined design of history. History itself is therefore made in accord with the law, wherefrom it follows that Marx's intervention into history must be understood in terms of acting as making. To Arendt, that repeats in modern terms Platonic conceptualization of action that sought to rid it of its unpredictability, of the suspense of its unexpected, volatile, uncontrollable occurrence, only Marx gives it a distinctly modern turn by instrumentalizing human agency for the purposes of progressive historical process which, once fulfilled, will overcome the political altogether. [KMTWPT, 314]

This understanding of history in terms of unstoppable process in which every instant is allocated its proper place in the gradual ascent towards the final goal, motivates Arendt's discontent with Marx' thought and her argument that Marx does not break with tradition but simply declares its definite ending. Marx' thought opens a growing fracture *in/within* philosophical tradition, signaling its incurable fatigue, but it is not itself a break, it does not generate a true new beginning from the end of tradition. Arendt offers a reading of Marx' challenge to Platonic legacy that rings with an undertone of 'missed possibility,' as the same old contempt for the discontinuous and rupturous of political action is uncovered. Marx' removal from Plato thus constitutes, at least partly, return to Plato.

Paradoxically therefore, the undesired surplus of history, as History, for modern philosophy is once again that which classical philosophical tradition sought to exterminate: human action, which resists subsumption under any preconceived design, being always more and less than established patterns, either tying men to temporality and occluding the light of eternity or transforming history into a flow of erratic events, interruptions, unintelligible single occurrences which do not *make* any sense – for acting is precisely not about *making*, modeling, fabricating, argues Arendt. Nothing, including sense, is made through action, which belongs to the 'arena' or the 'stage' of *praxis*, not to the 'workshop' of *poiesis*. What Arendt breaks open therefore is the uninterrupted continuity of the philosophical tradition, from Plato to Marx, the tradition of fear before uncontrollability and unpredictability of human doing. To harness action in the service of higher ends of history is nothing but 'the age-old attempt to escape from the

frustrations and fragility of human action by construing it in the image of making.²¹ [BPF, 79]

However, the fact that even Marx, who is ending Platonic tradition by reversing the hierarchy of action and contemplation, seeks to submit action to the teleology of historical process suggests to Arendt that the problem between philosophy and politics runs deeper than its Platonic roots. Arendt therefore points to the possibility of "some incompatibility between philosophy and politics built into the nature of each activity." (Canovan, 1990:137) Arendt describes this incompatibility as the gap between "being in solitude and living together." [KMTWPT, 316] Margaret Canovan gives this statement a phenomenological interpretation by locating the source of incompatibility between philosophy and politics in the *condition* of activities corresponding to them. (1990:153) The condition of philosophical thinking is solitude, withdrawal from public world into distanced contemplation. By contrast, political action, according to Arendt's phenomenology, emerges only in the condition of human plurality. It happens among many, to many. To act alone or when alone must not be mistaken for acting in solitude as the former still implies a multitude of actions which preceded it and of actions that will respond to its call, to the call of a new action.

This gap however can be given also a different, more fundamental or primordial interpretation, which does not stand in opposition to the cited phenomenological interpretation but underlies it, while also explaining why Arendt finds it difficult to foresee overcoming of the gap and return to it only in her much later works, more specifically *The Life of the Mind*. Namely, it is the 'embarrassment' of philosophy with freedom understood as bringing into the world something new, [LM/II:29] but also in the sense of its contrast with what has for long been the task of philosophy, the truth and the quest of it. In understanding hostility of philosopher to freedom, Arendt follows Jaspers' Christianity-inspired representation of relationship between truth and freedom: "For Jaspers, human freedom is guaranteed by our not having the truth; truth compels, and man can be free only because he does not know the answer to the ultimate questions..." [LM/II:22]

An argument which could be brought against Arendt's construction of the continuum of tradition would refer to the emergence of modern liberal political philosophy, which recognized in freedom and rights of individual its main concern. Arendt however discovers in the concept of freedom at the core of modern political theory a fundamental confusion of freedom with sovereignty, which only perpetuates the gap between

²¹ This Arendt's effort can be rightly appreciated only if recognized that even nowadays, in the roots of various schools in political theory, one finds living the old flame of the effort to subsume the particularity of political phenomena under the universal laws, to conceive theoretically of ideal political order immune to the unpredictability of human actions. Political theory in one of its strands continues to be understood not as thinking of the political in the particularity of free action but as a meticulous construction of perfect political edifice, of ideal order that will prove resistant to all forces of change. (Frieze and Wagner, 2002:343)

philosophy and politics. Namely, modern political thought equates freedom with sovereignty, with the ability of total and uncompromised control over one's own living. In that case, the living, which is always living among others and not in isolation, is denied freedom since the presence of others in the world, over whom one can never exercise total control, is always a source of unpredictability. Consequently, living among others becomes an insurmountable constraint upon 'freedom,' and politics must be understood as necessity of ordering relations among individuals on the one hand and on the other, those between individual and the collective, so as to ensure the highest possible degree of 'freedom' or rather, sovereignty to the individual. [HC, 234-235]

This produces the tension which defines one of the predominant debates in the modern political theory, between individualism and communitarianism, and of Arendt's stance in this regard more will be said in the next chapter. In terms of relating of philosophy to politics, however, understanding freedom as sovereignty, fascination with controllability earns modern political theory a place in a long history of philosophical fear of action, as it corresponds closely to philosophical obsession with the 'first principles' that render everything meaningful and ensure that we are in control, the obsession which Caputo reads in endless attempts of the metaphysical artery in philosophy to cast over the world and human existence lightness or easiness of perfect order. [Caputo, 1987:1]

And vice versa, as Arendt understands action, it corresponds closely to what Caputo describes as ineradicable gravity of existence. To act is to choose fear, impotence to control the consequences, tragic awareness of the destructive in us but it is also to choose to break with unbearable condition of imprisonment in attending to one's needs, of living as a hostage to biological necessity as both means and end of life. In that sense, what philosophy in its insistence on ordering of existence may be letting slip through is that action in all its perilous openendedness and uncontrollability is the bearer of freedom in the world and, as it will argued in the chapters to follow, being human is about acting freely. This understanding locates Arendt firmly in the context of the twentieth-century philosophy which places freedom at the center of its concern, originally through Jaspers and Heidegger, in contrast to the traditional centredness of philosophy on truth.²² As her teachers, she is preoccupied with the theme of freedom but for Arendt the concern with freedom constitutes also the main political problem of her age, due to the events of the Second World War.

²² This should not be interpreted as suggesting that traditional philosophy is not concerned with freedom and neither is this Arendt's claim. It is rather that freedom is primarily a concern for traditional philosophy in the sense of a *problem* for the principle of absolute necessity, a tension which propels and perpetuates the incessant philosophical struggle for reconciliation of the two, which more than often takes the form of subsumption of freedom to necessity or containment of freedom.

Arendt's critical engagement with the Western philosophical tradition draws directly and explicitly on her political experience, which was at the same time the defining political experience of the entire century: the event and the phenomenon of totalitarianism, the fact that it *happened* equally as what it actually was. Hostility of philosophical tradition towards freedom is mirrored in historical reality by attempts at annihilation of freedom which culminated in the institution of totalitarianism. In her critical overview of modernity, Arendt argues that roots of totalitarianism as the ultimate loss of the political must be sought in the fundamentals of modernity as a project.

Historical loss of the political

As Arendt portrays modernity, it is not an age of the political. It is the age when subsumption of political act in its uniqueness under automatic processes and procedures is desired and sought. But it must be observed however, before Arendt's radicalized image of modernity is recounted, that Arendt's critique of modernity is primarily driven by the ultimate experience of totalitarianism and its suffocation of freedom. While her reading of totalitarian tendencies from the entire motion of modernity may be seen as exaggerated, Arendt's narrative of modernity should be seen as part of her warning against dismissing inquiry into totalitarianism as a unique phenomenon, as a precedent that, being such an isolated occurrence, needs no explanation. Arendt refuses to conclude that totalitarianism should be taken as not having any further relevance but as the memory of incomprehensible tragedy, since it cannot be related to anything else that the world is made of.

Through three narratives – of science, religion as worldview and technology – Arendt sought to expose how the stable world of objects, as a setting of human actions, melted into the unstoppable, automatic process in which no specific event, act and, ultimately, individual has any particular importance for the course of the process, the state projected and executed by totalitarian regimes. What matters is not what is produced in the process but the perpetuation of the process itself.

Everything and everyone is in the function of process, which can be explained through the recourse to universal laws. The process gradually pervades all spheres of human existence.²³ The reality of stable beings and objects melts into the reality of constant change, sheer automatic flow. Thus the world of objects and beings has gradually given way to

²³ Arendt argues that the disturbed property relations have never again recovered the stability of Middle Ages and its feudal economy, inherently dependent upon the fixed world, collapsed into the unstoppable flux of production and consumption, in which the end-product of one's work is lost to the infinite process of wealth accumulation. Just as life process came to be considered the highest good by exact sciences, so the process of wealth accumulation replaced the concern with property ownership as the primary economic activity. To engage in wealth accumulation may respond to the needs of the life process but its ultimate end is neither a satisfaction of a certain desire nor making of an object nor acquiring property, as one's place in the world shared with others, but continuation of the process itself. [HC, 252-253]

the "constant process of change." [HC, 252] The change - not the stable Being in itself, became the principle of the world: "[u]nder modern condition, not destruction but conservation spells ruin..." [HC, 253] The world dissolved into motion without beginning and without visible ending, without purpose even but its own continuation, which though initiated by men for the purposes of men, no longer have the 'willed beginning and definite end' but proceed automatically:

Automatism is inherent in all processes, no matter what their origin may be... It is in the nature of the automatic processes to which man is subject, but within and against which he can assert himself through action, that they can only spell ruin to human life. Once man-made, historical processes have become automatic, they are no less ruinous than the natural life process that drives our organism and which in its own terms, that is biologically, leads from being to non-being, from birth to death. [BPF, 168]

This primarily biological duration, automatic and irresistible, possesses reliable permanence of a cyclical natural process: unless the species is extinguished, it will always inevitably continue. In other words, its continuation does not depend on any individual action, any single event. Single actions by individual human beings are drowned in the process, thus becoming meaningless since the process remains the only bearer of meaning. There is nothing at the end or beyond the process but the process itself.

Finally, the world itself loses worth as the standards of means and ends are relegated from the limited sphere of fabrication and employed to rule the world in its entirety, through "limitless instrumentalization of everything that exists." [HC, 157] Ultimately, the process renders obsolete even the differentiation between means and ends. This is what Arendt reads in Marx' identification of meaning with end(-product): it does not empower men, and it does not make them the masters of their destiny by placing the fabrication of future into their hands, but slaves of the steam-engine of "an unending chain of purposes in whose progress the meaningfulness of all past achievements was constantly cancelled out by future goals and intentions." [BPF, 78]

When bare life becomes the only valuable property in the world of men, labour ascends to the position of principal activity with which men are preoccupied, since labour is what sustains the life process. Arendt therefore argues that *animal laborans*, not *homo faber*, prevails in the modern age. In the process therefore man takes part only as that which sustains its motion, as *labourer* given to automatism of the flow and irrelevant as a unique particularity that never before and never again to appears in the world. Labourer, *animal laborans*, does not act and makes nothing. Whereas the goal of fabrication by *homo faber* was finished object, *animal laborans* is a servant to the process, which becomes the end in itself: "[W]e live in a society in which men consider their activities primarily as laboring activities, in the sense that their

end is 'the preservation of individual life,' and themselves as primarily owners of labor force." [KMTWPT, 311] In the continued duration unframed by any solid world, unanchored, not only is the concern with immortality of individual lost but *animal laborans* is deprived of birth and death as they blend with all other births and deaths in the function of process:

Birth and death presuppose a world which is not in constant movement, but whose durability and relative permanence makes appearance and disappearance possible, which existed before any one individual appeared into it and will survive his eventual departure. Without a world into which men are born and from which they die, there would be nothing but changeless eternal recurrence, the deathless everlastingness of the human as of all other animal species. [HC, 97]

By contrast to the narratives of modernity which focus on individualization and the emergence of individual autonomy as the features that, alongside with state sovereignty, mark modernity, Arendt argues that in the contemporary stage of modern society, individual ceases to matter, and everything is instrumentalised in the function of biological survival of human species: "the modern age continued to operate under the assumption that life, and not the world, is the highest good of man." [HC, 318]

If men are not mortal, in the sense of 'a recognizable life-story from birth to death, [which] rises out of biological life,' [HC, 19] they cannot be immortalized either. Life of *animal laborans* assumes the circularity of any other natural process, labourers that die merge with those who are born in their full functional equivalence, and the process continues uninterrupted. What remains of men's existence is nothing but sustenance of bare temporal duration, the linear and continuous flow of their lives.

The last stage of the laboring society, the society of jobholders, demands of its members a sheer automatic functioning, as though individual life had actually been submerged in the over-all life process of the species and the only active decision still required of the individual were to let go, so to speak, to abandon his individuality, the still individually sensed pain and trouble of loving, and acquiesce in a dazed, 'tranquilized,' functional type of behavior. [HC, 322]

The uniformity of behaviour characterizes a new sphere which emerges at the intersection of the public and the private and yet threatening both one and the other: society. Namely, the tide of the social – as Arendt understands it, a synonym for conformism – inevitably involves ebbing away of the political. Exposing herself to accusations for elitism, Arendt maintains that society reduces men to the uniformity of needs and behavioural formulas, extinguishing the diversity of human beings, their uniqueness in manifold. What is unique about individual human

beings withdraws into shadow of intimacy, while in the places where men reveal themselves to one another, they do so as atoms – separate entities of functional behaviour that can be both predicted and controlled.

In Arendt's interpretation, most serious political consequence of the world understood in terms of processes and men understood as a species is the shrinking of space for political action. As it is the case with all other activities, politics also becomes a matter of a functional process, attending to certain needs of mankind, those needs by which the diversity of human beings is reduced to the smallest common denominator of biological uniformity.

The one reduced to needs is not free to act, as was well known to the citizens of *polis*: men in need are absorbed by their constant struggle to maintain the life process going. Radical reduction to bare needs and consequent annihilation of capacity for action is encountered in its most extreme form in the example of concentration camps, where rebellions among interns were rare luxury of those who were not worried for their immediate, day-to-day survival:

In every instance they were planned and led by prisoners who were privileged in some way and, consequently, in better physical and spiritual condition than the average camp prisoner. This is not all that surprising: only at first glance does it seem paradoxical that people who rebel are those who suffer the least. Even outside the camps, struggles are waged by *Lumpenproletariat*. People in rags do not revolt.²⁴ (Levi, 1987:387)

This fragment of Levi's testimony resonates Arendt's main concern in relation to the new process-reality: the condition of freedom threatened by automatism, by the enchainment to necessity. If man's capacity of seizing an instant out of the flow to break and begin is forsaken at the altar of process – be it wealth accumulation, life process or historical progress – if men understand themselves not through resistance to automatism but in the function of process perpetuation, that would anyhow run its course, then the space of freedom retreats before necessity. As a result, the space for action withdraws before attending

²⁴ Along the lines of reducing freedom to necessity runs also Arendt's argument that the French Revolution had been a failed revolution, freedom succumbing to the urgency of life necessities, compelling necessity of hunger and extreme deprivation. [OR, 60] In Arendt's historical analysis, the process reign in the sphere of politics starts with the emergence of the social question in the course of the French Revolution, with the poor entering the political stage and bringing in the issues of necessity. What came out of the French Revolution was a mechanism to contain the urgency of homogenous multitude, while it never produced a political realm where heterogeneous but equal actors appear to each other through their words and deeds. This is the moment when freedom, in Arendt's words, surrenders to the necessity of maintaining the life process, that 'overwhelming urgency' of staying alive which devours all that politics of antiquity embodied: assumption of the distance from biological humanness, liberation from the dictate of needs, in order to retrieve uniqueness and contingency of one's appearance in the world. [OR, 59-60]

to the needs, administering, and we remain leveled and uniform in our shared biology.

If politics exhausts itself in the uninterrupted continuum of political process and in self-perpetuating perfect political system, all action is rendered superfluous or is monstrously transformed it into its antipode, the perfectly controllable behaviour. The ultimate product of this reign of process appeared in the form of totalitarian state: a perfect mechanism of leveling of and mastery over men, reduced to mutually replaceable units.

[W]here all men have become One Man, where all action aims at the acceleration of the movement of nature or history,... 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. [OT, 467]

The reconciliation of men with the inevitable flow of events, seen as a product of suprahuman forces of historical necessity, renders all human action altogether pointless. Everything then becomes possible and at the same time justifiable within the framework of historical necessity, the condition which echoes not a gloomy possibility but a historical experience, very specific and very present to Arendt and her contemporaries, who observed how a bizarre Kafkaian scene emerged in the place of their once stable world, as totalitarianism lifted the boundary between forces of nature and forces of history. The two then blended into each other, and historical processes acquired the quality of necessity such as ones attributed only to the natural ones, whereas natural processes lost the certainty of their movement, subjected to randomness of human interference. The impossible became the possible, the possible - the probable, the probable - the actual as the law that used to be a guarantee of stability, the pivotal arch of the political edifice, got perverted into "the expression of the motion itself." [OT, 464]

In the light of the historical findings of the *Origins of Totalitarianism* and the philosophical account in the *Human Condition*, Arendt can conclude however that not totalitarian states but totalitarian tendencies are the most damaging effect of this reign of process: spaces of freedom and acting of freedom continue to shrink as political affairs are *administered* and *executed*, and civic activity is pushed to the margins of political realm. [OV, 81] Political activity, hitherto propelled by the desire to leave behind something permanent in the only world that men had - the one that they themselves made, must consequently descend into mechanic procedures, directed at maintaining in function community, which emerged from sheer necessity of preservation. [HC, 314] Political actor, once unpredictable in his freedom to act spontaneously, is transformed into an economic actor, replaceable by any other economic actor or even a mere symbol in statistical exercises.

For Arendt, therefore, while totalitarianism materialized in historical reality of the world at a certain moment, as embodiment of annihilation of men in the function of Man, the reduction of men to the uniformity of masses continues to pervade our political reality.

The word *politikon* no longer meant a unique, outstanding way of life, of being-together, in which the truly human capacities of man, as distinguished from his mere animal characteristics, could show and prove themselves. It had come to signify an all-embracing quality that men share with many animal species, which perhaps was best expressed in the Stoic concept of mankind as one gigantic herd under one superhuman shepherd. [KMTWPT, 295]

In resistance to this modern degradation of the plurality of unique beings to the multitude of the same, Arendt's seeks to think the political in terms of freedom in action. What guides her inquiry through and through is not the effort to create a political order for eternity, in the sense of engineering upon a theoretical model. Nor is it the effort to perpetuate administrative, procedural continuum: continuum, a smooth uninterrupted flow but also *con-tenere*, holding things together, making sure everything fits in, nothing stands out, turns the political into a container, which 'holds things together' in an orderly manner. Arendt's concern however is precisely that which does not fit in, but 'towers over' everything else in its conspicuous greatness. [PP, 12]

Such thinking of the political has to be re-invented because the monolith of totalitarianism fell upon history, refracting any retrospective glance and exposing pre-totalitarian political thought as a not so reliable repository of concepts and ideas for understanding the world born in the shadow of totalitarianism. Thus Arendt's conversations with the tradition are partly aimed at loosening the grip of fossilized conceptual frameworks over new, unprecedented experiences of the present. Arendt begins her project with the work on the *Origins of Totalitarianism*, therefore from the point in which the tradition finally exhausted itself to the point of unintelligibility and absolute muteness before the new experiences.

At the same time however this is the tradition that, as has been argued previously, reveals itself not only as inadequate in the face of totalitarianism but also as something of an accomplice. While Arendt is explicit in refusing to establish any causal chains from philosophical tradition to the phenomenon of totalitarianism,²⁵ she did not hesitate to point to a certain 'crystallization of hidden 'elements' of modern European history and philosophy in totalitarianism. [Kohn, in Villa, 2000:118]

²⁵ "To hold the thinkers of modern age, esp. the nineteenth-century rebels against the tradition, responsible for the structure and conditions of the twentieth century is even more dangerous than it is unjust. The implications apparent in the actual event of totalitarian domination go far beyond the most radical or most adventurous ideas of any of these thinkers..." [BPF, 27]

Arendt's conversation with tradition thus bears a mark of her acute awareness that hers is not merely a discussion with something frozen in the times anterior to totalitarianism, and therefore inadequate for her task of understanding as thinking beyond. It is also a discussion with something that must not be accepted or recovered, only revisited, and even that with precaution. Precaution is due as, in order to revisit the tradition, the visitor will be lured by its language, even in the effort to engage with it critically, even radically critically, so if this engaging is to be in the function of the new reading of the political in recognition of the past but unburdened by its sins, the sins of the oblivion and the silencing of the political, the visitor must remain alerted and seek to maintain vigilance. Otherwise, uncritical translation of this tradition of thinking the political, even in bare employment of its concepts, would easily re-enact Procrustean coercion of political and historical experiences. How Arendt as herself a visitor of tradition maintains her vigilance will be the theme of the following two chapters.

**Chapter Two:
ON THE WAY TO A DIFFERENT THINKING OF THE POLITICAL**

The previous chapter has demonstrated that Arendt's project emerges from both the constraints and the potentials of the 'time out of joint.' For Arendt's generation of thinkers, the idiom of transcendental philosophy was rendered meaningless as a path towards interpretation of historical reality. Meaninglessness of the idiom however did not entail meaninglessness of thinking as an effort at reading the meaning of the world from what passes in the world, from events and occurrences of the world itself. On the contrary, the decline of transcendental philosophy vacated hitherto rather crowded philosophical space where throughout history of philosophy ideas were worked out and reworked and refined – almost as fishery nets are - for capturing reality, and that space opened up to the entry of political concerns into philosophy. What this means is not that the tradition of philosophy was not concerned with the *lifeworld* (tentatively speaking) but that its mode of concern was more the one of *writing*, prescribing how the world should be, rather than *reading* diverse meanings from it. Reading was reserved for reading of the Absolute, not for the world.

At the same time, the 'time out of joint' was a source of concern to Arendt. It is marked by the withdrawal of the political, the decline of the political, the vanishing of the political as the space of and for freedom. This was taking place either through the totalitarian annihilation of freedom or under the domination of economic forms of interaction which transformed the public sphere into relating of mere functions/roles, while other forms of relating between human beings were exiled into the private sphere. When the exhaustion of the philosophical tradition is brought in relation to these developments in the political reality, which is growing increasingly apolitical in Arendt's reading, it becomes clear that not only has the political declined but the ground for its recovery or retrieval has been undermined as well. What Arendt calls the 'Roman trinity' of religion, tradition and authority, which for long served as both the frame and the ground of polities as it both constituted laws and order and legitimized it at the same time, collapsed irremediably and together with it, all that brought and held communities together collapsed as well. So the collapse of the philosophical tradition is effecting the political on two levels, as unavailability of *ought* – the prescriptive dimension which philosophy provided for political concerns, and as the dissolution of the normative absolute – the legitimating transcendental principle.

In the context of the exhaustion of the philosophical tradition and the decline of the political, Arendt understands her project as an effort to retrieve what she considers the fundamental principle of the political:

human beings acting their freedom out in common. It is a search for new forms of plurality, enacted and institutionalized, against the tradition of repressing freedom which springs from plurality. The search also runs against the twofold modern process of the homogenization of actors in the public sphere and on the other hand, the 'privatization' of their distinctness, that is - the dislocation of their individuality to the private sphere.

This search is however hindered by the inadequacy of the conceptual language in the modern political thought insofar "the prejudices that stand in the way of a theoretical understanding of what politics is really about involve nearly all the political categories in which we are accustomed to think." More specifically, and for Arendt most importantly, the fundamental political categories are rendered in terms of brute force, domination and means/end logic. [PP2:152]

The passage where Arendt diagnoses this conceptual burden of the contemporary political thought intuitively that Arendt will seek to contradict the contemporary political thought by developing a different conceptual language. It would be such language that would open itself to the experience of the infinite, ineradicable plurality of the human condition in negation of all possibility, theoretical as well as empirical, of sovereign domination; to power understood as property of action in plurality only, and - finally and fundamentally - to the thinking of action as rooted in the principle of freedom beyond the instrumentality.

The previous chapter sought to put forth the argument that Arendt's project in political thinking, while being associated and communicating explicitly with political theory, cherishes also an important contribution to philosophy. In other words, when Arendt is writing what she considers her 'political theory' - and which I propose to rename into political thinking²⁶ - through her engagement with historical experiences and the philosophical tradition, she is in fact also redirecting philosophical inquiry and possibly, *radically* so. This however entails a question what Arendt's vibrant narrating of political stories and her dialogizing with diverse modes of understanding those stories means concretely, in terms of thinking the political. Only by answering that question, which more or less coincides with the question of the meaning of the political for Arendt, can the path be set for inquiring into the

²⁶ The term is interesting (and hence employed here) precisely for the ambiguity that it connotes: it is thinking of the political but also thinking politically. This ambiguity of the concept serves as a reminder that the two are essentially interconnected, though they must never be identified. At the same time, their dynamic relating - thinking the political from within the political is necessarily guided by the concerns of thinking politically - is not to be confused with the automatic, causal relationship between theoretical models and policies. This term is here also preferred to the term *political thought*, which resounds more with passivity and substantivity, though the two will occasionally be used interchangeably here for reasons of style or in reference to other writings. It is however important to note that political thinking or thought in the sense of political philosophy here must be distinguished from political thinking which Arendt used to denote what in her last work will have finally be termed judging.

philosophical meaning of her project, and setting the path precisely is the task of this and the following chapter.

Arendt's project between the political and the philosophical

On the one hand, Arendt places herself within the domain of political theory. On the other hand, her work can hardly be regarded as a typical example of political theory. Some critics found it necessary to pose the question what it is that Arendt's political actors talked about in the political sphere as Arendt conceived of it, suggesting that Arendt's work could not be brought to bear upon politics as it is done in reality and as it should be of concern to all of us. Underlying this suggestion there is the implication that Arendt's project is about aestheticizing of political activity.²⁷

In contrast to most other political theorists, it is never clear and evident from Arendt's writings where she stands in relation to democracy or any other form of political order whereas her theory of institutions is confined to a brief and rather sketchy outline of local 'councils' as spaces of freedom. Arendt offers a critique of what politics is about nowadays and retrieves some of the political experiences from history as examples of what politics should be about but her engaging with these experiences as with contemporary politics is hardly of sound normative-theoretical character. Nor do her writings offer explanatory models of 'political behaviour' – of the very phrase she would be most suspicious given her distinction between behaviour and action where only the latter can be associated with politics as Arendt understands it and her skepticism towards conclusions derived from the presumption of 'statistical uniformity'. [HC, 43]

In addition, Arendt's own definition of her role as a theorist stands apart from the most common immanent understanding of this discipline. Thus L. Weissberg argues in the Introduction to *Rahel Varnhagen*:

Arendt's rejection of the position of philosopher for herself rests not on the issue of the feminine, but on the definition of philosophy. She refers to Plato and Kant to draw a distinction between philosophy and political theory, and stakes out the latter field for herself. Philosophy, she explains, can claim political neutrality, and the philosopher can endeavor to speak in the name of humanity. Political science calls on a person to take a position, and for Arendt, who treats philosophy as an occupation of her past, it marks her not only as acting and active person, but also as one who has fallen from innocence. This fall from innocence led to her emigration; for Arendt the political theorist, the search for knowledge

²⁷ See particularly Kateb, G. *Political Action: Its Nature and Advantages*, in Villa, 2000:130-149.

led to a satisfaction, a feeling of being at home, a *Heimatgefühl*. [RV, 25]

Weissberg here relates Arendt's notion of understanding to the condition of being at home. While not entirely inaccurate, this phrase 'being at home' allows a subtle yet significant distinction to slip through, the distinction between becoming at home and being at home. The distinction elegantly captures a tension of the human existence that never ceases to be strange to the world yet the world as it is - remains its world. Hence understanding does not bring about any cozy *Heimatgefühl* but is a constant effort by man to place oneself in the world. This incompleteness of understanding distinguishes it from scientific knowledge, to which belong scientific theories, one which modern political theory has sought to become for the better part of its history.²⁸

What Arendt understands as political theory, and that is also where her identification with that field comes from, is closely connected with the original meaning of the word *theory*, defined outside the confines of the theory-praxis dichotomy. Beyond that dichotomy, theory is the effort to understand the world and to position oneself towards it. Understanding is here concerned with meaning, it is the reading of the world that cannot be equated either with the quest for truth or with the strife for control over the world. It places the 'reader' of a meaning in relation to the world, the world which shows itself through a specific situation or event or phenomenon, and through theorizing the 'reader' seeks to disclose what that specific situation or event or phenomenon communicates to her and how her position changes in relation to the communicated. Understanding is then this fine tuning to the waves of the movement of the world which cannot be either differentiated or segregated from the human existence:

Understanding is unending and therefore cannot produce final results. It is the specifically human way of being alive; for every single person needs to be reconciled to a world into which he was born a stranger and in which, to the extent of his distinct uniqueness, he always remains a stranger. Understanding begins with birth and ends with death. [EIU, 308]

If understanding is about living, and if life, according to Arendt, can only be grasped in a story that outlives it, then understanding must also be rendered in a form of story. It is no surprise then that Arendt seems to be most comfortable among those whom she calls 'writers' in

²⁸ These words echo Heidegger's understanding of philosophy as the way to being home everywhere. The source of philosophical thinking is a certain homesickness but there is no home proper to which this homesickness can be directed. It is not a homesickness for any place in particular, for a somewhere, but for anywhere: "Rather, to be at home everywhere mean to be at once and at all times within the whole. We name this 'within the whole' and its character of wholeness the world. We are, and to the extent that we are, we are always waiting for something. We are always called upon by something as a whole. This 'as a whole' is the world." [Heidegger, 1929/1995:5]

distinction to 'thinkers' - in the sense of professional thinkers, that is philosophers. The writers are those who "write out of political experiences and for the sake of politics." Unlike the writers, the thinkers are those who "write from the outside and they want to impose non-political standards," the implication being that political activity has no inherent value, only instrumental. By contrast, Arendt, like the writers among whom she singles out Montesquieu, Machiavelli, Tocqueville, also never asks "what is the end of politics, what is the end of government." So again, in distinction to theorists as much as to philosophers, Arendt finds herself in the company of those who do not build conceptual systems but think about what they see [FMM, 1/023453] and seek to tell stories of what they observe, thus keeping that experience, event, occurrence, alive. [MID, 97]

So if Arendt is not a philosopher, if she does not construct a theoretical system, what is it that she does? She defines her own project in painfully simple but not unambitious terms: "a re-examination of the whole realm of politics in the light of elementary human experiences within this realm itself." [EIU, 432] In this re-examination, she warns her students in her lecture notes, there can be: "[n]o theories, forget all theories. We want to be confronted with direct experience, to relive this period vicariously." [PETC, 1/023609] She adds quickly that abstaining from theories does not imply abstention from thought, but it does involve redirecting of thought, away from the prescriptive and the predictive, as from the descriptive projects of political theory, so that thinking can reach for the concrete experience, unbarred by the frameworks of scientific cognition. Scientific cognition involves subsumption of the particular under the universal and the incessant testing of validity of the principles of subsumption and of the universal categories. It stands therefore in sharp contrast to Arendt's insistence on the uniqueness of historical experiences and her effort to understand their interconnectedness without monistic reduction, for which she seems to rely more on imagination than on scientific rationality, that is - on ability to project oneself outside one's own circumstances and grasp the meaning of phenomena from within. [PETC, 1/023609]

Arendt's intention is thus not to tell us what politics should be like, but tries to understand what acting politically, in concrete instances, means to us. In that attempt, she collects the instances of difference, examples, but instructive as they may be - Arendt herself is not the one who is instructing. She seems rather to tell stories insofar "[t]he story reveals the meaning of what otherwise would remain an unbearable sequence of sheer happenings." [MDT, 104] Unlike science or philosophy, "storytelling reveals meaning without committing the error of defining it." [MDT, 105]

But meaning as Arendt understands it is not *the* meaning of traditional philosophical quest, not metaphysical Meaning, but the narrated meaning that assumes plurality of narrators, narratives and meanings and is in fact what one would today call a Derridian effect of the

interlacing of stories, always confirmed and always challenged anew through other stories.

Why then Arendt's insistence on this labeling 'political theorist?' It is aimed more at distancing Arendt from philosophy than at nearing her to theory. There is something problematic in philosophy and Arendt seeks to take distance, to distinguish her project from philosophical horizons. That which is problematic in philosophy for Arendt concerns not so much the crisis of philosophy as philosophy's predominant understanding of itself and its role in terms of Truth. Arendt argues that Truth exerts a compulsive force, which closes off any space for discussion or negotiation, the space that is properly political. [BPF, 235]

By contrast, Arendt's work in its entirety is founded on the understanding that men are many and so must be the meanings of the world since they concern the many. In that multitude, the meanings and their readings are mutually challenging, competing, contesting, occasionally coming into precarious balance, only to be disturbed anew. They may have equal bearing – or not. But ultimately, the world opens itself to understanding only through this irreducible multitude of what it is to mean, and that is irreconcilable with one single truth. Whereas the 'readings' of the world can be many as well as the meanings, the Truth is one or it is not.²⁹

In that sense, the traditional philosophy was no place for Arendt's project. But there also is a subtle intuition that Arendt is not ready to abandon philosophy to those who seek to replace meaning with Truth. That intuition suggest that Arendt considers her own approach, the search for meaning, to have a stronger right to philosophy defined as the exercise in thinking, than those approaches that led philosophy away from thinking and towards knowing. Thus there can be detected another, almost undercurrent strand of Arendt's thinking, which is *re-constitutive* of philosophy in the sense of building without foundation or even against what understood itself as a foundation, while unearthing within that very foundation-no-longer a potential for overcoming the fatigue of philosophy. Arendt's effort thus brings to the surface a deliberately submerged and marginalized connection between thinking, other than contemplation, and philosophy.

This perhaps explains why Arendt's sources, the interlocutors in her inquiries into the political are mainly drawn from what is historically demarcated as the region of philosophy. Her writings hardly ever open a dialogue with her contemporaries in the field of political theory or enter contemporaneous debates in the field. Nor is her engagement

²⁹ At the same time, Arendt makes even a stronger claim when she argues against the quest for Truth – that philosophers have misunderstood the main task of Reason and effectively reduced philosophy to science and cognition, because that is the proper place of truth, and thus eventually pushed philosophy into a hopeless battle for space with modern science: "*The need of reason is not inspired by the quest for truth but by the quest for meaning. And truth and meaning are not the same.*" [LM/I:15]

with phenomena an engagement by doing in the sense of the French existentialists after the Second World War.

Arendt does not believe that, in the face of the occurrences beyond all understanding such as the extermination camps, thought should be dismissed altogether. How strongly she rejects this is clear from her criticism of the French existentialist school, which contrary to the whole of philosophical tradition, looks "to politics for the solution of philosophic perplexities [...] It is as though that whole generation tried to escape from philosophy into politics..." [EIU, 437] There are undoubtedly certain sympathetic undertones to Arendt's critique of this movement, which evokes somewhat paradoxically the years following the First World War saturated with worshipping of the notion of resolute action. But Arendt dislocates it from both politics and philosophy and declares it 'utopian,' perhaps even dangerously so. She partly finds it problematic that their primary concern is, again, not with the world and changing it but with human subjectivity. This places the movement in a sinister affiliation to the tradition of philosophy, though it understands itself as a rebellion against all philosophy. But more importantly for Arendt's own project, there lurks peril in the leap into action. The peril struck Arendt in all its clarity at the time of the Eichmann trial: it is the peril of action divorced from thought which can only lead to the destruction of "validity and meaningfulness." [HC, 225]

This reveals that Arendt is not after an escape from thought into action, just as she did not accept the reverse movement, from action into thought. In the essay quoted above, Arendt thus talks of a "new political philosophy," suggesting that there indeed is space, within philosophy, for a different thinking of the political. Her project does not take us to a model of politics but demonstrates how it is possible to think the political differently without abandoning action as freedom incarnate. In that sense, it is not a political project but a project in thinking and towards thinking of the political.

Most simply put, in Arendt's words, she attempts to "think what we are doing." [HC, 5] She is not trying to grasp what or who we are or why we are here or what caused us and our world, all of those the time-old metaphysical concerns. Those questions border on impossibility since the events of the twentieth century, as well as the entire modern age with its restless movement forward, towards 'more' or 'better' or 'stronger' without ever considering *what* is more or better or stronger and what it does for us, urge us to confront not our grand designs or projected effects/results of our actions but these actions themselves. Confronting here means to translate actions and events out of our schemes and plans, back into our world in order to understand what we are doing to the world and ourselves. It is a project that comes out of Arendt's diagnosis of modernity as the age of world-alienation, the diagnosis of a gap opening between men and the world to which men simply and inevitably belong. Moreover, as the world itself is threatened with dissolution into the flux of naturalized historical processes, understanding becomes not only an effort at world preservation but

also at the recovery of the world and man's bond to it, in the sense of binding man to the world, disclosing to man how her doing necessarily falls into the world and how neither the world can escape her action nor she can escape the world.

Arendt considers the concern with the loss of the world as much more pressing than the concerns with any other forms of alienation, foregrounded by the discourses such as Marxism or French existentialism, which focus on collective or individual subject but not the world. The dark undertones of Arendt's concern should be read in the light of the historical situation of her generation that witnessed totalitarianism and its, never entirely uprooted, consequences:

Totalitarianism taught Arendt how absolutely indispensable such a realm of stability was, and how destructive the principle of unlimited dynamism instantiated in the restless activism of the totalitarian movements themselves could be. [Villa, 187]

Arendt's work thus insists on reminding us of the weight, even gravity, not of our existence for the being that is a man, which is the intention that Caputo attributes to the philosophical effort of the twentieth century, [1987:1] but of our existence for the world. However, the movement of philosophy beyond metaphysics, which marks the turn of the century, did create a radically new philosophical situation. To think philosophically ceases to be the dwelling in the nearness of the Eternal and the Absolute. These new currents in philosophy were driven by something echoing, at least remotely, the Socratic impulse of contesting and challenging all authorities, opening and holding in the open all norm, convention, the canon, through asking unanswerable questions.

Such philosophy is very remote from the philosophical tradition that forced Arendt to seek refuge in 'theory,' much more welcoming to Arendt's efforts in the way that traditional philosophy could never have been. Arendt acknowledges this movement within philosophy:

... the philosopher has left behind him the claim to being 'wise' and knowing eternal standards for the perishable affairs of the City of men, for such 'wisdom' could be justified only from a position outside the realm of human affairs and be thought legitimate only by virtue of the philosopher's proximity to the Absolute. [...] The abandonment of the position of 'wise man' by the philosopher himself is politically perhaps the most important and the most fruitful result of new philosophical concern with politics. [EIU, 432]

What the tremor produced by these new philosophical currents would mean for political philosophy can be read from Arendt's own work. In fact, it could be argued that Arendt's thinking itself constituted an opening or groundwork for a different political philosophy. In the attempt to seize a unique philosophical/thinking potential for recovering

the principle of freedom, enacted in the moment of breaking through as opening on to rather than only rupturing, Arendt is involved in thinking which Nancy defines as "hold[ing] itself in leap as a discovery of existence in leap." [Nancy, 1988/1993:58] Nancy's understanding of thinking captures the core of Arendt's project, in both its dimensions – political and philosophical, which emerge from Arendt's dialogue with tradition. These two levels are not unconnected and their connection is more than structural – it is fundamental to Arendt's project in its entirety. Or rather, that very connection *is* Arendt's project, the project of uncovering the potential for thinking the world and human condition from within and not from the elevated position of the contemplating philosopher.

Namely, political theory, albeit unanimously considered to be Arendt's main contribution to philosophy,³⁰ is only the most visible layer of Arendt's philosophical project that, as will be argued, is devoted not only to redefining the philosophical approach to human action but also to re-defining the place of such re-constituted political philosophy as concern with freedom and action within philosophy, relocating it from the margins of philosophy into its very centre. It is in that sense that it is peculiar to single out Arendt as an opening towards a different philosophy: in offering a renewal of philosophy, Arendt does not think philosophy but the political.

At the same time, Arendt however offers a solution to the odium of philosophy towards politics. It lies not in denial or defiance of philosophy but in "reformulation of the philosopher's attitude toward the political realm, or of the connection between man as a philosophical and as a political being, or of the relationship between thought and action." [EIU, 445] This seems to be what Arendt takes up as her project and that is how it again becomes meaningful to speak of Arendt as a philosopher or a thinker without violating her own understanding of her position and work.

It is therefore only a partial understanding of Arendt's work to look into what she says of the political. There also is the dimension of investigating the possibility of political philosophy despite its inherent contradictions, as is evident in the essay on *Philosophy and Politics* [EIU]. The investigation is later additionally motivated by the concerns which haunted Arendt's reporting from the Eichmann trial, when it became clear to Arendt that action itself was at stake in the struggle for thinking beyond Absolutes.

Of the method: Arendt's embedded idiosyncrasies

Arendt's dialogue with the current of the philosophical tradition that was concerned with the living-together in the world as well as with historical

³⁰ Almost all of the Arendt-related scholarship, with exception of Dana Villa's interpretations, focuses on Arendt as a political theorist, following her own affiliation to that discipline as well as her persistent critique of philosophy.

and contemporary political experiences, is therefore indebted much more to the German existentialist philosophy and particularly to Heidegger's thought. Arendt's inquiry is, in a certain sense, coming out of the possibilities opened up by Heidegger's inquiry into Being is the inquiry into Dasein that can be understood only as thrown and existing in the here and now, in the world, and whose essence is in its existence and the taking up of it. In other words, Heidegger advances philosophy as a concern with the being that is of this world and in the world, not with the other of the world.

Entering the place occupied by the tradition in philosophical thinking is meaningful to Heidegger only insofar that is a place of possibilities which, if explored, may lead to uncovering the sources of our questions. As Heidegger argues, any engagement with tradition that would not expose its illusions and dead-ends, that would fail to demarcate its limits, would entail only further *entanglement* of Dasein in the cobwebs of tradition, preventing not so much the glimpse of answers but silencing the questions.

The proper way to engage with tradition can therefore be only through destructuring which, although pervaded with negative tendencies "tacitly and indirectly," [Heidegger, 1927/1996:23] cannot be equated with mere negation of tradition since philosophy as mere negation of tradition can never lead beyond tradition. Negation remains similarly frozen and fossilized in the past concepts and (mis)understandings. Rather, by conversing with the history of philosophy, Heidegger is trying to speak with and to the today of philosophy, seizing the "positive possibilities" of the tradition by "fixing its boundaries." [Heidegger, 1927/1996:22]

To fully understand Arendt's sometimes retrospective inquiry into philosophy and politics, therefore, one must not allow it to slip out of sight that the critical interpretation of the philosophical tradition does not occupy a sovereign position within Arendt's project but constitutes a departure point for its own overcoming. In the analysis of Kafka's parable (the Preface to *Between Past and Future*) Arendt states her own position of a thinker trying to think the contemporaneous historical reality, without the support of the tradition exhausted. The text, just as the opening pages of *The Human Condition*, reveals Arendt as a thinker tied to modernity, and so not even or not only because she renounces the traditional philosophers' refuge in contemplation, that elevated position of the lover (and knower) of wisdom above the pandemonium of the things human, the renouncement which she, as other thinkers of the twentieth century, inherits from Marx and Nietzsche. Rather, the bond lies in the awareness that there can be no refuge, not any longer, and Arendt's appropriation of this absence of refuge as a potential. This thinking renounces the aspiration to absolute comprehension and aspires to seize the potentials of the age without resorting to covering up and without concealing the shadows of totalitarianism by pronouncing them unthinkable.

The re-constitutive and re-constructive, as opposed to restorative, nature of Arendt's critical interpretation results in rather idiosyncratic insights into the work of the thinkers whom she singles out as landmarks. As it is not an exegetical intention that guides her, the interpretations more often than not seem to deviate from the main course of the thinker's work or to ignore the facets of thought other than those that serve Arendt to substantiate her claims.

Arendt's inquiry should therefore not be read as a mapped route from the known departure point to the pre-defined destination point: it is rather an open-ended ex-cursion, *out-of-the-course* in the Heideggerian sense of the *off the beaten tracks*, guided by occasional outbursts, dive into certain historical moments when the political was experienced in its rawness, as the 'sheer joy' of acting in concert [APH] in resistance to the automatism of events. Those for Arendt were the moments of the political felt as freedom, of which some traces entered the concurrent conceptualisations of the political, leaving them open to conceiving of the political outside the traditional philosophical discourses.

Similarly to Heidegger who reads the history of metaphysics as the story of deserted or even buried 'wellsprings,' the silencing of origins of philosophical questioning in existence and the covering-up of the irremediable groundlessness of all philosophy, [Heidegger, 1927/1996:21] Arendt narrates political philosophy as the history of the fear of politics and the efforts to subdue it to the rule of ideas. It is the history of antipolitical tendencies, which obscured and obfuscated the meaning of doing politics. While at the same time conversing with those figures of the tradition that offered an opening into a different thinking of the political by thinking the political from within. Those Arendt considers to be the 'positive possibilities' in the tradition of political philosophy.

It falls beyond any need for argument that Arendt understands her own involvement with the political in this sense, never attempting to superimpose upon the deeds and events of the world but taking an active stance towards them. Equally so, she does not hesitate to take up the odd streams or traces placed within those philosophical systems which belong firmly in metaphysical tradition, such as that of Kant or Duns Scotus, but somehow out of place, *unheimlich* there, allowing an alternative to the metaphysical grasp of the world to show through. These Arendt develops in an unexpected direction, the direction beyond both the metaphysical tradition and the auctorial intentions.

Arendt would thus agree with Benjamin that "in every era the attempt must be made anew to wrest tradition away from a conformism that is about to overpower it." [Benjamin, 1999:24] It is understandable that Arendt, Heidegger and the others, as all renovators, seek to disclose the ruined and exhausted core of tradition, the crumbling of insides behind the stone walls. Or even to reveal that there never were any interiors, only the walls or the shell, since Heidegger finds that the question of the meaning and hence also the question of Being has

never been asked, and Arendt argues that the millennia long, dominant tradition of political philosophy has never even attempted to understand, only to capture, politics as a distinctly human mode of existence.

But, it could be asked why it is important, to both Arendt and Heidegger and not only them, to engage with this tradition, to uncover potential for the new "from the interior of our tradition." [Nancy, 1988/1993:74] Ultimately, why not do away with all that tradition in one stroke? Is it that, as Shklar reads Arendt, Arendt's project is modeled on "true Roman foundations [which] were not seen as original creations, but as returns to foundations?" [Shklar, 1977:84] And, implicitly, does Arendt believe that there is *the* origin or *the* source which can be recovered through hermeneutical endeavour?

In a sense, to engage with the tradition exhausted, as Arendt does, suggests that there is no source or origin but only various readings of the world and existence, even if some of those readings aspired to transcend the world and existence altogether. Implicitly, to assume that tradition can be done away with, that it can be transcended, rather than overcome, implies that philosopher can still raise himself to an elevated position, that philosopher is free from the burden of tradition, distanced from it and honoured with ahistorical sight. Arendt's involvement with the tradition is in fact recognition, in all philosophical modesty, that the fabric of any conceptual thinking, even if claiming radical newness, is necessarily woven out of the old conceptual threads, hence this peculiar 'dialectic' of "both inheriting and rejecting tradition." [Pitkin, 1998:243]

The necessity of delving into tradition belongs to the core of the phenomenological method:

[I]t is precisely that with late Husserl we discover all the vital importance of tradition for truth, namely that we can dwell by the source and ultimately reach it in its true sense only through innumerable previous productions and achievements. [Vlaisavljević, 2003:115, transl. by SN]

(Re)visiting sources thus understood is not return to the roots or origins but rather a referral to the beginnings, in the sense of Edward Said's distinction [Said, 1985:6] between beginnings as retention of open-endedness, "a displacement into the present... [when/where] time's arrow begins to point forward," and origins that are the "embodiment of infinite regress to the past." [Sennet, 1990:195] This referral, in Arendt's work, is then informed by one of the three basic components of the phenomenological method as Heidegger defines it, *deconstruction*: "A critical process in which the traditional concepts, which at first must necessarily be employed, are deconstructed down to the sources from which they were drawn." [1927/1982:23]

But Arendt's 'deconstruction,' taken here in the above sense of Heidegger's phenomenological method, is guided by her understanding of the sources as experiences, not as the sources of thinking. Arendt

does hear and follow the phenomenological imperative: "To the things themselves!" [Heidegger, 1927/1996:28] In that sense, her methodology is indebted to the phenomenological teaching, but it must be noted that it is not Husserlian transcendental but Heidegger's existentialist phenomenology which insists on the historicity of Dasein. [Caputo, 1987:87]

For Heidegger, philosophical inquiry begins with and returns to the state of being gripped, [1929/1995:7] the state which properly (cor)responds to philosophical, metaphysical questioning of the whole that always inescapably "comprehends within itself the questioner." [Heidegger, 1929/1995:14] For Arendt, thinking springs from the 'living incidents' and to those it must return, [BPF, 14] never allowing the thinker to rest upon a disinterested position. The methodological path for both Arendt and Heidegger therefore leads through re-examination of philosophical works in the light of experience, displacing philosophical inquiry from the heights of contemplation, bringing it back to the here and now with which one, any-one, is concerned.

What sets her apart from Heidegger's "positive return to the past... in the sense of its productive appropriation," [1927/1996:22] is that Arendt engages not with existential experiences that arise from the human existential situation but with concrete, historical political experiences.³¹

[E]very political philosophy at first glance seems to face the alternative either of interpreting philosophical experience with categories which owe their origin to the realm of human affairs or, on the contrary, of claiming priority for philosophic experience and judging all politics in its light. [PP, 92]

Arendt's own work testifies to her philosophic decision in this matter insofar her political thought is interlaced with historical narratives. If there can therefore be any meaning to the discourse of the origins or sources for Arendt and if there is the sense in repeating the tradition, it is only insofar the notion of sources refers to the historical political life in all its diversity: Athens, Rome, Florentine Republic, perhaps above all for Arendt - American Revolution as a political experience which historically belongs to past but politically remains the present.³²

As Arendt's thinking is thinking that feeds on experience in the attempt to render the specific historical situation meaningful, it is worth not

³¹ Indicatively, Arendt's first scholarly work was on St. Augustine, the one thinker who evaded conversation with the likes of himself and instead reached into repository of his worldly experiences for guidance. [LM/II:114]

³² The significance of American Revolution for the present, which Arendt never tired of reiterating, derives from the fact that revolutions epitomize the groundless condition of modernity and pose a problem for political thinking since "revolutions are the only political events which confront us directly and inevitably with the problem of beginning," [OR, 21] the problem peculiar to the modern age that is confronted with the radically new situation of beginning anew, in distinction to the situation of change within, the existing, which characterized the political thinking prior to modern revolutions.

rushing on in order to dwell on Arendt's concept of experience at this point. Arendt's concept of experience does not bear two of the habitual meanings. It has cut or shaken off its link to the empirical, retaining the connotations of *attempt* but not the relation to the prefixed *em-* as *en-*, therefore pushing in(to). In that sense, instead of throwing the one who questions back onto the infinite, all-encompassing subject, it seeks to draw out, to pull out, to extricate and extract, and push into the open and expose.

Firstly, it removes itself from the methodological understanding of experience as an analytical tool which, when presumed as "the origin of knowledge," allows "the vision of the individual subject... [to become] the bedrock of evidence upon which explanation is built." [Butler and Scott, 1992:25] In recourse to specific events, Arendt does not seek to objectify them into evidence, *corpus* in the broadest sense, in order to support a theory. Namely, to theorize for Arendt involves saving, saving of what is observed from oblivion so that it can then be related to our own experiences in the attempt to render the latter understandable, inhabitable in a way. In that sense, history is not a repository of dead evidence but a treasury of experiences to be related to and thus preserved against leveling into generalizations. To Arendt, experiences therefore do not *serve* and they are not *in function*, they are narratives that communicate directly with our own narratives, without mediation of theories and philosophies which no longer offer a home in the world. [GTNT, 12-13]

It is therefore not experience as wisdom, experience as 'gospel' to shield us from the very experience. [Benjamin, 1996:4] Rather, thinking from experience assumes venturing into the world through the concern with it. It abandons all claim to certainty and ground, embracing instead a leap into the open, not for the sake of gathering knowledge or penetrating into essence other than existence but following Heidegger's understanding of the essence of man and everything of man as existence, [1927/1996:43] which shares with experience the same perilous ex-

An experience is first of all the encounter with an actual given, or rather, in a less simply positive vocabulary, it is the testing of something real... Also, according to the origin of the word "experience" in *peirā* and in *ex-periri*, an experience is an attempt executed without reserve, given over to the *peril* of its own lack of foundation and security in this 'object' of which it is not the subject but instead the passion, exposed like the pirate (*peirātēs*) which freely tries his luck on the high seas. [Nancy, 1988/1993:20]

In other words, Arendt does not attempt to read political/historical experiences through the prism of political philosophy but the other way around, instructed by Heidegger's deconstructing as based upon the original experiences. [1927/1996:22]

Arendt's venture will be approached here through the interpretation of two moments in Arendt's thinking, body politic and action, which as occurrences in historical reality, in Arendt's reading, embody plurality and freedom, two concepts crucial for understanding of Arendt's political thinking and for relating it to philosophy as a project. In Arendt's reading of the entire tradition of philosophy, including political philosophy or especially political philosophy, those two concepts are persistently placed in opposition.

Arendt however understands her task as revealing, through references to political experiences, that plurality and freedom do not appear as opposed in the world and that they should not be thought in opposition either. Arendt's thinking is fully imbued by the rejection of this opposition but its implications reach out, beyond conceptualization of the political. Though it is the observation of the interconnectedness of plurality and freedom in *praxis*, the interconnectedness which is not external but intrinsic to both, that informs Arendt's conceptualization of the political against the mainstream of tradition, the problematized opposition is not tackled merely through the empirical narratives but above all conceptually. Arendt's conceptual overcoming of the deadlock of modern political theory therefore constitutes a stepping stone for a different philosophy which will not seek to position itself out of the reach of contingencies generated by both human plurality and human freedom but will seek to draw its questions from inevitable interlacing of the two within the human existence, as will be argued in the final chapter.

Institution as action

Arendt's inquiry into the political as a sphere of sharing a part of the world with unfamiliar others should be understood in distinction to the modern study of the political as a cognitive framework. The study of the political as cognitive framework can be traced back to the origins of modern political theory, which is informed on the one hand by the historical developments in the political field and on the other - by the rise of exact science in the cognitive sphere. These two factors in the rise and development of modern political theory are deeply interconnected.

The early modern age was marked by the turmoil in the politico-religious structures, which ordered relations within political entities, among political subjects. Though Middle Ages could hardly be described as peaceful, they were followed by the turbulent emergence of the revolution-generated new political order in America and France, which radically transformed the old pattern of relations while also depriving the new order of legitimation within the venerated religious horizon. More succinctly, individuals and collectivities were rendered autonomous and in the place of the strife for freedom, there emerged the *problem* of freedom. As P. Wagner argues, in such political constellation "the social sciences are exactly a part of the response human beings gave to their new condition of [...] contingency and

principled uncertainty." The emerging social sciences thus came to be understood as "a means to decrease contingency." [2001:39]

In the attempt to apprehend and master the new condition, exact sciences were taken as a model for social sciences, which accordingly focus on the discovery of the laws that would allow the construction of explanatory frameworks for events of the world and actions of human beings in the first instance and in the second – lead to devising the patterns of predictability by means of which the events and actions could be subjected to efficient control: "In modernity, the insistence upon taking charge of the world comes into its own. [...] Human and non-human nature become material to work on." [Connolly, 1989:2]

This modeling of social sciences upon exact sciences, in their flight from contingency to the fascination with order, drives Arendt to locate modern political theory in what she perceives as continuum of philosophical tradition where "most political philosophies have their origin in the philosopher's negative and sometimes even hostile attitude toward the *polis* and the whole realm of human affairs." [EIU, 428]

It is not that Arendt fails to recognize novelty in thinking of political affairs that modern political theory brings about. As Arendt points out, the ages abundant in political philosophies have of necessity been the same those torn by political crises and turmoil. [EIU, 430] Thus in the midst of chaotic and turbulent decades of the Late Middle Ages, a new intellectual approach to the political activity and sphere appears, granting the unprecedented status to political concerns. In the continuum of philosophical tradition, a new space for political inquiry or rather, for philosophical inquiry into political affairs, however did open up with modern political theory, which responded to the immediate concerns of the new age and the conflicts between religious and secular authorities, seeking to understand the political from within:

[H]uman affairs pose authentic philosophic problems and... politics is a domain in which genuine philosophic questions arise, and not merely a sphere of life which ought to be ruled by precepts that owe their origin to altogether different experiences. [EIU, 430]

But despite this new, elevated status of political concerns as focus of philosophical inquiry, Arendt contends that the fear of spontaneity and uncontrollability of action, the understanding of action not as the political properly speaking but as the political *problem*, remains a motor of philosophical, or now rather theoretical involvement with the political sphere.³³

³³ Paradoxically, political philosophy would itself fall prey to this new movement towards scientific study of human interaction, which resulted in the transition from political philosophy to social sciences between 1750 and 1850. Wagner, 2001: 36.

As Arendt observes, action – witnessed in all its wild unpredictability by the contemporaries of the democratic revolutions – failed the moderns on two accounts. Firstly, being perishable and fleeting as it is, it could not guarantee immortality to actors of the now secular political realm, that is – a realm no longer venerated through recourse to transcendental authority. On the other hand, understood teleologically in the context of modern progressivist narratives through which the idea of the eternal political order was slowly being replaced by the idea of a programmed future as the playground of political projects, [Koselleck, 1985:278-279] it has proved to be an unreliable instrument which ‘almost never fulfills its original intentions.’ [BPF, 84] Neither Hobbes nor those before him nor those who followed in his footsteps to shape the modern liberal thinking conceived of the political as that which has to remain in the discontinuous that freedom is, which will have become the principal assumption of Arendt’s political thought and which sets that thought apart from the mainstream political theory.

Underlying modern political theory, Arendt thus uncovers the same fear that marked the classical philosophy – the fear of spontaneity and uncontrollability of action, the understanding of action not as the political properly speaking but as a or *the* problem to which political institutions must respond by containing it. The method has been transformed – from that of the contemplation to the scientific pursuit of knowledge but the demand remains the same as that of Plato:

[W]hat the philosophers almost unanimously have demanded of the political realm was a state of affairs where action, properly speaking (i.e., not execution of laws or application of rules or any other managing activity, but the beginning of something new whose outcome is unpredictable), would be either altogether superfluous or remain the privilege of the few. [EIU, 1954/1994:429]

The modernist idea that human affairs can be (and need to be) rendered perfectly controllable once their laws are established, the same way that natural processes yield to the control by science once the mysteries of the nature are translated into axioms, to Arendt rings familiar tones of the ancient ambition of the classical philosophy: “When armed with the right method, and further armed with opportunity, man could construct a political order as timeless as a Euclidean theorem.” [Wolin, 1960:243] Arendt’s critique of modern political theory, although beginning with the praise of the new, elevated status of politics as a focus of philosophical inquiry, culminates therefore in uncovering of the continuity of the effort to dislocate action from the political sphere or, even more precisely, to detach action from the political.

It follows thereof that, in Arendt’s reading, modern theoretical study of the political understands itself as the search for the possibility of the political order embodied in a perfectly controllable, automatic course of political processes and procedures. The principal implication, arguably

even explication, of Arendt's understanding of modern political theory, apart from its innovative claim to autonomy and legitimacy of *philosophical* inquiry into political matters, is the understanding that a certain continuity between the modern theory and the classical tradition is established through this predominant concept of politics as an instrument of control over (political) action. In other words, modern political theory offers the concept of politics which centers on order understood in opposition to freedom.

According to Arendt, the concept of the political centred on order as opposed to freedom bars the sighting of the political but not only. Arendt's rejection of thinking of the political that would be centred on political systems and political order in general, which are the undisputable focus of the main bulk of efforts by political philosophers and theorists throughout history, rests on her deep conviction that to center on order is not only to misunderstand what politics is about but also to get involved in annihilation of the political. This conviction pervades all of her works: not only is Arendt not interested in political systems but she considers any such effort ultimately anti-political insofar as the structures of political order seek to harness and control action which is the core of the political.

The question is, how can then Arendt's thought be regarded as political thought, given that the political is concerned with living in community and community does form a certain normative framework of living together. Does Arendt then have anything to say about the political as lived within and through certain normative delimitations?

Arendt's understanding of meaningful thinking of the political corresponds closely with a tradition of political thought bordering on political philosophy, nevertheless outside it, those "modes of thought [...] particularly concerned with problems of political particularity, with what was intellectually possible when the particular political society was viewed as existing in time, when the particular contingency or event was viewed as arising in time, and when the particular society was viewed as a structure for absorbing and responding to the challenges posed by such events and as consisting, institutionally and historically, of the traces of such responses made in past time." [Pocock, 2003:9]

In that sense, Arendt's political thinking itself responds to her own particular-historical, which is the political life after the occurrence of the totalitarian states while responding to the fact that the aftermath of one totalitarian form is not necessarily an overcoming of totalitarianism. This uncertainty about overcoming of totalitarianism or 'totalitarian tendencies,' in Arendt's understanding, is the particular-historical that demands her attention as a thinker. The pervasion of all spaces of a community by the monstrous machinery that propagated collectivity yet executed homogenization, having moved towards total uniformity in aspiration towards perfect order, posed to the Arendt's generation the question of the political.

Arendt's position as a thinker is therefore located between the historico-political threat of totalitarianism on the one hand and on the other - a certain conceptual void, an inability of modern political theory to conceive more than an impoverished notion of political community, rooted in the equation of the political with government, within the framework of individualist liberalism which is tied to and tied by "the rights-endowed individual [as] the only conceivable ontological as well as the methodological foundation." [Wagner, 2001:43] To Arendt, both the threat and the void are related to the obsession with control and annihilation of contingencies, which spans centuries of political history as well as political thought.

In the attempt to respond to the threat of totalitarianism by moving beyond the liberalist paradigm in thinking of the political, Arendt seeks to retrieve a different notion of political community, the roots of which reach back to the ancient *polis*. Arendt's observations on the *polis* are written in an infinitely more sympathetic tone than her accounts of the modern state, which seems to be most interesting to Arendt in its totalitarian form. It is indicative that whereas the totalization of politics by totalitarian regimes is depicted in the *Origins of Totalitarianism* as something of the deviated or perverted political, totalitarian state is not considered a deformation of state. On the contrary, what pervades Arendt's writings would be the intuition that the modern state as such is itself a historical deformation of political community. Arendt could thus agree with Schmitt's critique of Hobbes' concept of the state "as an essential factor in the four-hundred-year long process of mechanization" [Schmitt, 1938/1996:41-42] although she would perhaps also assert that state is a mechanized political community. What Arendt would therefore consider lost is not the theological fabric of state's legitimacy,³⁴ which rendered the state "hollow and already dead from within," [Schmitt, 1938/1996, 61] but of the political sphere as a 'space of appearance' [HC, 199], which means both the space for appearance of political actors and the space created by their appearance, therefore by definition non-substantive.

As mentioned, the absence of the term state is most conspicuous in Arendt's political thinking. Apart from the specific historical analyses in the *Origins of Totalitarianism*, Arendt very rarely - if ever - employs the term. Her distancing from this term and concept becomes clearer from her explanation of its origin in Machiavelli's writings. Machiavelli derived *lo stato* from three terms - status, estate and state/condition, all three entailing stability as immobility.³⁵ Arendt however was looking

³⁴ This is given in Schmitt's conceptual idiom, the fabric is political theology that rejects privatization of inner beliefs thus establishing and preserving a substantive bond between state and its subjects.

³⁵ Machiavelli of course is not the first to employ the concept though the development of the modern concept of state should be attributed to him and other Renaissance political writers, according to Quentin Skinner's genealogy of the concept. Skinner also accentuates that, as other writers of the time, Machiavelli still associates institutions with the person of the ruler: "When he uses the term to refer to an apparatus of government, he is usually at pains to emphasize that it needs to remain in the hands of the prince: that *lo stato*, as he often puts it, remains equivalent to *il suo stato*, the prince's own state

for a term that would encapsulate the dynamism of political bond and reject its substantivity, and she found the two entwined in the term *body politic*. The logic behind the prevalence of *body politic* in Arendt's conceptual repository is rendering the political framework, not only its content, in dynamic terms. Despite its realness, materiality, substantivity, firmness, the 'body' necessarily entails motion, inside and outside. The potentiality of motion of the body is ever-present and always actualized. Absence of movement from body, by body, spells death as the absolute rest.

Body politic as a concept in political thought can be traced back to the organicist framework and the early modern fascination with analogies between the human world and the nature or rather, the semblance in functioning of human affairs to that of the natural processes. Arendt however cherishes a particular suspicion towards the tendency of modern science to draw parallels between these two worlds. Moreover, she is skeptical towards attempts to subjugate them to, and judge them on the ground of, the same set of uniform standards. [HC, 262] All throughout, Arendt insists on the uniqueness of human life as a rectilinear and more often than not haphazard movement cutting into the perfect and self-perpetual cycles of nature, which is incessantly rotating along the same course, determined by the immutable laws of nature.

Furthermore, *body* evokes the image of a perfectly functioning whole, not only a harmony but total unity of its parts, which derive their meaning and roles from the whole. It is a term which seems to synthesize the notion of 'naturalized' politics and the idea of polity as an organism in which all parts function towards the same goal of keeping the organism alive. Ultimately, it is an image which seems to evoke Rousseauian threads of political thought, or Arendt's reading of his thought, where *body politic* is indeed understood as a body, the decay of which would lie in the centrifugal tendencies of its parts, in other words – the withdrawal of those parts into their particularities would spell death to the whole.³⁶ *Body politic* in Rousseau's interpretation, pervaded with his idea of general will, thus runs against the core of Arendt's understanding of the political as that which happens not by *the people*, the uniform singular of multitude absorbing all distance among unique beings, but among *men*, a plural therefore that implies the 'web of human relationships' [HC, 183] in irreducible diversity of human beings.

Notwithstanding the genealogy of the concept, which stands in contradiction with Arendt's understanding of the political as opposed to

or condition of rulership." [Ball, Farr and Hanson, 1989:97] This may be the root of Arendt's systematic rejection of the term as founded on the premise of the gap between rulers and the ruled.

³⁶ In Arendt's interpretation, Rousseau responds to the question of establishing and maintaining a political bond by drawing a corporeal image of polity as a "multitude united in one body and driven by one will... a multiheaded monster, a mass that moves as one body." [OR, 94]

the natural, Arendt's insistence on the concept can be understood in light of her concern of circumventing the theoretical dead-ends in establishing the bond between citizens and their polity. If we think of political community and citizens separately, Arendt warns, we are not thinking the political but public administration or government, and we choose to remain under the spell of the Platonic dichotomy between the ruler and the ruled. The (Platonic) ruler is the knower of the course of action, the ruled are grown together into one, from plurality of *men* into singularity of *Man*, and theirs is to obey. This uniform mass behaves, executes orders but does not partake in political affairs.

In that sense, Arendt's narrating of Hellenic *polis*-experience of doing the political or the political as doing is meant as a reminder of the historical possibility of political community understood outside of or contrary to the divide between individuals/citizens and collective/state. This different understanding for Arendt is based on the notion of political community as not some-*thing* other than its citizens and their interaction.

By referring to polity as body politic Arendt thus seeks to recover the forgotten meaning of the political and political community as *res publica*, which is not a 'business' of the ruling caste but a public matter of concern to everyone insofar one lives among men. Body politic in Arendt's economy of the term therefore suggests not that citizens are united into one single obedient entity but that polity *is* citizens, its inalienable fabric. To speak of the existence of body politic makes sense only in the sense of men acting in the common world. Only insofar men appear to each other is body politic *real*. To assume reality of polity in any other way entails the problem of the gap between the structure and those upon whom the structure is imposed. The gap is nothing but the crisis of legitimacy which a state that is not a body politic can overcome only if it (mis)takes governing for political activity.

The meaning of governing lies in the transformation of political community into a territorial-administrative unit, something like a frame without picture, reduced to and identified with its regulatory function. The stakes however are much higher than the loss of a certain historical form of the political sphere. Political community is the mediator between the world and human beings. While human beings are necessarily in the world, how they are in this world and how they receive the world is mediated through their political community that is the part of the world over which humans enjoy certain ownership, but ownership made up of responsibility to it. Alienation of the state institutions from the citizens, the divide between 'us' and 'them' or rather, the 'It' of the state, renders citizens powerless. That is the problem of the Leviathan-state which Schmitt in the above cited interpretation failed to grasp: it is not that the state is hollow, but its 'citizens' or more precisely, Leviathan's subjects are hollow.³⁷

³⁷ Bonnie Honig elaborates on Arendt's rejection of substantive grounding of political community as well as of substantivity of the bond between community and its members:

At the same time, the powerlessness of citizens leaves a certain space unoccupied and the state structures move in. They acquire a life of their own, unbound by their rootedness in human interaction, a self-sufficient and self-contained, almost autistic mechanism. As such, the mechanism is threatened by human interaction, it is an unnecessary disturbance. Hence there always remains a possibility, which was actualized in the totalitarian states, that the mechanism would turn against this human disturbance. Once all men have been reduced to one and the same, even that one 'Man' becomes superfluous insofar no action is necessary to perpetuate the mechanism. [OR, 467]

The fear of political community that undergoes this metamorphosis into a mechanized state, as Arendt and her contemporaries witnessed, is what, more than any theoretical concern, drives Arendt to the republican³⁸ notion of body politic. It is a notion of political community which is not superior to, or in any other way alienated from, what is properly its corpus, the body of citizens in their mutual relating. As such, it seeks to recover the value of human agency for political affairs in order to counter the situation of "a collectivity of people by their own conduct rendering themselves helpless to deal effectively with problems resulting from that conduct." [Pitkin, 1998:239]

However Arendt's critique of modern political theory may be too informed by her own historical experiences to grasp that, for much of the modern political theory, the problem has always been not so much conceptualizing political community as unalienable, inseparable from human agency, as it has been the historical experience of the early modernity. Arendt's conceptualization of body politic may be opposed to the prevailing tradition but behind that tradition there is a history of political entities in collapse and a history of religious struggles over the transcendental source of legitimation of certain political form. The birth of the idea of Leviathan out of the English civil wars is thus a response to the concrete political problem for new political communities - how to establish a community and how to preserve it without a recourse to the transcendental. Leviathan in its neutrality is thus foreseen as a mediator among citizens - a peculiar, monstrous and alien body

"From Arendt's perspective, a political community that constitutes itself on the basis of a prior, shared, and stable identity threatens to close the spaces of politics, to homogenize or repress the plurality and multiplicity that political action postulates.... protecting the spaces of politics in the nonidentity, the heterogeneity and discontinuity of political communities, and also in the resistances of the self to the normalizing constructions of subjectivity and the imposition of autonomy..." [Butler and Scott, 1992:227]

³⁸ Arendt is often associated with the tradition of civic republicanism "traced back to the political thought of Jean-Jacques Rousseau in *The Social Contract* in 1743 where he argued for a radical conception of citizenship as popular participation in the polity." [Delanty, 2005:81] M. Canovan points out an important distinction between Arendt and republican tradition insofar "she was, for example, much less interested than most of her predecessors both in military prowess and in the details of institutions, and much more interested in free discussion." Arendt however appropriates the classical republican notion of "political freedom [not as] something bestowed by nature or history" but something that requires acting and acting always anew by the citizens. [Canovan, 1995:203]

functions as both a buffer and a glue between the members of a certain community.

In that sense, if Arendt wants to reconceptualise political community in the light of the new historical circumstances and the new political situation, she must either take into account the problems that gave rise to the idea of Leviathan or assume that those problems have been overcome. The paradox of the contemporary historical situation is however that new problems have not replaced the old but coincide with them in our political reality. Thus Arendt's concept of *body politic* must embody a form of togetherness of citizens viable under the modern condition, or else her conceptualization of political community is equally detached from the historical reality as any philosophical construct that she criticized so persistently. In other words, if *body politic* is about human interaction, Arendt must find the answer to the question of what brings citizens together, together with each other and together with their community. Where does this togetherness arise from, what generates acting in concert once the public sphere is deprived both of its immortalizing function (the ancient Greece) and of the ruler whose authority is derived from a transcendental source?

The question itself had haunted Arendt from the very beginnings of her scholarly work: In her first writing, the dissertation on Augustine, she engages in a detailed interpretation of Augustine's reading of 'love thy neighbour.' Augustine is particularly interesting for Arendt as a Roman-Christian thinker who experienced radical estrangement from the world yet preserved in his work the Hellenic legacy of concern with 'this' world. Augustine's question of why to love one's neighbour therefore corresponds closely with Arendt's modern, political question of relating of human beings to the world and those who inhabit it.

Augustine's answer is onto-theological: What connects men to one another and to this world, what turns thrownness into rootedness is the community of descent and fate with all other sons of Adam. All of them are born, out of the original sin, and all will die:

Rooted means that no one can escape from the descent, and in this descent the most crucial determinant of human existence has been instituted once and for all. Thus, what united all people is not an accidental likeness.³⁹ Rather, their likeness is necessarily founded and historically fixed in their common descent from Adam and in a kinship beyond any mere likeness. This kinship creates an equality neither of traits nor talents, but of situation. All share the same fate. The individual is not alone in this world. He has companions-in-fate, not merely in this situation or that, but for a lifetime. His entire life is regarded as a distinct fateful situation, the situation of mortality. [LSA, 100]

³⁹ Therefore, not in the sense of Aristotelian third type of friendship as based on semblance in virtue. Aristotle, *Ethics*, 1156a27-b17.

What speaks to Arendt across centuries from Augustine, in her particular historical, political and philosophical situation is Augustine's understanding of kinship among men in relation to the equality of their situation, the human condition of being born, passively appearing, suffering appearance, and being mortal, both in the muteness of one's own will, therefore made an inhabitant of a world ultimately strange,⁴⁰ and becoming ever stranger as one witnesses the works of men and men themselves crumble into nothingness.⁴¹

But the kinship or commonness of past and future for the sons of Adam crystallizes into love only indirectly, through the alchemic working of divine grace. The source of Christian love for neighbour in this world lies beyond this world, in the divine creator of all beings who are loved for the sake of loving him and through relating to him.⁴² The bond among the neighbours is therefore not of this world but is mediated through a transcendental absolute, in its origin as in its destination.

In that sense, Arendt's deeply, though in that first work still only implicit, political question of why engage with the world and her attempted answer without recourse to the transcendental cannot receive an answer from Augustine's theological framework. Arendt's inquiry is a political project, a search for the way of living together at the time when that which kept the world together, i.e. the religious and related/derivative moral and political frameworks, broke down. What is therefore foregrounded in Arendt's later, explicitly political writings is the reinterpretation of the theological, 'static' concept of common origin into the political, 'dynamic' concept of common action or action in concert which binds citizens or members of political community together.

The paradigmatic historical example of this bond through action is for Arendt the American Revolution and the emergence of the United States as a new body politic. In that sense, the American Revolution was a radically different experience of modern revolutions – for Arendt, not the destruction but the foundation of the 'space of freedom' was the principal meaning of this breaking event. The Revolution is thus the most illuminating example of Arendt's understanding of commonness through beginning, active, breaking, in-performance. It pervades her thinking in its entirety. It testifies to acting in concert of men who are conjoined not by interest – nor even by articulate intentions – but by

⁴⁰ "... to be born means always to be born into a world peopled with men, to be born from them, to join a family, a people, a commonwealth, etc. that was there before and with respect to which we are newcomers." [PP1, p. 26]

⁴¹ "... the general nature of sadness which needs no pretext because it can rise up unpredictably out of anyone's inner self, because it is deeply rooted in the fact that we have not given life to ourselves and have not chosen life freely." [RV, 137]

⁴² "Yet the believer relates in love to this individual... only insofar as divine grace can be at work in him. I never love my neighbor for his own sake, only for the sake of divine grace... This indirectness turns my relation to my neighbor into a mere passage for the direct relation to God himself... This indirectness breaks up social relations by turning them into provisional ones." [LSA, 111]

the specific historical situation, a particular moment and momentum of events and thereof derived their common action.

The American Founding Fathers inhabited a peculiar historical situation, the foundation of the absolutely new, a new *body politic*, which had to be legitimated in order to be preserved and perpetuated. They were instituting the new, against all established structures, and they were doing so without ground in anything other than their own actions.

As Arendt repeatedly observes, the inevitable problem of every new beginning however has always been its arbitrariness, its need to justify its appearance, not simply appearance of something different in the place of something old but entirely new space opening where there was none. In Machiavelli's words, "there is nothing more difficult and dangerous, or more doubtful of success, than an attempt to introduce a new order to things in any state." Machiavelli further explains that not only is it the problem that there are always those who profited from the old order but also "the incredulity of men who have no faith in anything new that is not the result of well-established experience." [Machiavelli, Book VI:32]

What posed itself as a problem in that situation was not investing the people, through their representatives in the legislatures, with legislative powers but perceiving these very people, to whom the leaders of the Revolution belonged, as the sources of 'higher law', and allowing them to perceive themselves as the law that would bestow both the justification and permanence upon the founded polity and its new laws, binding the citizens hitherto known to themselves as a sheer multitude of 'the subjects of the Crown' into a new political community to which they were to owe not loyalty but commitment in the sense of partaking in its history. In other words, the Founding Fathers were embarrassed by the ungroundedness of their own, unprecedented act. Such act always constitutes a problem for the politics which J. Butler defines as "politics unthinkable without a foundation, without these premises," [Butler and Scott, 1992:3] that is - the politics as it was known to the American revolutionaries when they embarked upon their enterprise. Their conceptual language and their thinking, unlike their action, was binding them to what Arendt considers the Judeo-Christian tradition of law as the divine commandment, therefore legitimated by a transcendental authority.

Through an exhaustive textual analysis of Jefferson's proclamation: "We hold these truths to be self-evident," Arendt succeeds in capturing or rather, opening up, both ambiguity and ambivalence of the historical moment of the revolution and building of a new polity in response.⁴³ On

⁴³ "Focusing on the famous phrase, 'We hold these truths to be self-evident,' Arendt argues that the new regime's power, and ultimately its authority, derive from the performative 'we hold' and not from the constative reference to self-evident truths. Both dramatic and non-referential, the performative brings a new political community into being; it *constitutes* a 'we.' This speech act, like all action, gives birth, as it were, to the actor(s), in the moment(s) of its utterance and repetition.[...] For the sake of politics, for

the one hand, the reference to *the* truths by these men of Enlightenment suggests the continuing presence of the transcendental in the political. Being self-evident, these truths resist any dispute by men, who appear not as their authors and having no power over altering that which has not come from their own will. On the other hand, and for Arendt's project more importantly, the phrase "we hold" is an opening towards understanding that political truths cannot "posses the same power to compel as the statement that two times two make four." [OR, 193] It was clear to them, as actors, that the new law and new order were emerging neither through the divine intervention nor through a neutral hand of a law-maker alien to the '*polis*' but through their own doing. In that sense, the doing becomes the ground on which it itself stands.⁴⁴

Thus Arendt the political thinker, in contrast to young Arendt who read Augustine mainly on his terms, will have reworked considerably the idea of the common and commonness of condition at the core of the concern with the world. From passivity of the existential situation she moves to the dynamism of acting together, from Augustine's notion of common origin as the working of god-creator - to the Aristotelian conception of civic friendship as engaging in action-projects, that acting in concert which Arendt recognized in the situation of American founding fathers who were filled with 'sheer joy' at the decisive moment

the sake of free political action, Arendt cleanses the declaration and the founding of their violent, constative moments, of the irresistible anchors of God, self-evident truth, and natural law. There is to be no 'being' behind this doing. The doing, the performance, is everything. On Arendt's account the real source of the authority of the newly founded republic was the performative not the substantive moment, the action in concert not the isolated acquiescence, the 'we hold' not the self-evident truth. And the real source of authority in the republic, henceforth, would be the style of its maintenance, its openness to re-founding and reconstitution." [Butler and Scott, 1992: 216-217] This passage recapitulates B. Honig's reading of Arendt's interpretation which brings to light its performative dimension. However, the reading does not balance that vein of Arendt's interpretation against its counterpart, Arendt's profound awareness of the ambiguity surrounding the act of Declaration, the hesitation of the Founding Fathers to declare the absolute newness of their act - absolute as totally new, unprecedented, but also absolute as absolved, in this case of transcendental grounding - but also their captivity in the conceptual framework of traditional political philosophy and its instrumental understanding of politics.

Nevertheless, while Honig's reading could benefit from incorporating this note of ambiguity, the spirit of Arendt's thought in the given reading is not violated. By contrast, the employment of Arendt's analysis of the American Revolution in support of the argument for necessity of religion in the moment of 'the birth of a new political order' in Viroli's new book constitutes a misunderstanding of Arendt's concept of the political as of her understanding of the American Revolution as the truly modern political event and exit from the medieval transcendental framework of political affairs. The misreading is even graver if it is understood that the American Revolution is not an example for illustration of conceptual argument to Arendt but essentially informs her conceptualization of the political, community and action. [Viroli, 2005]

⁴⁴ Beiner reads Arendt's understanding of the moment of political acting in the illuminating light of Nietzsche's moment, the self-contained moment which holds its own meaning. Beiner here draws an important parallel between Arendt and Nietzsche, striking an important cord of Arendt's political project, the self-containedness of beginning, when he argues that 'circularity' should in fact be read as the existential 'autonomy' of moment: 'it has no purpose outside itself, it leads to nothing but itself. Being is circular. Therefore, nothing outside the moment can serve to justify it...' [LKPP, 148]

of constituting their political community and the joy was generated by nothing else but partaking in the 'public matter' with one's fellows.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Fellowship is perhaps the most appropriate term for the bond among persons acting together, more appropriate than friendship though the latter is also found in Arendt's economy. If the term is to be drawn from her essay on Lessing, then it would seem logical that the term is *friendship* but in the sense of the Aristotelian non-erotic notion of friendship for the world, where love, as the most unworldly of all relations between humans, almost anti-worldly, is abandoned in favour of respect: "Respect, not unlike the Aristotelian *philia politikē*, is a kind of 'friendship' without intimacy and without closeness; it is a regard for the person from the distance which the space of the world puts between us, and this regard is independent of qualities which we may admire or of achievements which we may highly esteem." [HC, 243]

Friendship as discussed by Arendt in the essay on Lessing is opposed not to the presence of multitude which 'crowds' space but to intimacy, which seeks to arrest and to behold, to suspend all motion since it is a passive condition, a sensation of warmth and shelter which can be perpetuated only through undisturbed motionlessness. The assumption is that there is a different kind of space between men, the space which connects and relates them but is still a 'spaced space' and not the absence of space. This spaced space characterizes a peculiar politically meaningful category of friendship that does not extract one from one's world but inserts one into the world, the friendship for and in the world.

To understand better why Arendt insists on space needed for distinction one can turn to her argument on freedom of movement as the most elementary freedom, most directly felt as pre-condition for acting, which in itself is motion, whereas motion is traditionally associated with meaning of beings whose *is* is in becoming and vanishing, as philosophy has been understanding man ever since its beginnings. One can move freely only if there is space, one can therefore act as one only where space is not erased, suffocated, or saturated.

Arendt's discontent with the intimate friendship pervades *Rahel Varnhagen*, her early study of existing on the margins or even outside the world, the condition of suffering the world rather than relating to it, the condition of deprivation which becomes the condition of the total withdrawal from reality. The intimate friendship develops among those to whom the world is denied and who therefore fall on each other for the sense of embeddedness in the world. [RV, 90-91] In such condition, there is always a danger of fraternal bond emerging as a substitute for the public realm.

Arendt's notion of friendship must therefore be seen in distinction to the 19th century metamorphosis of friendship from a public to a private relationship, from that which concerns the world to that which concerns the individual. Such worldly friendship is based not on harmony and 'brotherliness,' but on the perpetuated contest and perpetuating of contests, challenge and difference as it entails those 'unpredictable hazards.' This interpretation of the concept of friendship is found in P. Bowen-Moore's book on Arendt [1989:145], also discussed in L. J. Disch's *Hannah Arendt and the Limits of Philosophy* [1994:187]. The latter author also cites the friendship between Jaspers and Arendt as an example of this different kind of friendship, which resisted closure of spaces for "discourse between thinkers." [MDT, 30]

Nevertheless friendship is what helps us deal with "this mere existence, that is, all that which is mysteriously given to us at birth and which includes the shape of our bodies and the talents of our minds." [OT, 115] Namely, this friendship manifested in the unending, unresolving, unsettling discourse, is that which renders the world human. [MDT, 25]

However, even in the essay which is *inter alia* on friendship, Arendt employs the term *fellows* and in *On Revolution*, which portrays the historical instances of acting together, friendship is absent - unlike fellowship. If the key to the understanding of this peculiar and non-intimate concept of friendship is therefore the distance that is the world and if the world is both the spacing in-between and the connection between the persons relating as (political) 'friends,' then it is not accidentally that Arendt much more frequently and comfortably uses the term *fellows* than *friends*. Though her analysis of friendship as a historical category suggests that the concept is broader than the romanticized intimate relationship imbued with *eros*, it seems that Arendt is reluctant to recover the old notion of friendship and confront all the implications of its genealogical history and common understanding. Even in its ancient meaning, most notably in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, the notion of perfect friendship is based on the semblance of virtue, whereas what is crucial for this relationship in Arendt's understanding, as for the public sphere to which it belongs, is not the commonality of individual qualities or virtue, insofar the fellows

Through action in concert and not on the ground of commonality of condition there emerges the bond among citizens of body politic. The bond does not precede action, and it does not generate action but is itself through action, renewed or re-established through actions to follow.

Arendt has therefore developed a dynamic concept of political community instituted through action and existing through acting.⁴⁶ Action is both man's bond to the world and a bond between men. The community emerging from the moment of action is, as Kharkhodin rightly points out, a community of action, as opposed to community that claims substantive grounding. [2001:471]

Moreover, the community of action is also a community *in* action, it exists through movement of actions. The *is* of community lies not in some concealed Being but in its acting out, in its own becoming; there is no more sense in talking about Being of the community, only about it being, in the form of verb to denote existence in acting. Acting is the 'mode of being together,' [HPT/Montesquieu, 3] moreover – a political mode, since "a political realm does not automatically come into being wherever men live together." [OR, 19] That community is neither a communion where singularity disappears nor a substantive entity. And the community – 'founded only through and for an infinite resistance to every appropriation of the essence, collective or individual, of its sharing, or of its foundation' [Nancy, 1988/1993:95] – is not an *entity* of communal Being, it is itself a moment, resisting capture, an event of being-in-common which cannot be reduced to the *state* as a static structure.

Arendt contends that body politic, as any body, necessarily *is* only through change and movements, its own inner transformative processes or outer influences. This understanding of the main principle of body politic as movement and change for Arendt emerges from the work of Montesquieu, a political thinker singled out by Arendt for his interest in the principles of motion and not the institutions that seek to contain it. Arendt shares with Montesquieu the profound understanding of the tension inherent to every political edifice, which is so unlike any products of men's hands and tools: "it does not survive the actuality of the movement which brought it into being, but disappears not only with the dispersal of men... but with the disappearance or arrest of the

within the political arena are not chosen on the same terms as those in the intimate sphere. It is rather commonality of the world as "the space between them that unites them, rather than some quality inside each of them," [Canovan, 1985:634] the space which is experienced as common only through acting together. Unlike friends, fellows do not relate to each other directly but their relating is mediated by the world with which they are concerned.

⁴⁶ Arendtian principle of community pervades contemporary political theory of agonistic democracy: "This modern form of political community is held together not by a substantive idea of the common good but by a common bond, a public concern. It is therefore a community without a definite shape or a definite identity and in continuous re-enactment." [Mouffe, 1992:233]

activities themselves." [HC, 199] Montesquieu's observation on political community as that which moves instead of that which arrests is what Arendt reads as a modern reinterpretation of the experience, perhaps also 'advent,' of *polis*, which came into being as framework for action and not a refuge from it: "a 'form of government' which provided men with a space of appearances where they could act..." [BPF, 154]

The question however remains what keeps this 'space of appearances' together, and it is more than a theoretical question, equally so for Montesquieu and Arendt – it is a problem of particular graveness for the age marked by the withdrawal or decline of the transcendental authority in the political sphere. In searching for remedy, Arendt remains close to the thinking of Montesquieu whom she sees as the only one among the thinkers active prior to the modern revolutions, therefore the only one without an immediate experience of a radical break and novelty in his political repository, who does not withdraw into the refuge of introducing "an absolute, a divine or a despotic power, into the political realm." [OR, 188]

The peculiarity of Montesquieu's solution lies in his notion of the different 'orders of laws' which ought not interfere with each other as they differ "in their origin, in their object, and in their nature." [Montesquieu, Book XXVI] The order of human laws is historicized by Montesquieu – they are subject to change unlike the religious laws that come from eternity and are meant for eternity. The human laws retain relational quality, Montesquieu argues, and recovers Roman Latin root of the word *law*, accentuating a relational dimension inherent to the notion of law and legality, which renders any resort to absolute authority meaningless. The law is not about substance but about relating,⁴⁷ separating, distinguishing and demarcating which relates at the same time that which is separated.

By renouncing the import of the transcendental into the political, Montesquieu's concern with the political and its institutional structure assumes a very different course than that of his contemporaries but also that of many of those who come after him. As Arendt reads and appropriates his thought through her understanding of law and polity as living (and changing) entities, Montesquieu's principal question is the question of the *spiritus movens* of political action which lives in the laws, rather than being contained, limited, constrained by the laws:

The necessary movement of a body politic can never be found in its essence if only because this essence – again since Plato – has always been defined with a view to its permanence. Duration seemed one of the surest yardsticks for the goodness of a government... Therefore what the definition of governments always needed was

⁴⁷ The opening sentence of *The Spirit of the Laws* defines laws as 'necessary relations.' Further on, Montesquieu develops not only a relational character of laws, in the sense that they themselves are relations, but also their relative nature – that they have to relate to various factors, such as the climate, population, other laws, etc. of the polity. Montesquieu, Book I.

what Montesquieu called a 'principle of action' which, different in each form of government, would inspire government and citizens alike in their public activity and serve as a criterion, beyond the merely negative yardstick of lawfulness, for judging all action in public affairs. [OT, 467]

Underlying this search for the 'principle of action' is the awareness that laws as a construct of human community are confronted with the most unpredictable and most ephemeral of human activities, human action. What laws are supposed to limit, where limitation presumes not only controlling but also foreseeing, predicting, pre-empting, is this open-ended and rupturous event. On the basis of such understanding of action, it was clear to Arendt as it was to Montesquieu that laws could not be relied upon for, paradoxically, they were supposed to limit that which "has an inherent tendency to force open all limitations and cut across all boundaries." If for nothing else, than for the fact of human natality, the pressure of each new generation coming into the world and making a claim upon it to be accommodated: "The frailty of human institutions and laws and, generally, of all matters pertaining to men's living together, arises from the human condition of natality and is quite independent of the frailty of human nature." [HC, 190-191]

What follows thereof is that one cannot proceed to construct a lasting body politic on the ground of the assumed universal human nature – which is precisely what early modern theorists devoted themselves to – and presume that the laws would predict the course of actions and thus preserve the polity from their destructive drive. After all, the laws cannot be relied upon since "...on the one hand, particular intelligent beings are of a finite nature, and consequently liable to error; and on the other, their nature requires them to be free agents." [Montesquieu, Book 1:2]

Therefore, unlike nearly all other modern political theorists, Montesquieu does not depart from a notion of human nature to devise a corresponding set of norms to contain it but from the basic presumption that only 'power arrests power,' and that the constitution of a lasting body politic must be thought in these terms. The root of this thinking preserves the original relation of *power* to *movement*. Power is *not* but power *moves*. It appears in the world through movement, where movement includes the movement in the sense of becoming – becoming as such or becoming different, changing therefore. Therefore to *ar-rest* power means precisely to hold, to stop, to bring to rest that which moves. If body politic however is defined not only by its normative-institutional structure but also through the movement/acting of men, moreover if "[a]ll political institutions are manifestations and materializations of power..." and therefore themselves emerge from movement, *ar-resting* power directly contradicts preservation of the body politic in that motion without which institutions "petrify and decay as soon as the *living power* [emphasis by author] of the people ceases to uphold them." [OV, 41]

From Montesquieu's premise that only 'power checks power' without annihilating it altogether and the premise that power emerges only through action, Arendt derives the conclusion that the capacity to control action must lie in action itself. If not, it would submit action to some other, 'higher' capacity of man which would entail that action was not the *locus* of freedom and would reduce it to the execution of the preconceived plans, submitting it to something external to it.

The question is how to generate power within the body politic since human being does not possess power. Namely, unlike Hobbes, Montesquieu does not contend that the animalistic man in the state of nature, which is actually the state of confrontation with nature, possesses any power, for even the capacity to kill is nothing but the ability to evade being killed. Montesquieu's portrayal of the primordial human condition, not nature, depicts men in the state of nature as weak and fearful but these traits of men are a property of condition, not of men as such. Power however emerges not in a man, but only among men, in action.

Arendt accepts Montesquieu's basic proposition that power is generated only among and by many though she does not develop and does not purport to develop any notion of primordial human nature but rather insists on the non-essentialist understanding of the human condition, which is defined in the sense of limits and potentials arising from the fact of being born as a human. Hence it is meaningless for Arendt, though she accepts Montesquieu's conclusion, to speak of man as weak, equally meaningless to portraying man as strong. How and why power is related to plurality in Arendt's economy stems from Arendt's understanding of man as finite (and here we find the first undertones of the existentialist dimension of Arendt's project) and therefore non-sovereign in the sense that one can be an author of action but not a master of its consequences and ultimately, not a creator of the outcome of one's action.

Any action has the processual character, which does not mean that action should be equated with the automatic process but that action "has no end." [HC, 233] The story of action, as it will be elaborated in the next chapter, is a story "of being able to begin something new and of not being able to control or even foretell its consequences." [HC, 235] Since power is defined through the ability to effect something, and man by himself can only effect a beginning towards an effect of something but never actually achieve that something, power is generated only by common action, not in oneness. Power as power-to will emerge if and only if men act together into their world, and this power can be checked only by power, therefore - through action again.

In terms of an historical, particular body politic, however, it may seem that this conclusion leaves much wanting, and seems less of a conclusion and more of a seed of many an *aporia*, above all - how to translate it into viable political institutions. It is the question that

incessantly haunted Machiavelli as a student of change and innovation whose inquiries were however driven by the concern with the permanent and the stable. Namely, the source of Machiavelli's inquiry into *virtù* as the political response to unpredictability of *Fortuna* is his attempt to endow the political edifice with certain stability and lastingness that Florentine Republic did not enjoy, and his concerns are very close to Arendt's who never ceases to believe that "one of the points of politics is to found institutions that will last." [Honig, 1993:112]

What Arendt's and Machiavelli's common concern suggests is the inherent and irresolvable tension at the heart of the political – the tension between order and freedom manifested through action. Already in her critique of the classical philosophy, elaborated here in Chapter One, Arendt argued that political philosophy has from its beginnings been caught in the tension between the conserving, stabilizing role of the laws and institutions, and the explosive spontaneity of human actions within the space of freedom delineated by the laws. Political edifice is inevitably projected into future and for it, not in the sense of calculating and planning the future as if there were a prototype to follow in the operation of modeling but in the sense of having a world in the most elementary sense: "[B]odies politic have always been designed for permanence..." [HC, 47] Body politic is a treasurer of future as a possibility for a certain community and must be understood not only in spatial terms, as a demarcated territory, but also as a certain temporal horizon, duration both in the sense of temporal extension and of permanence, paradoxically therefore existing in time while claiming resistance to time, as a bulwark against its ruinous flow:

If the world is to contain a public space, it cannot be erected for one generation and planned for the living only; it must transcend the life-span of mortal men. Without this transcendence into a potential earthly immortality, no politics, strictly speaking, no common world and no public realm, is possible... [T]he common world is what we enter when we are born and what we leave behind when we die. It transcends our life-span into past and future alike; it was there before we came and it will outlast our brief sojourn in it. It is what we have in common not only with those who live with us, but also with those who were here before and with those who will come after us. [HC, 55]

But this demand for permanence stands in contradiction with Arendt's attempt to conceptualize body politic through constant movement. Body politic appears tension-ridden: the cessation of motion spells ruin for that which is defined through motion; on the other hand, the movement entails change and threatens the stability and permanence which body politic should both embody and guarantee. In other words, the problem of the permanence of body politic is not overcome.

The act of promise as institution

Contrary to the institutionalist approach which opposes institutions to agency but also contrary to those theoretical frameworks which foreground agency as opposed to institutions, Arendt's response to the problem of permanence of *body politic* is based on the proposition of action as institution through the act of promise. Promise is not a model for a future world but a commitment to the futurity of the world, opening of the world for those who are yet to come. Promise is not predictive but it becomes the ground for future. It is action not only among one's contemporaries but also among the succeeding inhabitants of the world, wherefrom responses to the act of promise will come:

There is an element of the world-building capacity of man in the human faculty of making and keeping promises. Just as promises and agreements deal with the future and provide stability in the ocean of future uncertainty where the unpredictable may break in from all sides, so the constitution, founding, and world-building capacities of man concern always not so much ourselves and our own time on earth as our 'successor,' and 'posterities.' [OR, 175]⁴⁸

The bond that is established among acting men on the one hand, and on the other – between them and their projected *body politic* is embodied in the word of promise, as the agreement to guard and pursue a certain joint enterprise against the unpredictable odds of future over which men have no power but their own word.

To promise, *promittere*, denotes putting and sending forth, promise is a word placed into the world which is sheltered by nothing else but itself. Promises are only "isolated islands of certainty in the ocean of uncertainty" and to attempt "to cover the whole ground of the future and to map out a path secured in all directions" is a misuse of promise. Promises remain only the 'guideposts,' to which one can return again and again, the trace of one's presence in *terra incognita* that the future is, which however is no less *incognita* for that, yet the ones who will inhabit it can say how they will want to live in it. [HC, 244] Promise is neither a firm destination point nor a mapped route but something for which the ones brought together stand in the present and from where they are ready to depart into a common future. The ones making the

⁴⁸ This is how Arendt deals with one of the two ills of action, its unpredictability. The other, its irreversibility is in Arendt's phenomenology of agency also remedied through a type of action - forgiveness, one act that 'betrays' expectations and disturbs the automatic flow of events, annulling the disturbing, even tragic, irreversibility of actions: "Forgiving... is the only reaction which does not merely re-act but acts anew and unexpectedly, unconditioned by the act which provoked it and therefore freeing from its consequences both the one who forgives and the one who is forgiven." [HC, 241] To resort to vengeance means to take another step within the same course of expected events. To forgive however is to break the chain and start an altogether new course of events. [HC, 240-241] Therefore, the remedy against the irreversibility and unpredictability of the process started by acting 'does not arise out of another and possibly higher faculty, but is one of the potentialities of action itself.' [HC, 236-237]

promise commit themselves, although they cannot foretell all that it entails, hides, brings about and where, ultimately, it may take them. Future as the duration of being together, of existing as a body politic is a miracle which only men can bring about. To speak of future for men in plurality therefore is meaningful only if one sees it as a potential which actions of those men translate into reality.

What Arendt is saying by focusing on the concept of promise is that while the future of *man* as a *being* is naturally necessary – it is a future of that which is and has to not-be at a certain point, after it has run its course – there is nothing natural about the course of *men* in the world. With the world and all things and affairs human certainty is always non-future rather than the future. Future for men in plural who form a community is not simply that which is yet to come, it is not a given span of time ahead which men and their affairs flow into. It is only a potential of human actions, a matter of freedom and action, not of necessity and process, it weaves itself out of human action. Promise in that sense is nothing but opening of future, any future for the world, and the binding of those who promise to the world.

In the notion of promise, therefore, it is the present that takes over the ground from the future, "dipos[ing] of the future as though it were the present, that is, the enormous and truly miraculous enlargement of the very dimension in which the power can be effective." [HC, 245] It is therefore not about accepting the responsibility for the present as it comes out of the future but accepting the responsibility for both the present as now and the present as the nest of the future by acting in the *now*.

If with action a new series in time beings, through promise men commit themselves to continuation – while not necessarily continuity – of that series. Paradoxically the rupture here rests in the unpredictable resistance to the unpredictability of men and the world, the resistance which does not erode the world but builds it. In the concept of promise as it seems, the reconciliation of the destructive and the constructive potentials of action is achieved, disclosing the breaking element in action as breaking through and into the new, not simply breaking as shattering.

However to interpret Arendt's conceptualization of promise as reconciliatory is to misunderstand her peculiar position in relation to the prevailing tradition of political philosophy, which never ceased to insist on dichotomous thinking of the 'spirit of novelty' and political stability. [OR, 223] Arendt contends that no stable political edifice can be thought outside action. Stability is established and re-established through action. It is therefore a question not of establishing a lasting institution which would embody the revolutionary spirit but of understanding that this spirit is itself instituting insofar the preservation of the world is not in arresting it but in changing it through augmenting and giving to it, bringing into it that which is new, ultimately – beginning. The political form that Arendt finds to be the closest to

grasping this and mirroring it is the institution of constitutional amendments, the acknowledgment of motion as the principle of the political. [OR, 200-202]

The historical example which informed Arendt's conceptualization of promise is the American Revolution, which cast a different light on the opposition of change and lastingness in body politic: as philosophical or conceptual categories, those may be opposed but not so as occurrences of the world. In the world they are but the "two sides of the same event" [OR, 223] where they intertwine, permeate, even merge through the institution of constitution and amendments, which affirm and perpetuate polity by changing it.

To make a promise is to 'give one's word', and the word is not the Word of the divine creator, but a word from man to man through which men come to terms with the world [MDT, 24] and equally so, endow a world with a particular futurity, the one different to the silt of the torrent of time. The future of promise is something to which the men behind the promise bind themselves, a project rather than the automatic postness of the present. Through promise men are empowered to see their project through, to ensure its lastingness by themselves and without anyone or anything but themselves acting together:

Whereas the act of consent, accomplished by each individual person in his isolation, stands indeed only "in the presence of God," the act of mutual promise is by definition enacted "in the presence of one another;" it is in principle independent of religious sanction. Moreover, a body politic which is the result of covenant and "combination" becomes the very source of power for each individual person who outside the constituted political realm remains impotent; the government which, on the contrary, is the result of consent acquires a monopoly of power so that the governed are politically impotent... [OR, 171]

The actual contents of these words from the world, to the world, for the world⁴⁹ for Arendt must remain beyond the confines of (any) political

⁴⁹ Not all words are creating or opening the space of togetherness in the world, Arendt argues already at the time of work on *Rahel Varnhagen*, a minute study of life lived among people yet outside the public world. Introspection, confession, walking through the inside of one and the other in the totalizing intimacy of relationship removing all distance, almost to the point of removing distinction, between two beings to allow full permeability of their thoughts but primarily feelings – all that remains outside the world, it is politically inconsequential.

Those are the words proper to the relationships of losing oneself, drowning oneself in the other, and the other drowning in us where it is not that something like a 'true self' is revealed, but one-self is stripped of that one-, since this intimate confession appeals to that in the interlocutor that is the same, appeals to the same 'stock' which humans are made of and which produces compassion, the feeling which identifies us with the other.

Unlike the words of confession, the words of promise relate to the world [MDT, 25], they come not from an inner feeling or mood, they are not ex-pressing the innerness as if

theory if the trap of metaphysical thinking of politics is to be avoided. For this, Arendt has often been accused of certain fluidity, to the point of denying her a theory of the political.⁵⁰ But it is not a matter of

pressing upon the outside the mark of the inside, but are always already in-between, wherefrom they arise and where they return. This passage from in-between back to in-between, this circulation clearly requires space, that which absorbed, cancelled distance of intimacy cannot offer. The word of the world comes from the world and requires the world to mediate what is being said, to give it and to receive it and give it back again, revealing in the process the unique one, allowing one to be(come) as one, and revealing itself, the world.

It requires also that those who exchange words do not lose themselves in their talk through instrumentalizing clichés and phrase-words, those words that are deprived of relation to both the speaker and the listener, in the sense of the speaker and the listener being the world, and which signify the absence of thinking in the one who appears in the world, which is what Arendt noted in Eichmann's frequent outpourings of empty talk, the pretense of talk. [E], 48-49]

⁵⁰ In the development of Arendt's thought of action as institution, which is the core of her thinking of the political, historical analysis of revolutions is of particular importance as it contains an embryo of more specific theory of institutions. As Arendt observes in her concluding observations on the American Revolution, the new space was opened through acting freedom out but in the aftermath it also closed off the 'spaces of freedom.' That is the 'lost treasure' of revolution which Arendt laments. All political communities or movements embodying the principle of freedom that Arendt evokes are either somewhat flawed (USA) or aborted (Hungary, 1956) or historically irretrievable (the Athenian *polis*). The closing pages of the *On Revolution* are therefore dedicated to the loss of the revolutionary momentum and the problem of "how to preserve the revolutionary spirit once the revolution had come to an end." [OR, 239] Arendt attempts to offer an answer to the paradox of revolutionary legacy by elaborating on councils as possibly instituted 'spaces of freedom,' contrasting – in harmony with the whole of her political thought – these councils as institutions built on action and participation to the parties as pillars of system founded on representation. [OR, 273]

Arendt's theorization of councils as "organs of order as much as organs of action," [OR, 263] arguably underdeveloped, ultimately reaches beyond political history, towards poetic memory and ends in a feeble echo of the experience of *polis* rather melancholically. Arendt's theoretical explorations of councils as political form fail to overpower her tragic insight stated at the beginning of her analysis of post-revolutionary developments:

[I]f foundation was the aim and the end of revolution, then the revolutionary spirit was not merely the spirit of beginning something new but of starting something permanent and enduring; a lasting institution, embodying this spirit and encouraging it to new achievements, would be self-defeating. From which it unfortunately seems to follow that nothing threatens the very achievements of revolution more dangerously and more acutely than the spirit which has brought them about. [OR, 232]

Here, one finds it impossible to resist the temptation of drawing a parallel between Arendt's tragic awareness of the inescapable withering away of freedom in the 'spaces of freedom' and Heidegger's thought of the inescapable concealment of the Being whose every disclosure is nothing but closure anew. It must however be noted that the significance of this analogy in the context of this work and its relevance for this project will become clear(er) only later in the course of explicit discussion of Heideggerian traits in Arendt's concept of action. For the time being, let it be observed that Heidegger's *tractatus* on *The Essence of Human Freedom* reveals that the fundamental question of all philosophy for him is the question of freedom also given as transcendence. In other words, the discussion of being and time is meaningful only if located within the question of freedom. Heidegger's exploration of the Being of beings is thus in fact exploration of freedom.

Illuminating this word behind the absent name of the Being also means illuminating the fundamental paradox of Heidegger's discussion of Being – the concealment of the Being through its appearance. Every appearance of freedom entails non-freedom insofar the movement in one direction is the negation of the possibility of movement in all other directions. Arendt's discussion above reveals that the political is also pervaded by this

evasiveness or elusiveness of thought, it is a matter of the philosophical decision which distanced Arendt from the alternative, communitarian philosophical tradition of the common (moral) good as the defining characteristic of the political, [Delanty, 2005:90-91] just as her focus on action in common distanced her work from the liberalist political concern. Namely, unlike the communitarian versions of the republican thought which were concerned with the substance of the political, Arendt's work leaves the substance to be determined by specific political actors immersed in their particular historico-political situation and engages only with the contours of the political, with delineating that which is the political as the space within which the specific concerns and events will appear as political.

The bond between men and their polity, as among men – members of the polity, therefore emerges from this very speech and listening act, it does not exist beforehand as substance but is established as the two different 'ones' are established and mutually confirmed in the words between them, understood, distinguished and affirmed in the world through the interplay of isolation-distinction and situation.⁵¹

Through the world-building words of promise, Arendt argues, we do not only refer to that which is common and shared but appearing to each one of us differently. We *place* the common into the world in the form of our common act of founding anew. Living together in the world is manifested in our common referring to that which thus becomes that what is held in-common, as is maintained by the communitarians such as Habermas and Benhabib who define community through communicative exchange, but even more importantly in the common new that is placed into the world through the act of promise in the Arendtian sense of founding.

This brief insight into Arendt's thinking of political community therefore concludes on the theme of action. Arendt points to the way of circumventing the deadlock of the principal dualism in modern political thought, between citizen/individual and polity/collective. The way is to think political community as *body politic* – not as a system of rules and institutions separate and even alien to its *civitas* but as the fine net of

paradox – appearance of freedom in the world happens through action. On the one hand, one action is negation of all other possible actions. On the other hand, political action is about institution, as we have seen, which means that it brings about the very negation of itself, continuity and stability in place of rupture and mutability.

⁵¹ In this talking of the common, which is at the same time talking from and of the difference, each one of us is confirmed as distinct through the words, just as one confirms one's own presence in the world through one's image in the pupil of the other. That is the original and most essential confirmation of our place in the shared reality and our understanding, by the other, as a distinct part of the common world through the presence of this witness who testifies to the reality of us as us and of the world as ours: "I understand something or somebody directly, if I understand something, I always understand it within a wider horizon of things which I take for granted. I isolate the thing I understand and put myself into a direct relationship to it. If I understand somebody, I understand him in a direct relationship, within the framework of the world, but still him directly, isolated from others." [CI, p.3/1]

civic interaction in the public sphere. In other words, Arendt is not taking sides between the institutionalist political theory and political theory focused on human agency but seeks to demonstrate that institution *is* action - through action community is instituted and maintained, through action the bond among its citizens is established and through action it exists.

Summing this argument up, action is thus what one must think if one is thinking the political. By rooting the political, as world-formative, instituting and constituting, in action Arendt denies that the political can be reduced to any regulative form that living together assumes in a given historical moment. What she aims to demonstrate instead is that the political must be interpreted as the *locus* of freedom in the world. The task of the following chapter is to show how freedom is embodied or rather, enacted in action - through institution of the new in the world.

**Chapter Three:
ACTION AS INSTITUTION OF THE NEW**

The interpretative reconstruction of Arendt's political thought in this chapter is meant not simply to (re)introduce Arendt's thought but to set the context for further inquiry into Arendt's contribution to philosophy by uncovering the meaning of the political. The political here is understood primarily as political action which is not an instrumental activity but that which "offers a lasting source of meaning to human affairs." [Beiner, 1983:13] It will be argued that, by placing action as the core of her notion of politics, Arendt does not advance yet another performative, as opposed to the instrumentalist understanding of political activity but the existentialist one, which however has to be conceived of in opposition to Schmittean existential politics or, in Agamben's terms, (2000) politics of *zōe* or naked life. Namely, Arendtian politics is not concerned with bare life but with endowing life with a meaning through action that is the enactment of freedom, and as such is the 'reason' for man's appearance in the world. Uncovering this aspect of Arendt's thought constitutes the guiding thread of this chapter.

The justifiability of this hermeneutical effort however is not based solely on the fact that perhaps the main debate in Arendtian scholarship, between Aristotelians and Machiavellians or Nietzscheans does not address the existentialist line in Arendt's political project – if for no other reason than because Dana Villa's work on the dynamics of Arendt's intellectual engagement with Nietzsche, Aristotle and Heidegger [Villa, 1996 and 1999] has partly brought this to light. The intention is rather to argue that for Arendt's project as also a philosophical project and not only politico-theoretical, the existential dimension of her notion of action must be considered crucial.

In that sense, this interpretation of Arendt's thinking of action stands apart from the 'binary' debate between Benhabib's and Honig's readings of Arendt as distinguished and mapped by Mary G. Dietz:

Benhabib poses a (Habermasian) communicative concept of 'associational public space' as an alternative to the (Nietzschean) disruptive concept of 'agonistic public space' that Honig purportedly supports. [Honig, 1995:37]

In reading Arendt's political thought, Benhabib places the emphasis on the togetherness that characterizes political acting which is manifested in the discursive practices of deliberation, discussion and argumentation. Benhabib observes that these practices, which structure Arendt's concept of action as speech-act, will only find full elaboration

in Habermas' model of communicative action and public sphere legitimated through the Kantian exercise of public reason. [2000:201-202]

The roots or rather, the ground of the Habermasian reading of Arendt lies partly in the Aristotelian threads running through Arendt's conceptualization of action. Villa's study on Arendt and Heidegger [1996] explores in more depth Arendt's ambivalent relationship to Aristotle, whose conceptual language she employs while also taking distance from something that, drawing on her critique of Plato, might be referred to as Platonic undertones of Aristotle's philosophy.

Aristotle, as Plato, could not ignore the experience of living in the *polis*, an experience dominating the Greek historical reality according to Arendt, which instructed him to associate household, the private sphere, with necessity, with attending to the demands placed upon social reality by human biology, ultimately – the sphere where man is closest to animal. By contrast, the public realm is where humanness distinctly appears:

What all Greek philosophers, no matter how opposed to *polis*, took for granted is that freedom is exclusively located in the political realm, that necessity is primarily a pre-political phenomenon. [BPF, 31]

This distinction between the public and the private, taken as corresponding to the distinction between freedom and necessity, is one of the two main distinctions that Arendt appropriates from Aristotle and also accepts the understanding of public life as truly human. Namely, for Aristotle, the *polis* is the place of appearing as human, therefore – being human, the *locus* of 'good life' attainable not to men *qua* men but to men as citizens. The good life in the *polis* is lived in discussion with equals over common concerns, the discussion that is a battle of opinions and arguments and where one is distinguished not through force or strength or status, but through the power of one's *phronesis*, the 'embodied political judgment' or 'judgment consummated in the efficacy of good praxis.' [Beiner, 1983:74] The spirit of discussion is the spirit of the already discussed *philia politikē* or political friendship where everyone is required to recognize and respect at the same time both the commonness of their world and the distinctness of one another.

In that sense, the good life is achieved in the very living, which means that politics must be distinguished from *poiesis*, making related to all work-related activities, and affiliated with *praxis*, which includes all performative activities that do not result in production of any object. The second important conceptual distinction which Arendt accepts from Aristotle's framework is precisely this one, between *poiesis* and *praxis*.

Praxis is closely tied to another Aristotle's concept, that of *energia* or actuality insofar the final end of any practical activity is already inherent to it. In this sense, living in *polis* is the best living as it is not

subdued to any higher end,⁵² it is itself its own end according to Aristotle's argument made in *Nicomachean Ethics*: "We call that which is pursued as an end in itself more final than an end which is pursued for the sake of something else..." (1097a) This non-instrumentality of political life is what Villa describes as *self-containedness* of action in which 'freedom resides,' (2000:25) and it is a conceptual possibility seized by Arendt since 'Arendt's theory of political action should be read as the sustained attempt to think of praxis outside the teleological framework.' [Villa, 1996:47]

In Aristotle's conceptualization of the good life in good living, which is underlied by the performative notion of action, Arendt detects a potential for recovering from within philosophical tradition the non-instrumental understanding of the political. It allows restoration of action as meaningful without transcendental reference, that is – meaningful insofar it is freedom incarnate. The understanding of action as presencing of freedom leads in Aristotle's thought suggests to Arendt that in contrast to Plato, Aristotle retains at least 'a feeble echo of the pre-philosophical Greek experience.' [HC, 207] There remains in Aristotle something that Arendt never found in Plato's work, which sets the two apart and flows into Arendt's theory of the political: 'Aristotle... is still aware of what is at stake in politics... the work of man...' [HC, 206] Through this 'work'⁵³ of man nothing is being fabricated but there emerges meaning of being in the world as human.

However, Aristotle's thought for Arendt constitutes only a partial disruption of Platonic tradition in philosophy. While more of the Socratic spirit of 'public square' philosophy may have been preserved in Aristotle's discussion of the political than in Plato's outspoken disenchantment with political affairs [PP, 82], it is precisely with Aristotle that, as Arendt believes, 'the time begins when philosophers no longer feel responsible for the city...' [PP, 91]

This may not be an entirely legitimate observation since both Aristotle and Plato wrote political philosophy, as Arendt herself acknowledged. Arendt is thus probably closer to the critical disclosure of the non-

⁵² Villa (2000) notes a certain ambiguity in such reading of Aristotle's discussion of good life. He argues that Aristotle introduces into good life of citizen a character-formative dimension whereby action as a self-contained activity that endows the world with meaning is reinterpreted as a purposive, educational activity: "The main concern of politics is to engender a certain character in the citizens and to make them good and disposed to perform noble actions." [Ethics, 1099b; Politics, III.9] Villa foregrounds Arendt's interpretation that political acting is through Aristotle's normative move harnessed in the function of a purposive process through which men are shaped into virtuous citizens: "Aristotle's ideal *polis* has its *raison d'être* less as a field for action than as a *school* for virtue." [Villa, 2000:51]

The ambivalence of the meaning of *praxis* in Aristotle's philosophy cannot be addressed here. Suffice it to say however that the subtleties of the merging of goodness or virtue with *praxis* in Aristotle's thought indicate that the dynamics cannot be reduced to subjugation of one to the other.

⁵³ *Work* here being synonymous to deed or doing, and should not be equated with work as category of human activity which Arendt distinguishes and, partly, contrasts with action in her phenomenological analysis.

political underpinning of Aristotle's political philosophy when she argues that the interest of the Greek philosophers in the political can be equated with their fascination with legislation. From this fascination Arendt reads Platonic project of escaping the open-endedness of action by substitution of making for acting, the project driven by the 'suspicion of action.' Namely, Arendt maintains that the Greeks, the citizens involved in political doing, considered law-making a pre-political activity, that which establishes the space for the political by separating the natural world and natural processes from the human world and its affairs. Philosophers, by contrast, are drawn to law-making by this *making*, which is not only an activity predictable and controllable but it is also closest to contemplation being guided by a pre-established model, the 'idea:'

To them, legislating and the execution of decisions by vote are the most legitimate political activities because in them men "act like craftsmen": the result of their action is a tangible product, and its process has a clearly recognizable end... It is as though they had said that if men only renounce their capacity for action, with its futility, boundlessness, and uncertainty of outcome, there could be a remedy for the frailty of human affairs. [HC, 195]

The central concern for Aristotle as for Plato thus becomes the concern with order as opposed to the concern with freedom. For Arendt's understanding of the political as the sphere of freedom this move spells the surrender of freedom for the sake of the predictable and controllable submission to the law, the submission which philosophers themselves practiced in relation to the Absolute.⁵⁴

By contrast to Benhabib's Aristotelian reading, Honig acknowledges the tension in Arendt's appropriation of Aristotle. She therefore relates Arendt to the tradition of virtuosic politics that, in counter-distinction to virtuous politics such would be closer to Habermasian concept of the politics, defies any attempt to contain *agon* understood as fundamental and essential to politics. As Honig argues, the virtuosic politics, a tradition of counter-tradition in political thought originating from Machiavelli, is the politics on, of and off the margins, politics of fissures, residues, exceptions, imperfect solutions, performance in place of representation, absence in the place of presence. Honig argues that these frictions, fractures and imperfections appears not because the enterprise of founding the perfect political order would be difficult or

⁵⁴ This remains however a somewhat controversial criticism of the position of legislation in relation to the political insofar Arendt celebrates the act of foundation of political community, the Kantian idea of community giving of laws unto itself, especially the Act of Constitution in the American Revolution and its 'space of freedom' in the institution of amendments as the openness of the Constitution to inevitable changes in the life of political community. This could be attributed to theoretical consistency had it not been for Arendt's observation in the essay on authority [BPF] on the distinction between Greek and Roman conceptions of legislation. What Greeks left outside the walls of *polis*, introducing into politics a transcendental element embodied in the figure of alien legislator, Romans integrated into the political as the continuing source of inspiration for political deeds.

because human nature was corrupt but because inherent to politics is imperfection:

Whereas virtue theorists assume that their favored institutions fit and express the identities or the formations of subjects, *virtù* theorists argue that no such fit is possible, that every politics has its remainders, that resistances are engendered by every settlement, even by those that are relatively enabling or empowering. [1993:3]

Honig singles Machiavelli out as one of the sources of this alternative thinking of the political and relates his thought to Arendt's in the somewhat discountious thread of this alternative political thinking.⁵⁵ Arendt was drawn to Machiavelli's writings as a unique collection of observations by a genuine passionate observer, student and actor of politics who did not refrain from freedom and action as both the driving forces and principal *raison d'être* of politics. Machiavelli the scholar never succumbed to the dominant ambition in philosophical relating to politics – subjugation of political doing to non-political ends. Reconciling in his own life thinking and doing of politics, he stood for Arendt as a rare example of the thinker devoted to the greatness of the political as an autonomous and autonomously valuable sphere of human existence.

In Machiavelli's understanding and writing of politics as virtuosic, and this particularly refers to *The Prince*, politics emerges from the interplay between *Fortuna* and the *virtù* of one man, the ruler, of whom Machiavelli writes:

[T]hey had no other favour from fortune but opportunity, which gave them the material which they could mould into whatever form seemed to them best; and without such opportunity the great qualities of their souls would have been wasted, whilst without those great qualities the opportunities would have been in vain. [Machiavelli, Book VI]

This interlacing of opportunity and the doing of men, and the notion of actor as the one who does not evade the commotion of history but responds to what the world and time offer, is what Arendt found fascinating in certain moments of history. One of those was the 'Machiavellian moment' or rather, the Florentine moment alongside that of the American Revolution or Hungarian Revolution in 1956, the moments of the eruption of the political (doing) in history.

⁵⁵ Honig also points out the proximity of Arendt's and Nietzsche's understanding of action and, especially, the power of agon but she also acknowledges that, while Nietzsche and Arendt belong together in this agonistic tradition of understanding politics, Arendt's understanding and working with *virtù* is "more political and more institutionally located." [Honig, 1993:4] Honig's observation on this matter suggests that the source of the virtuosic aspect of Arendt's political theory should be sought in *political* thinkers such as Machiavelli, who were concerned with the instituting and constituting potential of action as with its uncontainable rupturous and boundless character.

The meaning of this interplay as Arendt reads it, which may not be in exact correspondence with the way Machiavelli thought it – the element of violence understood as force had deep significance for Machiavelli,⁵⁶ defies any notion of mastery, of ruling, manifesting itself instead as 'a harmony between man and world – playing with each other and succeeding together.' [BPF, 137] By locating her own concept of action at this Machiavellian intersection of opportunity and the response to it, Arendt dislocated her theory of political action away from the Aristotelian idea of cognitive, rational politics or politics of deliberative wisdom bound by, arguably teleological, framework of good life.

At the same time, as Arendt observes, the Machiavellian notion of action escapes another problematic aspect of Aristotelian action, the idea of *political* action as the vehicle of *ethical* demands:

And it must be understood that a prince... cannot perform all those things which cause men to be esteemed as good; he being often obliged, for the sake of maintaining his state, to act contrary to humanity, charity and religion. And therefore is it necessary that he should have a versatile mind... not to swerve from the good if possible, but to know how to resort to evil if necessity demands it. [Machiavelli, Book XVIII]

This telling, fundamentally 'Machiavellian' Machiavelli's paragraph could be read as celebration of the unethicality of political doing. Arendt however strongly opposes any such reading of Machiavelli, arguing that neither good nor evil were meaningful as terms, concepts and standards in Machiavelli's understanding of politics and political acting. The political is neither ethical nor unethical – it is simply non-ethical insofar it is concerned not with one man and one soul, be it the One or the Other, but with the world, as Arendt would say [BPF,156], or 'successful maintenance of the state,' in Machiavelli's words.

In that sense, judging a political action is predicated on acknowledging its intrinsic value and implies recognition of autonomy to the realm⁵⁷ of the political. Machiavelli is thus crucial for Arendt as a political thinker who divests the political of the rational-instrumental logic as from the ethical criteria but also the one who grasps where lies the intrinsic value of a deed: in its own greatness. Arendt associates this greatness with extraordinariness - those who respond to *Fortuna*, those must be prepared to exit the shelter of their private existence, of concern with the known and personal, and do what is not done in ordinary life [HC, 35]:

[A]ction can be judged only by the criterion of greatness because it is in its nature to break through the commonly

⁵⁶ "... for fortune is a woman, and if you wish to master her, you must strike and beat her, and you will see that she allows herself to be more easily vanquished by the rash and the violent than by those who proceed more slowly and coldly." Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Book XXV.

⁵⁷ In that sense, it is not at all surprising that Arendt often uses the term *political realm*, suggestive of a sovereign sphere, the sphere that rules and determines itself.

accepted and reach into the extraordinary, where whatever is true in common and everyday life no longer applies because everything that exists is unique and *sui generis*. [HC, 205]

As Honig points out, "the talent of Machiavelli's man of *virtù* is his capacity to cross uncrossable lines (between male and female, man and nature), his willingness to take risks from which ordinary humans withdraw." (1993:16) Machiavellian dimension of Arendt's concept of action is captured vividly by this image of acting as crossing uncrossable lines. 'Crossing the uncrossable' is defining of action as that which stands apart and above of the ordinary insofar it has "an inherent tendency to force open all limitations and cut across all boundaries." [HC, 190] While Arendt remains indebted to Aristotle for the dimension of action as the form of human being together whereof she develops this being-together as dynamic doing in concert as opposed to the vision of political community as a static entity, a static being, Machiavelli's notion of virtuosity which emerges from the courage to do the undoable, to tread where there is no beaten path, allows Arendt to think action as a form of concern with the world that men do perform *in common* but it may, and often does, take them beyond the borders of what is regarded as *common* in human interaction. Moreover, this breaking into and through the common as the ordinary and venturing into the extraordinary becomes for Arendt the defining trait of action, its 'inherent tendency to force open all limitations and cut across all boundaries.' [HC, 190]

But on the point of extraordinariness Machiavelli and Arendt intersect only to part ways. Namely, Honig's interpretation suggests and so does the entire context of Machiavelli's discussion of virtuosity – which is that of the discourse on the qualities of the successful '*Principe*' as the main actor in the political arena – that extraordinariness of action is to Machiavelli tied to the extraordinariness of *certain* men. While Arendt does not specifically deal with this problematic aspect of Machiavelli's insistence on virtuosity, her elaboration of action as a potential inscribed into the human condition of plurality as both equality and distinction, where the distinction is always in distinguishing, [HC, 176] indicates that Machiavelli's presence in her thought of action, just as Aristotle's, is limited.

The poles of this debate thus perfectly complement each other as both are most vulnerable to the criticism that would depart precisely from the perspective of its counter-part and would be best fortified if it could incorporate such criticism: Honig's interpretation would thus need to be compounded with the associational and constitutive elements of Arendt's concept of action, Benhabib's – with the agonistic dimension. In other words, these counter-posed interpretations correspond, at least in wide brush-strokes, to the two interlacing dimensions of Arendt's conceptualization of action – the associational-constitutive and

the agonistic, which genealogically can be traced to Aristotle and Machiavelli.

Insofar the two interpretations correspond to the Aristotelian in Arendt and the Machiavellian in Arendt, they are both valid. But Arendt's understanding of action is not exhausted in the interplay between Aristotelian and Machiavellian elements – the interplay which is present not only in Arendt's thought but within the thought of Aristotle and Machiavelli as both discuss both the constitutive and the performative moments of action. However neither of the two extremes of the debate nor their possible middle-ground that would balance the interpretation, succeeds in casting any light on one other but no less essential aspect of Arendt's concept of action: its existentiality.

Action beyond teleology and performativity

As shown, Arendt draws on and departs from both Aristotelian teleologically framed political action in concert and from Machiavellian virtuosic political action as generated by the possession of certain personal qualities. On the one hand, Aristotle's understanding of action as the primary and original form of living in a human community is visible in Arendt's concept of action predicated on human condition of plurality – that is, as the way of being of this plurality. On the other, what Arendt saw as a 'slip' in Aristotle's thinking of action, the return to teleology of good life to which the political must be subjected, suggested to Arendt that the full appropriation of Aristotelianism would contradict her understanding of action as fundamentally predicated on the principle of freedom. Namely, teleology of good life – as Arendt understands it – removes the weight of act, its meaning from the sphere to which the act belongs, the political, into the sphere of the ethical. Action becomes a means to the end of good life, in Arendt's reading of Aristotle, and cannot incarnate the principle of freedom which Arendt considers crucial for the distinction of action from all other forms of human activity.

Machiavelli, by contrast, understands political action entirely politically and autonomously of all other spheres. Action spells freedom from circumstances and venture into the new. But Machiavelli's action springs from virtuosity of extraordinary personalities, or rather – it is preconditioned on the actor being a man of *virtù* rather than on the mere fact of human plurality as Arendt strived to argue. In that sense, just as Arendt had to move beyond Aristotle's theory of action in order to conceptualize action in relation to freedom, so Machiavelli's theory of political agency remains too constrained by individualism of the concept of *virtù*.

What the dynamic of Arendt's parallel appropriation and overcoming of these two theories of action however reveals are the two main conceptual pillars of her own theory of action: plurality, as condition, and freedom, as principle. This forms the axis of Arendt's conceptualization of action.

The problem of freedom and plurality⁵⁸ or rather, freedom in plurality is of course not new to modern political and ethical theory which is primarily defined through its enterprise of navigating society away from the conflict that would necessarily arise from the doings of many diverse individuals not subjected to one absolute principle of harmony. [Darwall (1995):3-4] In contemporary political theory this debate is mostly cast in terms of the debate between liberal individualism and communitarianism. The novelty that Arendt offers through her understanding of political agency however takes her thinking beyond the debate that contemporarily most often is captured as the debate between individualists and communitarians. Namely, Arendt rejects conflict between freedom and plurality, asserting in her phenomenological analyses that action arises only in plurality and through action a change is effected in the world inhabited by this plurality, the change that is incarnation of freedom. In other words, the problem is not empirical. The question is however what conceptualization of action allows Arendt to overcome the tension between freedom and plurality if the limits of one's freedom are drawn by the presence of many and the conflict that arises from multitude and diversity of drives, inclinations, motives, interests.

The interpretative literature justifiably focuses on Arendt's phenomenological analysis of action, which proceeds through a series of distinctions that define the subcategories of the sphere of *vita activa* or human activity in general, the process that leads to the conceptual crystallization of action as one such subcategory. Action is thus counterposed to labour and work, most explicitly, and somewhat less elaborately to behaviour, which Arendt notes, relating it to the historical occurrence of society but leaving it conceptually underdeveloped. [HC, 40]

Arendt closely follows definitions of labour in antiquity when "to labor meant to be enslaved by necessity." [HC, 83] Labour reduces the human life form to its animalistic roots, to nature dictates which are the same not only to all human beings but to all living beings. Labour is man's integration into the cycles of nature, driven by uncompromising necessities of human biology.

It ought to be noted however that Arendt is not insensitive to the lure that the bare rhythm of labour efforts and consumption of the fruits of labour emanates, a certain magic of the simplicity of being part of the whole of nature, the living force that runs through all beings living.

⁵⁸ This problem is more often encountered as the problem of freedom and equality. For Arendt as well plurality presumes manyness of the equals, therefore – presumes equality. However Arendt understands this equality as equality emerging from the shared conditions of human existence, an argument already present in her early thesis on *Love and St. Augustine*. In other words, plurality assumes equality in the existential rather than political sense. The stated problem however is not resolved – how is free agency to be exercised within the limits imposed by plurality of sources of free agency, potentially conflicting?

However, in that pleasure or the "sheer bliss of being alive" [HC, 106], there remains nothing of humanness, nothing distinctly human that sets us apart from other natural occurrences driven by the same necessity of preserving themselves alive. For labour is mimetic of life in its elemental biological sense insofar it is a flow of production, consumption, reproduction, consumption. To labour, in the sense of making the effort to provide for the needs of metabolism whatever the form of that effort, is essentially to live not as a distinct being, as a person, but to live as a particle of nature replaceable by any such particle in the chain of the reproduction of nature. Labour is thus the bare existence of the human *corpus* which "concentrates upon nothing but its own being alive, and remains imprisoned in its metabolism with nature without ever transcending or freeing itself from the recurring cycle of its own functioning." [HC, 115]

To free oneself from the recurring cycle of coming into (biological) existence and then vanishing by blending into other forms of biological existence means to overcome futility of such existence entirely subsumed by necessity "which nobody can share and which nobody can fully communicate" [HC, 119], meaning that man absorbed by the fulfillment of needs may be a natural being but is not entirely a human being. Namely, the human being is characterized by living among other human beings, relating to them and to the world. In other words, it means that man does not live in the world but in the cycle of natural processes, like any other biological entity.

To live as a human, as opposed to living as a being, involves giving a meaning to life other than the process of production and consumption:

The birth and death of human beings are not simple natural occurrences, but are *related to a world* into which *single individuals, unique, unexchangeable, and unrepeatable entities*, appear and from which they depart. Birth and death presuppose a *world* which is not in constant movement, but whose durability and relative permanence makes appearance and disappearance possible... Without a world into which men are born and from which they die, there would be nothing but changeless eternal recurrence, the deathless everlastingness of the human as of all other animal species. [HC, 97; emphasis by SN]

The notions emphasized in the above paragraph introduce implicitly the concept of action in counter-distinction to labour. Unlike labour, action concerns human beings as unique occurrences in their world, and it relates these beings to each other and to the world. Through action, human life becomes a narrative whole, the whole specific to that and only that human being, biography that is. Action therefore is revelatory of the distinctness of the *who* of each and every one of the human beings.

Action is first and foremost an activity that discloses actor. Through action, the actor is known as an unrepeatable being in the world. To tell the story of *who* one is or was, men always resort to telling the story of what one does or has done or did. The story of every single *who* is therefore the story of the deeds, which involves both the one who did them and the world in-to which they were done and which is the only treasury of the deeds once the actor is gone or the deed has been done. Action thus emerges from the tacit implications of the above paragraph as the bond between man and the world, as opposed to labour which forces man into anonymity of natural urges and instincts:

If nature and the earth generally constitute the condition of human *life*, then the world and the things of the world constitute the condition under which this specifically human life can be at home on earth. [HC, 134]

The 'specifically human life' is at home on the earth only because there is the world, which one could portray as a thin membrane between nature and man, composed of "the things of the world [which] have the function of stabilizing human life." [HC, 137] The membrane is the reality constructed by the presence of the things durable, that serve as the source of stability, and also the presence of other men to whom one relates: "Without a world between men and nature, there is eternal movement, but no objectivity." [HC, 137] Objectivity here is directly related to the roots of *objectus* – it is about presentness, thingness, about that which is other than the subject and exists independently of it. However, while objects may exist independently of the subject, the subject places them in the world through his work.

This *tangible* understanding of the world through the men's involvement with material and fabrication is a very Heideggerian thread in Arendt's phenomenology of work, another form of human activity other than action, which produces the durable elements of human environment and thus anchors the very human existence.

Unlike the circle of labour, which consumes itself, work produces things that outlive the process of fabrication but both the process and the product are preceded and outlived by the model guiding the fabrication. The work course can be more or less easily traced from potentiality to actuality because its product, before it appears as the object of this world, has already been present in the mind of the working man, as a model or at least an intimation to guide the hand.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Work in that sense is an activity, Arendt argues, almost paradoxically closest to the activity of contemplation as Plato recognized relating philosophy to *poiēsis* by borrowing from the latter the term *eidōs/idea* which denotes shape or form. [HC, 142] But insofar fabrication is governed entirely by predetermined means and end, that is – inasmuch its predictable and controllable (or, predicted and controlled as well) course falls within the utilitarian framework, it clearly stands apart from contemplation as unbound exploration of ideas, for the "[t]hought [...] has neither an end nor an aim outside itself, and it does not even produce results." [HC, 170]

In that sense, work is as distinct from action as labour: action in Arendt's understanding is incomprehensible within the utilitarian and instrumentalist frameworks. It serves nothing and it places no-thing in the world – apart from placing man among other men into the world. As Arendt points out, the condition of work is isolation or, more precisely, the political isolation. The involvement is with objects, not with other men. By contrast, action exists only insofar it relates man to men and thus to the world as a whole and, as Arendt incessantly argues, this relating generates the unexpected for it never can be premeditated or predetermined – unlike labour, inevitably dictated by necessity, and unlike work, guided by the model of the product to be – because it falls into the 'web of human relationships' [HC, 184] and provokes response:

Since action acts upon beings who are capable of their own actions, reaction, apart from being a response, is always a new action that strikes out on its own and affects others. [HC, 190]

An act or activity which is a link in the chain of other activities, all harnessed for the attainment of a certain preconceived goal, is what Arendt equates with the category of behaviour, not action. Action by contrast constitutes a rupture, breaking of a pattern, which Arendt portrays as instantaneous, momentous, sudden, and contrasts it with the 'everyday', 'continuous' and 'automatic,' in H. Friese's words:

[t]he meaningful, 'decisive' moment, which turns the fate of the human being or of history at one stroke, defies any concept of continuous progress. The moment becomes the guarantor of the dissociation from the steady course of things and the liberation from the imperatives of social life. [Smitek and Mursic, 2001]

What emerges from action can always radically alter the course of events and transform any historical framework into something new that neither could have been envisaged nor can it be reduced to what preceded it. Peculiarity of action is precisely its opening (in)to the unknown:

Whoever begins to act must know that he has started something whose end he can never foretell, if only because his own deed has already changed everything and made it even more unpredictable. [BPF, 84]

This extraordinariness of action is rooted in unique distinctness of human beings, the uniqueness manifested in our distinct physical appearance but even more so in doing. Action is the medium of this 'unique distinctness' by which it is revealed.⁶⁰ [HC, 176] In other words, the oneness of one appears through action, which implies that man means as one through acting among others who recognise him as one.

⁶⁰ Though this term *reveal* must be taken with some reservation insofar Arendt maintains that what is revealed is not there, given, but becomes through this revelation, through action that is.

⁶¹ Uniqueness of each man can only be recognized in the company of equals. Only in the company of equals can the distinctness of *who* she is not be *asserted*, but it can in the first place – *be* through doing.⁶² In that sense, action bears importance for the life of man regardless of its motives, goals or consequences insofar its character is revelatory.

This uniqueness however generates tension within community, the tension which contemporary political theory understands as the core of the politics of *agon*.⁶³ For Arendt, the prime historical example of politics pervaded by *agon* was Hellenic *polis*:

[T]he public realm itself, the *polis*, was permeated by a fiercely agonal spirit, where everybody had constantly to distinguish himself from all others, to show through unique deeds or achievements that he was the best of all. [HC, 41]

This particular example is strongly embedded in the historical context of Greek democracy as the pursuit of earthly immortality through great deeds [HC, 19], the pursuit which – as Arendt acknowledges in the final chapter of *The Human Condition* – does not outlive its historical context and does not mark the Modern Age. Nevertheless, Arendt argues that there is theoretical grounding to assume the necessary conflictual dimension of human relations in the public sphere. It lies in the unbreakable but tense connection between equality and distinction as two elements of plurality which is the fundamental human condition.

On the one hand, publicness of action assumes openness of the acting one to responses, challenges, judgments, or simple silence of oblivion, open as vulnerable yet thrown into the face of one's peers. At the same time, the process of distinguishing always involves a certain decision, who one is, and it implies discriminating against the WHOs that one is not. There always is a possibility that who one is will be understood as a challenge to those who are what this one is not, the ones who are different. Ultimately, that can lead to one wanting to be not only different but also better and the best, which is what the *polis* was about – being the best among the equals [HC, 19] – and why the Greek practical philosophy insisted on the worth of moderation. [HC, 191]

⁶¹ In the *Human Condition*, Arendt briefly discusses otherness, tracing it back to medieval philosophy as the concept of *alteritas*, which is a quality possessed by every-thing. Every-thing is other to every-thing else, merely by existing. Thereby it belongs to man as does distinctness, the quality belonging to every-body, every living being as different to every other living being. [HC, 176] Otherness and distinctness are important elements of plurality but the notion of plurality cannot be reduced to them because man is not only other and not only distinct but is unique. What Arendt is trying to point to, through these seemingly pedantic distinctions, is that uniqueness is not simply a quality possessed, something that statically belongs to man *qua* man, but also enters the world through man's actions, in other words – both is and appears through action and not only being.

⁶² Equality here is not to be understood in any normative-political sense but existentially, in terms of the equality of human condition.

⁶³ In the literature on Arendt, Dana Villa's [1991] parallel reading of Arendt and Nietzsche is based on the conceptualization of politics as agonistic.

Thereof also Kant's insistence on our unsociability as inextricable from our sociability: the boundlessness of our urge to be different.

Politically, this translates into an ever-present danger that men will go too far in their distinguishing, and the distance that otherwise allows for interaction will become the unbridgeable detachment from the common world. While the understanding of relations among men in a political community as a fellowship based on respect seems to endow body politic with certain stability (Chapter 2), the distinction as one of the motors of the political reveals politics as pervaded by the principle of dissonance, rooted in *dis*-stance, *dis*-tinction, *dis*-crimination, *de*-tachment, rendering the political edifice vulnerable to centrifugal forces of its fabric, the human relations.

Uniqueness thus renders action unpredictable: in action, the *who* is revealed, the *who* that cannot be reduced to any other *who* nor can it ever be comprehended in totality until it is no longer. It is the *who* the peculiarity of which is not exhausted in listing of its attributes and properties, and the *who* can thus be rendered intelligible (while not graspable) only in the wholeness of the life story.

But action is not only unpredictable, it is also uncontrollable in the course of the events which it initiates or rather, sets in motion.⁶⁴ It is another implication of plurality as the condition or environment of agency, and perhaps for Arendt more important than the agonistic dimension of human affairs⁶⁵ - the boundlessness, Arendt's term, of human action, in other words - its uncontrollable openendedness. It is plurality of acting beings, whose deeds come from unknown origins and run in unknown directions, always having their course changed by the deeds of other acting beings, like atoms in the matter. This is the process-character of action,⁶⁶ not action as a step in the totality of the directed, determined process from beginning to end, but action as unending, growing through the series of other actions and reactions. [HC, 233]

⁶⁴ It is of course difficult to speak of the initial, *original* action in the web of constant acting.

⁶⁵ Namely, *agon* is threatening for political community insofar it can break it apart and fragment it. Boundlessness however is a potential peril for the entire human world, as *inter alia* Arendt's analysis (in the concluding chapter of the *Human Condition*) of modern scientific interventions into nature and unforeseen consequences of series of actions and reactions, indicates.

⁶⁶ Arendt's term *process-character* used here to describe action can be confusing, given that Arendt criticizes the pervading logic of process in modernity. The latter critique however refers to teleological processes of progress and automatism of process. In the context of action by contrast *process* is supposed to signify a series of events that action triggers off, the events however that cannot be read from the action nor their course can be predicted. If in spatial terms therefore any action is inserted into 'web of relationships' [HC, 183] than in temporal terms, it is inserted into series of events that actions of others. It must be observed however that this twofold and contradictory usage of the notion of *process* does not contribute to conceptual clarity of Arendt's understanding of action.

The discussion of the distinguishing and boundless character of action, both arising from plurality as the condition of human existence, touched upon two dimensions of action, the dimensions that one could grasp by two prepositions that relate action to the world in which it occurs: *in* and *before*. Namely, action is always done *in* the world, therefore among men and in reality by them constructed. That is its 'container,' a tangible shape carved out of the indifferent space and appropriated by *plurality* of men. It is *before* the world: in front of, facing, those who are the world, *public* therefore. Underlying these two characteristics of action is Arendt's ontological argument against sovereignty premised on self-sufficiency and self-mastery. The possibility of sovereignty is denied by the fundamental condition of action – human plurality, which means that no one can enjoy absolute control over the course of one's action and its final outcome unless others are annihilated. [HC, 234-235] It is from and by one of them but it is never owned as one's own to be disposed of, to be handled at total discretion, as it is the case with any object in one's possession. [HC, 182]

The third defining characteristic of action is related to freedom which appears in the world through action, and this can be well captured by the preposition *to*. Namely, action happens *to* the world: as vulnerable as action is to response by the world so is the world vulnerable to action, which never leaves it unchanged. That is the element of *novelty* in action, the novelty which can be undone only through another action, another bearer of novelty in a counter-movement to change the world *back*, to reverse the change but thereby again *change* it.

The bringing of the novel into this world does not follow Aristotle's and Aristotelian itinerary of becoming from potentiality to actuality, that is a causal pattern of becoming. By contrast to any causal framework, action in Arendt's works is depicted through recurrent reference to miracle, rather peculiar term, which seems more fitted to the discourse of mysticism than political theory. But with this word, *miracle*, Arendt seeks to reiterate her understanding of action through freedom, that which defies teleology and resists the inertia of the existing. Namely, free act:

...is a miracle – that is, something which could not be expected. If it is true that action and beginning are essentially the same, it follows that the capacity for performing miracles must likewise be within the range of human faculties. This sounds stranger than it actually is. It is in the very nature of every new beginning that it breaks into the world as an 'infinite improbability,' and yet it is precisely this infinitely improbable which actually constitutes the very texture of everything we call real. [BPF, 169-171]

This constitution of reality by the improbable happens through the new as a beginning, which is man's investment in(to) the world, and it is so even in the extended, expanded meanings of Italian *investire*, an

abrupt movement of matter into matter, body into body, a blow and crash, which urges unexpected, unplanned, radical even, rearrangement of the existing patterns to accommodate the new. The old pattern can no longer be restored after the beginning, it has to be undone by doing anew. It is in the aftermath of beginning, as in its miraculous origin, that one can sense the full power of Arendt's metaphorical and conceptual 'cord' between birth and beginning: in the world, there is never a place for a newborn, a newcomer, any new, but place is made and not only in the sense of 'room being made.' And once the new/comer is there, there can be no return to the condition of its non-presence, it can now only be the condition of absence of that which has been present, a vacancy felt as vacancy.

Investment also in the sense of putting something in and entrusting with, committing oneself to that which receives through that which is given, where commitment is neither responsibility/accountability nor guilt (as it would be for an *investimento* of violence, for breaking into and undoing the pattern) but a bond that is in giving and receiving. Through the concept of natality as the capacity for beginning, Arendt therefore arrives at a different relationship of men to their world, the groundless bond contained in the very (political) act itself.⁶⁷ The bond does not precede the act, it is constituted and re-constituted through every new act. In the sense of this groundlessness of man's bond to the world, just as Arendtian action could not be derived from Aristotelian framework of potentiality and actuality, so it stands in opposition to neo-Catholic understanding of the foundation of political order as "an

⁶⁷ Beginning always however entails the peril of conservation, as Arendt observed: "Psychologically speaking, the experience of foundation combined with the conviction that a new story is about to unfold in history will make men 'conservative' rather than 'revolutionary', eager to preserve what has been done and to assure its stability rather than open for new things, new developments, new ideas." [OR, 41] Beginning as the new falls prey to the destructive desire of those who have brought it about to preserve it, and the new is thus annihilated or ossified in the attempt of preservation, such as was the aspiration of American Constitutionalists: "Under the new system, Americans were never again to undertake extraordinary political actions, because from that time there were, at least in theory, no more revolutions to be fought and no more constitutions to be made." [Lienesch, 1988:181] But more than that which has been brought about is at stake in the fated process of conservation. The protective effort of the founders similes the drive which thrusts parents into sacrifice beyond comprehension for their offspring, the sacrifice greater than the world itself. More often than not, the founders have been prepared to prefer their foundation to the rest of the world, perhaps even to the world itself. Beginning becomes more valuable than the world to which it is born and from which it came.

The question of the potential clash between the patrons or founders of a beginning and the world cannot be either solved or overcome or circumvented just as there is no remedy for the conflict between beginning or newness and the present. Arendt's response to the latter problem is derived from the teaching of Jefferson, also Paine, who learned from the ancient Rome that preservation is secured only through augmentation, in other words – beginnings live on through new beginnings only. [OR, 233] Equally so, the attachment of founders to their foundation is cured or contained only by the new founders of new foundations. Any more specific solution or any tighter closing of this crevice would entail that which Arendt persistently warned against – the closure of the space of and for freedom that is the political.

essay in world creation," [Voegelin, 1956/2001:55] whereby the political act is derived from the transcendental idea of the mundane/temporal order.

Arguably, there remains a certain tension in Arendt's notion of action as disruptive beginning in the light of her pronounced yet not entirely worked out distinction between action and violence. The tension springs from a certain shared ground between the two, the disruption that they cause, the demand that they place without justification. But while action is self-contained insofar it is the *locus* of its own meaning, violence must always be understood in instrumental terms. In this sense, action is violent as it disrupts the existing, violates it, but it cannot be equated with violence, which is mute not because it is not verbal (it can very well be so) but because it does not speak to the world, it does not relate to the world, it is a piece of tool without meaning inherent to it, dependent for justification upon whatever generated it.

There is also the question of the initiatory dimension of action - whether an action towards conservation can still be understood as action. Arendt's phenomenology of action would suggest that nothing aimed at preserving the present or the past, at arresting the now could be interpreted as action. However, one ought to be cautious not to equate Arendt's theory of action with the philosophies of constant motion and flux, characteristic of modernity, by this narrow understanding of action. To preserve may well imply a resistance to the flux in certain situations. The key word here is therefore neither dynamic flux nor static condition but *automatism* of one or the other, inertia of necessity of either motion or immobility derived from it already being there, in the world, which action disturbs and against it which places the demand of freedom.⁶⁸ Freedom can, through action, place in the world what has never been there, not even through thought, and bases its claim to presence on its very appearance.

Novelty as a dimension of action begs an inevitable question of how a being that is embedded in the givenness of its condition, someone thrown into the world without having chosen or willed it, can change anything.

Elaborating on this, Arendt speaks of our relationship to the world, which is for the world and against its ruin, in terms of love, and that is the only point at which she evokes the notion of love in the political sense. Namely, in *The Human Condition* love is situated in the private or even the intimate realm, as that which is not only apolitical but anti-

⁶⁸ In the essay on the crisis in education, Arendt actually explicitly addresses the difference between conservation in education, as the necessary element of transmitting *our* world to the new generations, and conservatism in politics: "In politics this conservative attitude - which accepts the world as it is, striving only to preserve the status quo - can only lead to destruction, because the world, in gross and detail, is irrevocably delivered up to the ruin of time unless human beings are determined to intervene, to alter, to create what is new." [BPF, 192]

political insofar it connects lovers to each other, not the world, pushing them into total fusion that "destroys the in-between which relates us to and separates us from others." [HC, 242] By virtue of this fusion, of total mutual absorption, love is distinct from respect, which is related to looking back/at and thereby implies distance. The world however is not to be respected but loved precisely because we are inside it, one with it as we are *of* it - a genitive not simply to denote possession but to indicate that we are *made* of the world.⁶⁹

This conception of the world as constitutive of man is strongly Heideggerian. Namely, Heidegger's concept of the world and his understanding of Dasein as inescapably being-in-the-world and being-with opened a new philosophical horizon. One of the problems of philosophy with the political, as Arendt points out and as analysed in the previous two chapters, is the presupposition of the ontological priority of singularity in opposition to the ontic (ontological-ontic being a distinction here borrowed directly from Heidegger) plurality of men in the world. In that sense, to be in the world is interpreted as a fall from the reality of Being, it is the argument of the 'corruption of human nature' which is captured by Heidegger's concept of inauthenticity. [Heidegger, 1927/1996]

But through Heidegger's ontological reinterpretation of the worldliness of existence - going much further than all ontic arguments for men's sociability which draw on some sort of the Kantian notion of unsociable sociability or the understanding of man as essentially singular but forced into plurality by (natural) necessity, philosophy is compelled to consider the world as constitutive of human being, on the one hand, and on the other - human being as essentially and fundamentally in the world.

It lies in the nature of philosophy to deal with man in the singular, whereas politics could not even be conceived of if men did not exist in the plural. [...] Heidegger's concept of the 'world,' which in many respects stands at the center of his philosophy, constitutes a step out of this difficulty. At any rate, because Heidegger defines human existence as being-in-the-world, he insists on giving philosophic significance to structures of everyday life that are completely incomprehensible if man is not primarily understood as being together with others.⁷⁰ [EU, 443]

⁶⁹ This exposes the limits of Arendt's famous metaphor of the world as table that relates and separates men - insofar the relationship among men in the world is concerned, the metaphor loses nothing of its power, but it does not incorporate the particular relationship between man and the world.

⁷⁰ The above citation demonstrates that Heidegger's notion of the world is more useful for Arendt's thinking of the political than Jaspers' philosophy of communication, as already mentioned here. As Dana Villa observes, Arendt departs from Jaspers' model of understanding the world through the relationship between I/Thou in the *Concern with Politics in the Recent European Philosophical Thought*, and - in contrast to her earlier counter-position of Jaspers to Heidegger - moves to Heidegger's notion of the world as closer to the plural *We* of politics than dialogical communication between (any) two

While it remains difficult, perhaps even dangerous, to derive any principle of (political) community from Heidegger, Heidegger's conceptualization of the world and man's relating to it through their mutual constitution lays ground for Arendt's understanding of man and the human condition.

Can Dasein be conceived as a being whose being is concerned *with* potentiality for being if this being *has lost itself* precisely in its everydayness and "lives" *away from itself* in falling prey? Falling prey to the world is, however, phenomenal "evidence" *against* the existentiality of Dasein only if Dasein is posited as an isolated I-subject, as a self-point from which it moves away. Then the world is an object. [...] However, if we hold on to the being of Dasein in the constitution indicated of *being-in-the-world*, it becomes evident that *falling prey as the kind of being of this being-in* rather represents the most elemental proof for the existentiality of Dasein. [1927/1996, 179]

Arguing that Dasein or human being can never be understood or interpreted (with)out the world,⁷¹ Heidegger exposes the dead-end stry of the traditional ontology, which sought to understand the relationship between human being and the world in terms of the subject-object relationship. The traditional ontological effort to render the relationship between human being and the world intelligible in the subject-object paradigm entailed problematic implications for understanding the phenomenon of being in the world.

While the world is constitutive of human being, both Heidegger and Arendt accentuate a certain strangeness of man to the world. Strangeness implies a certain distance as well as a feeling of discomfort, to be a stranger somewhere means also that the *somewhere* is strange to the *stranger*, that it is unhomely, in Heidegger's idiom. How can therefore man be of the world, love it in Arendtian terms, and yet also be strange to it and feel it strange?

subjects. [Villa, 1996:120] This interpretation points to an important aspect of Arendt's understanding of plurality insofar as it is qualitatively different from both simple enumeration or conglomeration of subjects on the one hand and homogenous entity/totality, in a sense a different or collective kind of subject but still a subject, on the other. To develop a notion of community from/through/in action, which Arendt holds as argued in the last chapter, Arendt conceptualizes plurality as underlying any understanding of the way man is and not preceded by singularity, be it individual or collective. Heidegger's conceptual move thus allows Arendt to surpass the entanglement of debates where singularity is opposed to plurality and the political is understood as coming out of the necessity to balance between the two, whereby the political is reduced to instrument of necessity.

⁷¹ This being within the whole, *within* which is neither with nor in, and the whole which is neither outside nor around, but both exist through mutual constitution, is what Heidegger's notion homesickness is directed at. Such homesickness is not driven by longing for a place that once was inhabited and is now lost, since Heidegger's understanding of the world inscribed into Being does not allow any objectification of their relationship in terms of possessing, owning, having. [Heidegger, 1927/1996:57]

This is the tension of human condition that Arendt does not purport to have solved and does not even aspire to do so. Namely, Arendt sees the principle of the political as emerging from this very tension, which is not the tension between the world and man but is inscribed into the very human condition and intrinsic to being as a man. Being as a man entails both being given, insofar man never wills her appearance in the world through birth, and being free, insofar one can still take this birth up and insert oneself into the world again and again through the 'second birth,' that is - action "in which we confirm and take upon ourselves the naked fact of our original physical appearance." [HC, 176]

Taking up of the given existence through action is the core of Arendt's principle of natality, as transformation of birth into beginning, which in turn is the fundament of Arendt's understanding of man through freedom. The connection between birth and action is not merely one of analogy but is fundamental and therefore essential for the understanding of man.

The 'second birth'

The connection between action and birth appears in Arendt's early dialogue with St. Augustine as a precarious first step of the young scholar in the search for the bond between man and the world whose first encounter comes out of man's unwilled and undecided upon insertion into the world. The question for Arendt in that early work is, what it is between man and the world, what the connection or rather the relationship could be which could not be reduced to the mere link between existent and the *locus* of its existence. One is inevitably drawn to the conclusion that Arendt already in her early work established that the problem of man's being in the world as being concerned with the world is the question of questions for philosophy, which cannot be either asked or answered through flight out of the world, into the absolute and the eternal.

Seen in the context of that early work, the roots of Arendt's principle of natality seem to be explicitly theological insofar as her understanding of human being as beginning is derived from Saint Augustine's: "that there be a beginning, man was created before whom there was nobody." [HC, 177] In part, the meaning of Augustine's assertion is that, rather than nobody, there was 'no-one' before the creation of man, no being to be singled out since only man exists as a unique and unrepeatable novelty. Man is the absolute new, an unpredicted occurrence capable of unpredictable that no law can regulate or predict.

Arendt thus builds on Augustine's parallel between man and beginning in order to construct an ontological triangle - man-novelty-freedom. Arendt reads Augustine in order to assert that the meaning of human existence lies in freedom, which is the appearance of the new in the world, just as man is the new in the world: "the principle of freedom was created when man was created but not before." [HC, 177] Man

breaks the eternal cycles of nature, man is not necessary – ontologically therefore, not analogically, action breaks patterns for it is that which always could but did not have to be. [LM/II:16] Without man, nature would be spared the unknown and the unpredictable, there would remain nothing outside the iron grip of its laws. Without action by man, the likelihood is that all todays and tomorrows would be no different than yesterdays. [BPF, 170] If men were simply born to be, there would be no principle of freedom, the sameness would prevail: "In this sense, and to the extent that we still live with ourselves, we all change the human world constantly, for better and for worse, even if we do not act at all." [EU, 88] Natality is thus the 'basic condition' of political life and all change in the world.

In the lecture notes from 1953, the link between politics and beginning is spelled out most succinctly and strongly: "What counts for politics which is in the present and concerns present actions is that man is a beginning. Without this we could not act. For Politics the beginning [is] as important as the end for historian." In politics, namely, we are after the new, after bringing something new to the world – "whether we like it or not." [GTNT, 2]

But in her later works Arendt problematizes this idea of sheer existence as a change to the world, denying it a political relevance. Already in *Rahel Varnhagen* Arendt was concerned with the position of pariah as that of impotence to change one's own position in the world.⁷² From that historical analysis of Rahel's exclusion there emerged Arendt's understanding of the political as that which changes the world, that which augments the world through novelty. By being a novelty to the world, man can bring novelty into it. This reconceptualisation transforms the *f-act* of origin into *act* of beginning, not the infinite falling upon a particle of non-time but the event in the present, generated by human action, responding to past and opening towards future.⁷³

The birth and death of human beings are not simple natural occurrences, but are related to a world into which single individuals, unique, unexchangeable, and unrepeatably appear and from which they depart. [HC, 96-97]

In Arendt's appropriation of the ancient Greek understanding of the human condition, the fact of birth, just as the fact of death, belongs in the private sphere of life, which is concealed from the public and governed not by the will of men but by the laws of natural cycle. [HV,

⁷² One could even draw a direct link between the inquiry into Rahel's unfortunate social position as an inquiry into action denied and, on the other hand, Arendt's uncompromising critique of Jewish leaders under Nazism as failing to act.

⁷³ One must be cautious to avoid mistaking Arendt's understanding of action through the condition of natality as capacity to begin for the commemorative fossilization of *arche*, which is Habermas' misreading that Lisa Disch criticizes: "In sum, Habermas imputes to Arendt a reaffirmation of social contract theory and then concludes that it is by her return to the myth of the originary moment that she subverts the democratic possibilities of her work." Calhoun and McGowan, 1997:149.

62] The ground of the principle of natality lies in the fact of birth, that all men are born, but its meaning is not exhausted by the fact of birth. As a principle, it conjoins the beginning and lasting insofar the principle is inexhaustible, it moves and preserves by moving, it inspires action, therefore begins, and lives through it to inspire again. [BPF, 152] It follows that the principle of natality is the amalgam of the fact of birth and the act of beginning.

The political springing from the principle of natality is therefore different from politics of birth or politics of life as much as from politics of death. It is politics that emerges from man's capacity to initiate and to change, not from the fact that men are natal or mortal and require to be protected from their own, human condition. In other words, its ultimate origin rests in the fact of birth as that which bestows upon man the capacity of beginning but birth is not what shapes or directs or drives political doing.

What is therefore the political to Arendt? It is a certain relating to the world by "partaking in discourse and events" [PP1, 9], which renders the world changed. That is the embodiment of freedom – not in the sense of *licentia* as having something permitted, nor as a liberty of choice (within the determined framework, therefore) but as bringing something in(to) the world because one was brought into the world as a novelty oneself. Freedom is not about freedom of movement within set parameters and frameworks but about absolute novelty: "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, and which therefore, strictly speaking, could not be known." [BPF, 151]

From the understanding of man as the being in the world, Arendt has therefore moved a step further, towards transforming the condition of being thrown in the world into taking up of this thrownness and being *with* and *to* the world, turning this host of ours, who never invited us, into our concern. This movement of the reconceptualisation of birth that Arendt performs however is not Augustinian but follows closely the scheme of Heidegger's reworking of mortality from a biological fact into a task to be taken up by Dasein:⁷⁴ "... natality as a human condition is the capacity to bring something profoundly new into the world rather than a simple capacity to procreate..." [Kharkhodin, 2001:466] Dasein is not an existence that merely extends but it exists through relating to the world, for Heidegger through care – for Arendt, through action. As Arendt reads Heidegger: 'The nature of Dasein is not that it simply *is* but, rather, that in its being its primary concern is its being itself.' [EU, 179] Or, in Heidegger's own words:

Dasein is a being that does not simply occur among other beings. Rather it is ontically distinguished by the fact that

⁷⁴ Just as his concern with temporality is not the concern with temporality of the *physis*, when Heidegger speaks of death as finitude, his concern is not with death as the fact of the *physis*, but with *Dasein* relating itself to the death "as the foundation of the being that we are." [Taminiaux, 1997:43]

In its being this being is concerned *about* its very being.
[1927:13]

Arendt's main argument is thus that freedom in action is defining of humanness, therefore belongs to being as a human. Men do not possess freedom, freedom is not in man that appears but in the event of appearance just as it is not owned by men but is in action, as long as action lasts, "for to *be* free and to act are the same." [OR, 153] Insofar as to act is to exist as a human being, it cannot be argued that "freedom gives humanity, and not the inverse," [Nancy, 1988/1993:73] but that freedom and humanity are born together and entwined. Man means as a being endowed with freedom, through action. While the importance of dislocating action from teleological frameworks for Arendt is related to the preservation of the principle of freedom this interpretation would be incomplete if it would not be understood that what is at stake here for Arendt is the meaning of human existence, yet not in isolation but in relation to the world.

The principle of natality at the core of politics, as Arendt understands it, thus points to the existential dimension of the Arendtian political, which suggests that the political cannot be reduced either to the institutionalist, normative framework and deliberative practices as outlined in Benhabib's Aristotelian/Habermasian interpretation or to the performative, agonistic discourse of political theory such as the one dominating Honig's Nietzschean/Machiavellian reading of Arendt or to any sort of balance and dynamics between the two. Namely, a recourse to the third genealogical source of Arendt's thinking is inevitable: that is, Heidegger's philosophy.

The political existentialism or existentiality of the political?

The inevitable question that arises from this close parallel reading of the two thinkers is the question of the opposition between centrality of birth in Arendt's thought and centrality of death for Heidegger's philosophy. It could be argued that Heidegger's anticipatory resoluteness and Arendt's act of beginning are fundamentally ontologically different. The anticipatory resoluteness is principled on death whereas the core of the act of beginning for Arendt is the principle of natality, which is derived from the fact of birth, the fact that men are mortal simply because they were first born. In his parallel reading of Arendt and Heidegger, Taminiaux [1997:9] departs from Arendt's early essay on existentialism in philosophy - *What Is Existential Philosophy?* in 1948 [EU] - where she denounces entire Heidegger's project as an heir to the Platonic contempt for the world. It is a matter of the opposition between that which relates to the world and that which seeks to flee from it. Taminiaux further argues that, while Arendt will have later found even the words of praise for Heidegger's contribution to philosophy, her attitude to his philosophy never essentially changed: he remains the philosopher of Being whereas her primary concern remains the world and men in it.

It can further be observed that mortality as a condition of being human does not constitute a matter for Arendt's concern unlike for Heidegger. Namely, the necessity of death and ruin is the law of nature. In other words, they are the inevitable endings of automatic processes, in this case – the life process. The future as death, therefore non-being, can be rendered in terms of cause and effect as it is governed by the laws of natural necessity. The fact that man understands himself as singled out, as unique, does not imply that, as a being of nature, man is not tied to *zoe*.

If left to themselves, human affairs can only follow the law of mortality, which is the most certain and the only reliable law of a life spent between birth and death. It is the faculty of action that interferes with this law because it interrupts the inexorable automatic course of daily life, which in its turn, as we saw, interrupted and interfered with the cycle of the biological process. The life span of man running toward death would inevitably carry everything human to ruin and destruction if it were not for the faculty of interrupting it and beginning something new, a faculty which is inherent in action like an ever-present reminder that men, though they must die, are not born in order to die but in order to begin. [HC, 246]

In that sense, Heidegger's notion of being free for death would be nothing but a negation of freedom and delivering oneself over to the automatism of natural processes: "It is in the nature of automatic processes to which man is subject, but within and against which he can assert himself through action, that they can spell ruin to human life." [BPF, 168] The occurrence of death is not an interruption of the life process but its, perhaps sudden and abrupt yet certain, expected and inevitable ending. By contrast, actions as Arendt understands them constitute the "interruptions of some natural series of events, of some automatic process, in whose context they constitute the wholly unexpected."⁷⁵ [BPF, 168] The ruin is the natural, whereas everything new occurs against 'infinite improbabilities.' [BPF, 169] Death and ruin are a certainty that however do not belong to the future but are constant shadows over the present, shadows which only action in the present, for the future, can disperse.

⁷⁵ Arendt's analysis of death could be counterargued on the ground of both Hellenic and Christian understanding of death as actually setting man apart from the rest of the natural world. In nature there is no death or birth properly, only cycles. Just as man is born, unlike seeds that simply emerge, so man dies, she does not simply vanish to be replaced by the same. In that, man is part of nature, but also its most un-natural part. The tragic dimension of this un-naturalness of man in universe struck a cord with Greeks as a civilization moving away from the mythic unity with *kosmos* to the disturbing philosophical awareness of the gap: it is the condition of human mortality that contrasts man to the entire nature which, as a totality, is immortal. Rectilinearity of lifecourse was central to Christian teaching as well though Christianity, unlike Greek civilization, offered consolation for the suffering inflicted upon men by their uniqueness.

If the argument is thus posed, being free for death would paradoxically mean being free for being unfree, surrendering oneself to the natural flow. Unlike death, which is necessary for all creatures born, birth is always a miracle, it is natural but at the same time, there is nothing necessary about it. Death is not miraculous – miracle always concerns life, be it bringing in life or bringing back to life. Death is neither exceptional nor peculiar but most natural for everything living. In other words, death is not predicated on the principle of freedom.

At the same time, Arendt in the *Human Condition* defines death alongside pain as the most private of all experiences, belonging to no one else but the one dying. Death cannot appear in the public world except once the one is deceased, when death becomes the fabric of one's lifestory and is preserved in the memory of the world.

Death is the most private of all experiences and that as such it could correspond only to the condition of solitude: unlike birth that places man among men and in the world, death extracts man from it. In that sense, mortality is apolitical, no notion of togetherness can be extracted from the fact of mortality. Rather, death as experience and mortality as phenomenological concept are related to philosophy through the condition of absolute closure to the world taken to be the only properly philosophical, contemplative mode of existence. Contemplation, the condition through which man approaches the eternal, is closest to death insofar both assume a distance and detachment from the world. [HC, 20] In that sense, death stands in denial of plurality as in denial of freedom, the two defining features of the political as understood by Arendt. Unlike birth therefore, death stands in opposition to the political in human existence:

Speaking in terms of existential modes of the difference between or opposition of Politics and Philosophy is identical with the difference between or opposition of Birth and Death, or conceptually speaking: Natality and Mortality. Natality is the basic condition of all living together, and hence of all politics; Mortality is the basic condition for thought in the sense that thinking relates to something 'unrelational' to something that is as it is in and by itself. [PP1, 27]

This reading of death by Arendt suggests that there can be no parallel between hers and Heidegger's understanding of the source of resistance to the limitations of human existence, a claim perfectly valid, insofar one is prepared to claim the absence of profound intellectual ambivalence from Arendt-Heidegger dialogue and Arendt's project as a whole. One would also have to argue that Arendt considered Heidegger's philosophy as a complete and rounded whole rather than an infinitely open possibility, while also gravely simplifying Heidegger's notion of death and misinterpreting the fundamentals of his inquiry into the meaning of Being. If however one aspires for a greater openness of interpretation, then one must be ready to read in Arendt's works what she seized as a potential from Heidegger and did so implicitly, through

her own conceptual language rather than explicitly in her writings on Heidegger specifically. In that sense, what is much more interesting than the naturalness of death to her as a thinker of political doing is Heidegger's notion of ontological finitude of Dasein, rooted in the concepts of death and thrownness, and essentially interconnected with the concept of unwholeness.

Death as the ownmost and ultimate potentiality of being of Dasein and the being-towards-death of Dasein in Heidegger's ontological analysis is not to be understood as living from birth to death, which makes it seem that death is a goal of the being born. Heidegger's understanding of man is centred on death not as biological fact but as the possibility of the wholeness of Dasein. Heidegger discusses this in the first section of the Second Division of Dasein on *The Possible Being-a-Whole of Dasein and Being-toward-Death*, where death is defined not as the fact of *physis* but as the ownmost *nonrelational* possibility of Dasein. [Taminiaux, 1997:8] Biological death happens of its own accord, to any being – not only the one that Heidegger is concerned with. Death ontologically interpreted as finitude however takes the form of an ever-present possibility in the human existence.

Heidegger would therefore actually agree with Arendt in denying to death as a biological fact any eventfulness and in associating it with meaningless automatism. His interest lies in the ontological finitude of Dasein that is related, though not reducible to the fact of death, in which it is however ontologically rooted. Equally so, the ontological root of action, which is freedom incarnate, lies in the fact of birth, according to Arendt: "the faculty of action is ontologically rooted. It is, in other words, the birth of new men and the new beginning, the action they are capable of by virtue of being born." [HC, 247]

Finitude is not confined to the moment of death but it 'haunts all our existence,' [Inwood, 2004:69] inasmuch the presence of death in the being of Dasein is both certain and indefinite – certain because the being is mortal, indefinite because death may come in every moment, but the exact *when* is unknown. [Heidegger, 1927:259] The omnipresence of death is the ontic or existential dimension of finitude, touched by Heidegger's thinking but not central to his attempt to offer an ontological analysis of finitude.

Another dimension of the presence of finitude is found in the Kantian idea of the necessary cognitive limitedness of a created being, the being that did not create itself as it did not create its environment. At the same time that being must strive to understand the world alien to him. But the being's relating to the world must remain indirect and mediated through the process of thinking of the given. Heidegger's dissatisfaction with the epistemological interpretation of Kant's idea of finitude which equates it with finite knowledge is clearly expressed in the Davos discussion between him and E. Cassirer. [Heidegger, 1929/1997, Appendix IV]

Heidegger offers instead the ontological interpretation of finitude as the ontological condition of thrownness. [Inwood, 2004:69-70]⁷⁶ Before it becomes anything (else), Dasein is thrown into the world not created by it and through birth not willed by it: "Dasein exists as thrown, brought into its there *not* of its own accord. It exists as a potentiality-of-being which belongs to itself, and yet has *not* given itself to itself. [Heidegger, 1927:284]

The concept of finitude thus understood cannot be reduced to mortality but it comprises both the mortality and natality of human being, not as events - just as thrownness is not an event⁷⁷ - but as the fabric of the very existence. This is what makes it interesting for Arendt and allows her appropriation and reinterpretation of Heidegger's concept of finitude as incorporated in birth as much as death.

Arendt's understanding man through the concept of beginning as the beginner who himself is begun is grounded in the same notion of the ontological unwholeness of human existence. The future is not open-ended and unpredictable because human cognitive abilities are limited but because one man is never a master of the course of events. Where the beginning will go, does not depend on the beginner. Man in singular is defined by the capacity to begin - not the capacity to end and to complete, which remains the capacity of men in plural. Man though a finite being can and does start an infinite time series through his act but must accept that he is unable to control and navigate the course of events to follow his action:

the impossibility of foretelling the consequences of an act within a community of equals where everybody has the same capacity to act... the impossibility of remaining unique masters of what they do, of knowing its consequences and relying upon the future, is the price they pay for plurality... [HC, 244]

This is the core of man's absolute, ontological incapacity to be sovereign.

Thus Heidegger's notion of unwholeness informs Arendt's refutation of identity as given or substantive. Heidegger understands being of Dasein as becoming. Dasein is a being whose being is in becoming, as always coming-into-presence and still always not-yet. This unwholeness is not a matter of a missing part but, as Heidegger argues, the being of Dasein, what it is, is always not-yet. It must also be differentiated from 'any imperfection of *cognitive faculties*.' [Heidegger, 1927:236] It is unwhole not as a whole that can be completed but through the negation of wholeness.

⁷⁶ Inwood however speaks only of Heidegger's appropriation of Kant's notion of cognitive finitude, overlooking the connection between Heidegger's ontological meaning of thrownness and ontological unwholeness of Dasein.

⁷⁷ "But thrownness does not lie behind it as an event which actually occurred, something that happened to it and was again separated from Dasein. Rather, as long as it is *Dasein* is constantly its 'that' as care." Heidegger, 1927:284.



For Arendt also, who one is can be told only when *one-is* turns into *one-* was since the *who* appears through action only, and every new action is a new stroke on the portrait. The whole is a property, as Heidegger argues, of the between birth and death, the 'connection of life' which ties together the two ends of existence. [1927:373] For this reason the revelatory character of action in Arendt's analysis should not be understood as that which expresses someone already there but the coinciding of being and appearing. In other words, that man is a beginning means also that man, while alive, is never complete, never a told story or as Guignon says of Heidegger's notion of unwholeness: "Who a person *is* is defined by the entire story of his or her life..." [Dreyfuss, 1992:132] It is the price, as Arendt says, of man's freedom [HC, 244] - the imperfection of an unfinished finite being that, through action, can always change itself and how it appears to the world.⁷⁸

From Heidegger's inquiry into death not only as a certainty of Dasein but also its potentiality, one attribute of death has often been a matter of criticism: its non-relationality, the alleged ground of Heidegger's philosophical and ontological solipsism. The non-relational quality of death comes from the impossibility of taking the dying away from Dasein - Dasein must die for itself. [Heidegger, 1927:240] Arendt does not deny this, as was evident from her observations on the privacy of death earlier quoted here. However Heidegger's concern is not death *per se* since death, as the end of all possibilities of Dasein, is nothing but the end of existence, which is the focus of Heidegger's entire analysis of Dasein as the being that essentially exists. Heidegger is therefore pursuing an existential and ontological interpretation of death, death therefore as part of the existence of Dasein and that existence is always in the *da* of Dasein, in the world.

It follows that Heidegger does not seek the way for Dasein to escape the world and the *they* but to exist in the *da* without negating the non-being, which is one the rare certainties of its existence. This suggests that the cited Arendt's early critique of Heidegger for unworldliness of his philosophy is not necessarily valid. According to Taminiaux, the centrality of death in Heidegger's philosophy is interpreted by Arendt as an attempt, yet another, to assert the fundamental solipsism of Dasein, its ownmost self found only in the denial or even negation of being-in-the-world. [1997:16] As Taminiaux further argues, Heidegger's effort at overcoming death as a matter of nature and transforming it into that which retrieves Dasein from inauthentic existence, as that which can open the passageway to the authentic existence, would in that sense present a paradoxical form of making Dasein at home in the world while removing it from that being-with, from being in common with others through whom the world appears to us.

⁷⁸ Markell discusses, much more elaborately than possible here, the meaning of finitude in Arendt's political theory as that which is about having limits "imposed upon us by the openness and unpredictability of the future." [Markell, 2003:5]

Contrary to this critical interpretation, however, Heidegger's answer to the question of the existential possibility of wholeness in human existence – anticipatory resoluteness⁷⁹ – does not separate Dasein and its world, or *da* from *Sein* but reveals to Dasein its world and itself as being among beings in a different light, the light cast by the awareness of Dasein's finitude. The *they*, despite its inauthenticity, therefore remains the *locus* of being but also the *locus* of possibilities for the authentic being of Dasein:

As *authentic being a self*, resoluteness does not detach Dasein from its world, nor does it isolate it as free floating ego. How could it, if resoluteness as authentic disclosedness is, after all, nothing other than *authentically being-in-the-world?*[...] Resolution does not escape from 'reality,' but first discovers what is factually possible in such a way that it grasps it as it is possible as one's ownmost potentiality-of-being in the *they*. [Heidegger, 1927/1996:298, 299]

In the quoted passage from *Being and Time*, Heidegger establishes resoluteness as both the way of being in the world, remaining within reality, and the way of interpreting reality as the source of possibilities for Dasein. Resoluteness is then about working with reality as a horizon of potentials, which are more often than not the limits reworked.

The authentic existence unfolds as a response to the potentials of reality, where the potentials are not there but must be read from the existing and the given by Dasein. Heidegger's existentialism, which he however never accepted as a philosophical niche of his work, reveals itself through the understanding of the (authentic) existence as a response to the givens of the existential condition. In the words of another German existentialist and also Arendt's teacher, Jaspers: "To be a man is to become a man." [Jaspers, 1951/2003:73] As both Jaspers and Heidegger maintained, man's being is never in just being but in the decision to be.

Departing now from Heidegger's economy of the terms resoluteness and *resolution*, what would be the practical meaning of resolution as an ontological concept? In *The Essence of Human Freedom*, Heidegger explains that personality of person lies in freedom – what makes person a person, in ontological – not in psychological sense, is freedom incarnated in action. Resoluteness is Heidegger's ontological

⁷⁹ Without ambition to offer a detailed interpretation of Heidegger's concept of anticipatory resoluteness, it should be pointed out here that anticipatory resoluteness cannot be reduced to the encounter of Dasein with its death: one must recall Heidegger's instruction for thinking as allowing to be *gripped* by the question. [Heidegger, 1929/1995:7] Analogically, to anticipate is not to wait or to be aware to, not to forecast or envisage but it is about allowing that which is anticipated to permeate, to pervade the whole of existence. This pervasion of existence by the certainty of its non-existence and, at the same time, seizing existence from non-existence both as non-being and as being in discord with one's meaning, therefore not the mere passage of time which takes those born to their inevitable end in nothingness, is the meaning of being-towards-death of Dasein.

interpretation of freedom as a mode of being, not a state but the *praxis* of existence: "Practical action is the way of being of the person. Experience of practical freedom is experience of the person as person. Personality is the proper essence of man." [Heidegger, 1930/2002:188]

The fundamental in Heidegger's concept of freedom for Arendt's concept of freedom is the understanding that freedom is a mode of being, the ontological-existential notion of freedom, as Villa points out. [1996:126] Freedom as the defining potential of man, rather than the notion of liberty rendered in terms of choice or decision or sovereignty, is what Arendt seeks to recover for the political. It is the primordial freedom, absolutely unbound and underpinning all other, 'derivative' freedoms.

Arendt's thinking of human agency here intersects with Heidegger's early work on the fundamental ontology at the point of freedom as transcendence, therefore freedom that cuts through the dichotomy of negative and positive freedom. To be free *from* the givenness (that is, to be free negatively) means to remain within the givenness but give anew (freedom *to*). It is freedom emerging from spontaneity as the "power of the self-origination of a state". [Heidegger, 1930/2002:16] What Arendt is actually saying by relating ontologically defined freedom, freedom without and above all purposes and goals, with the political is that the potential for the political is bound up with the very existence of man.

While uncovering the existential dimension of politics in Arendt's political theory does not necessarily suggest that Arendt is an existentialist herself, there is an important caveat to be introduced into such reading. Whether Arendt's political theory is to be considered existentialist or not, the theory is not about "existentialism politicized," [Hinchman and Hinchman, 1991] in other words - the existentialism is not in the foreground. For Arendt, the political must always remain in the foreground. In that sense, this is not about the potentials of existentialism as a philosophical school but about the political given an existential meaning. This existential meaning as Arendt reads it must of course be grounded in her understanding of man as plural and must refer to the situations of plurality, since Arendt's concern almost never was related to the situations which stand at the center of the existentialist philosophy, the situations that are our *ownmost*, to employ Heidegger's term, but always those that we encounter in the world and that always again place us in the world and in relation to it. Those are, in Arendt's idiom, truly political situations where it is not only our life on its own or our life with those close to us is at stake but the world itself.

Equally so, the uncovering of the existential dimension of politics by Arendt must be differentiated from Hobbesian and Schmittian (death-centred) existential politics. As different as Hobbesian and Schmittian political visions and projects are, their source is common - it is the

concern with bare life, which antiquity never considered a matter of political doing:

Naked life (the human being), which in antiquity belonged to God and in the classical world was clearly distinct (as *zoē*) from political life (*bios*), comes to the forefront in the management of the state and becomes, so to speak, its earthly foundation. [Agamben, 2000:20-21]

Namely, the center of Hobbes' and Schmitt's political project is the decision on life or death. Hobbes' envisages the absolute surrender of the individual power of this decision to the sovereign, conceiving of the politics as that which protects bare life of the subjects while Schmitt is concerned with defining politics through the very sovereign's decision, external and overriding any legal or other norm. The main landmarks of these two political theories are the concepts of life and death. Where they collide with Arendt's notion of politics is however not her centering on birth but her centering on natality as a principle that arises from the necessity of birth reworked into freedom of beginning: "Freedom is the capacity of beginning." [GTNT, 13]

Peculiarity of Arendt's theory of the political lies precisely in her reworking of the concept of birth into principle of natality as the principle of human freedom. In other words, Arendt's politics – while centering on freedom – is actually neither about freedom only, which would be the defining characteristic of classical political philosophy, nor about necessity only, the principle which prevails in modern political theory, but about freedom born out of necessity.⁸⁰ Nor is this about the dialectics of necessity-freedom, as Arendt had always been a pronounced opponent of (Hegelian) dialectical flux, which blends the two thereby negating freedom, but about the understanding of the political as that which reworks necessity into freedom, never the other way around.

Existentiality of Arendt's notion of politics therefore implies a political doing as a response to the irremediable human condition of givenness by reworking this givenness into free act:

With word and deed we insert ourselves into the human world, and this insertion is like a second birth, in which we confirm and take upon ourselves the naked fact of our original physical appearance. [HC, 176-177]

In the notion of taking up of existential necessity, both Heidegger and Arendt introduce the notion of *response*. The principle of natality is manifested in the impulse that "springs from the beginning which came into the world when we were born and to which we *respond* [italics by

⁸⁰ Birth of freedom from necessity should not be understood in terms of dialectics in the sense of Arendt's understanding of dialectical movement as the process that 'has a beginning as well as an end, whose laws of motion, therefore, can be determined.' [BPF, 79] As it will be argued, there is nothing necessary about reworking of necessity into freedom.

S.N.] by beginning something new on our initiative." [HC, 177] Man therefore responds to the 'call' of birth in oneself by calling for the new birth in the form of new beginning. Heidegger also speaks of *call* to Dasein and *response* by Dasein.

There is therefore the fundamental difference between the preoccupation of modern political theory with the bare fact(s) of life and, on the other hand, Arendt's thinking of the political as delineated by those facts and the ineradicable constraints of life process, which however can never be the focus of political concern. Quite the contrary, Arendt conceives of politics as taking up of these limits and developing them as capacities – birth thus transforms from the fact of arbitrary thrownness into an alien world to the act of conscious engagement with the world through novelty brought into it by political action.

Through the notion of action as the 'second birth,' Arendt performs a Heideggerian move of taking up the necessity of thrownness. To this, men are not prompted by necessity, but "its impulse springs from the beginning which came into the world when we were born and to which we respond by beginning something new on our own initiative." [HC, 177]

This is the principal implication of Arendt's connection between the fact of birth and man's capacity to act for political theory – that the political must be understood as a potential inscribed in human condition. Arendt is not saying that politics thus *is* necessarily nor is she purporting to develop a notion of human nature. In the reply to Eric Voegelin on the issues takes up from the *Origins of Totalitarianism*, Arendt explicitly distances herself from essentialist conceptions of human nature: "Historically we know of man's nature only insofar as it has existence, and no realm of eternal essences will ever console us if man loses his essential capabilities." [PHA, 163] The first part of this statement is in harmony with Heidegger's understanding of man's essence through existence: "The whatness (*essentia*) of this being must be understood in terms of its being (*existentia*)." [1927:42] The final segment suggests further that refutation of the notion of human nature for Arendt does not imply the denial of certain potentials that define being as human. In this sense, the political is one of the man-defining potentials.

But there is also a significant philosophical implication of Arendt's relating action as freedom to birth. Contrary to the centuries long philosophical tradition, Heidegger and Arendt offer ontological understanding of man not in terms of Reason, therefore man's capacity to think, or any other internalized capacity, but in terms of freedom and action in the world as the defining capacity of man: "man achieves reality only to the extent that he acts out of his own freedom rooted in spontaneity." [EU, 183]

In Arendt's as in Heidegger's thought freedom from necessity shows itself on the horizon of time. The acting out of freedom occurs on the

horizon of temporality insofar the originary freedom of man is freedom from time though within time. In other words, man – while thrown into the flow of nature – becomes free by re-enacting the rupture caused by his first appearance and thus is not only in time but relates to time by interrupting, ever anew, the steady flow of indistinct instants and establishing a new temporal sequence woven through actions, the sequence to which there can be no masters but for which there are authors/actors to which it can be traced back. The political act is then that by which a political being, therefore a being among and with other beings, becomes responsible for the course of events though not a master over it.

In action which does not just occur in time but breaks into it and opens a new sequence resisting the automatism of flow, time is taken up as responsibility. Namely, Arendt does not conceive of political action as merely *situated* in an instant but as being a moment of beginning insofar the world can never be reversed back to what it had been before the action and insofar it spells the renewal of the world which otherwise is destined to decay and ruin.

Because the world is made by mortals it wears out; and because it continuously changes its inhabitants it runs the risk of becoming as mortal as they. To preserve the world against the mortality of its creators and inhabitants it must be constantly set right anew. [BPF, 192]

The necessity of the ruinous time flow is therefore resisted neither by the dislocation nor by control but by its taking up as responsibility, its flow understood not as a succession of indistinct instants but as sourced by men, not only through their natural birth but also their 'second birth' in action.⁸¹

The question of that freedom, which is human freedom properly, is the fundamental question of all philosophy, argues Heidegger: "the question concerning the essence of human freedom is the fundamental question of philosophy, in which is rooted even the question of being." [Heidegger, 1930/2002:206] For Arendt, equally so, the question of freedom as new beginning, as bringing into the world, is the fundamental question of any inquiry purporting to be relevant for men and the human condition, as she fights "against illusions of helplessness, the spurious naturalization of matters that are in fact subject to human choice and action." [Pitkin, 1998:192]⁸²

⁸¹ While this cannot be investigated here, it would be interesting to analyze how this Arendt's conceptual triangle, man-action-time would reflect on the old philosophical debate between the (Aristotelian) objective time and (Kantian) subjective time and whether it is within political thinking of time sequence as rendered meaningful through political action that this debate could be offered a reconciliatory path.

⁸² As further argued by Pitkin, the politico-historical (and also normative) context of Arendt's conceptual focus on freedom is the situation of the social as opposed to the political, the acceptance of the existing as unchangeable and oblivion of the possibility resistance to the flow of events and of change, which defines the political. Accepting and enacting freedom is what more often than not stands between disasters and averted disasters.

The problem however remains for Arendt's thinking of the political. The notion of man as the beginning that was begun to begin poses the question of the source of action as beginning. If moment of beginning is so miraculous, as though it comes from no-where and no-time, emerging from the bare fact of man's birth, where does this moment come from? How can it be called for and not simply befallen upon the actor by virtue of natality? Or, starting from a different direction, how can an actor ever be responsible for a miracle?

This remains the problem of the connection between the ontological root of the human condition, that is - the condition that "we are always already free-to-become-free" [Pitkin, 1998:282] or always free to place our freedom in the world through action, and on the other hand - *praxis*: how is it exactly that this ontologically rooted capacity for action is set in motion?

While thinking of the political as the dynamics of relating in the public sphere, therefore the dynamics of inter-acting, cuts through the knot of the individualist-communitarian debates in modern political philosophy and theory, it at the same time renders itself vulnerable to a different dualism, the one not only principal in history of philosophy but so entwined with the roots of philosophy that it could be considered fundamental were it not for those voices of dissent in philosophy that reject its fundamentality. It is the mind/body dualism, as the mirror image of the dualism between the world of ideas and the world of phenomena.

When Arendt focuses her conceptualization of the political on action, what is in the focus is one of the worldly occurrences refutes this dualism of the world and the one which most evidently does so, yet also the one that has been most difficult to grasp conceptually as precisely that, the refutation of dualism. When therefore a political thought such as Arendt's focuses on action defined in terms of miracle, thus an occurrence of unknown origin and in defiance of causality and rationalization, it begs a question of the source of action: Where does it come from, this action? Are we to assume that Arendt allows the political to slide into irrational, ungrounded performativity with this conceptualization of action which precludes any premeditated modeling of its course and reckoning with the consequences? If so, can there be a source of action or it is simply a mysterious motion of *physis* in historical reality, which in fact perpetuates the metaphysical dualism of mind and body? Are we then to conclude that action is nothing but a snap in reality, the moment when the mind is blinded and the consciousness as well as conscience silenced?

These questions, to which the following chapters will seek an answer, though perhaps finding only *response*, have enormous importance for thinking of the political and thus for the internal consistency of Arendt's project within the sphere of political thinking, and critics and

interpreters have indeed looked into them from that angle⁸³ yet the answers remain open, just as Arendt's inquiry into the source of action remained open since her theory of mind is incomplete. At the same time, the bearing of Arendt's explorations in this direction upon philosophy as a whole stands hardly touched.

⁸³ See in particular Villa (1996), Zerilli (2002), Canovan (1995), ; Beiner (1983), Beiner and Nedelsky (2001).

**Chapter Four:
SITUATING MIND IN THE WORLD**

Every beginning anew is an absolute beginning which is an irremediable, irreparable fracture of the temporal continuum disclosing its frailty. As such, it poses a particular problem of conceptualization: How can it be entirely absolved of all ties, does it assume the erasure of everything before? Is it a negation of any meaningful historical narrative? Where could it come from if it is absolutely new? It is clear to Arendt that a free act is free only insofar it cannot be fitted into the existing chain of causes and consequences but itself 'immediately turns into a cause of whatever follows...' [LM/II:210] The answer that she offers is to place the free act, the absolute beginning in the legendary *hiatus*, a 'gap of historical time' that disperses the illusion of 'all-powerful time continuum', therefore itself a category of dislocated time. As such, it separates the old from the new, absolving the new from the automatism of causality, whereof follows that 'the end of the old is not necessarily the beginning of the new.' [LM/II:204]

But by exposing the discontinuity of the continuum, what the beginning brings about is also undermined. It is inexplicable through the *locus* in 'a reliable chain of cause and effect ... in Aristotelian categories of potentiality and actuality. In the normal time continuum every effect immediately turns into a cause of future developments, but when the causal chain is broken... there is nothing left for the 'beginner' to hold on to." [LM/II:207-208] The beginning is groundless while at the same time it cannot be trusted to ground the new ground, to create 'the condition for all future political life and historical development' [LM/II:209] since it explodes the time continuum. Overcoming necessity deprives the new beginning of any certainty, of a safe shelter that the causal chains provide.

With notable undertones of disappointment, Arendt observes how the actors of the American Revolution shunned away from the newness of their own act and, rather than face the 'abyss of nothingness,' endowed their new beginning with the meaning of renaissance, the re-enactment of the great past and historic political examples. Everywhere in history they looked, they could not find an example to help them think and recognize what they did in the sense of men acting in concert and binding themselves to certain principles upon which they wished to see their new political edifice erected. They could not justify it neither to themselves nor to the others that this outburst of political freedom into a new political community was founded on nothing else but itself, and that the free act entailed its own ground.

Arendt traces this inability to think the new as newness proper back to the Western philosophical legacy where, 'in its original integrity, freedom survived... only in utopian and unfounded promises of a final 'realm of freedom.'" [LM/II:216] In her research therefore, Arendt found that the only trail of thinking that could lead to thinking the free act as groundlessly grounded in itself is the thinking rooted in the Augustinian conception of man as himself a beginning, therefore brought into the world as the absolute novelty that could not have been derived from anything preceding it and had to be justified by the very fact of it being there. Such thinking invalidates the very question of justifiability of the new and grounds the new in the existence of man as the absolute beginning, related to what was before but not derived thereof.

This relates Arendt's conceptualization back to the genealogical roots of her own understanding of man as beginning in Augustine's notion of *homo temporalis*, who was created not as other beings to perpetuate the same, its own kind in the reproductive cycle, but to be the novelty. Arendt however is aware that this is an ontological answer to the political question of the source of political action, whereas her overall project has all along been directed at finding a political answer to the political question, though incorporating as something of a collateral benefit the response to the philosophical problem of world dualism. One implication of relating the capacity for action to the fact of natality, which is beyond man's power, is that freedom itself appears unfree, a matter of fate. Arendt's argument is therefore in the danger of falling back into the pit of Hegelian dialectics of necessity and freedom, which she has criticized all throughout. The fact of birth:

... seems to tell us no more than that we are *doomed* to be free by virtue of being born, no matter whether we like freedom or abhor its arbitrariness, are 'pleased' with it or prefer to escape its awesome responsibility by electing some form of fatalism. [LM/II:217]

Arendt's project of thinking the new as absolutely new is here confronted with the danger of arbitrariness entailed in every new beginning. This is the question of the moment that can be called for by an actor and not only befallen upon the actor, who thus consciously resists the automatism which to Eichmann seemed as the insurmountable state of "everything always in a state of continuous flux, a steady stream?" [EJ, 152] The question here is not the cause of a cause, which Arendt regards as the dead-end street of the infinite regress [LM/II:89] but the way out of the arbitrariness of beginning that would both preserve spontaneity and escape fatalism.

The problem here is twofold. Or rather, it is the same problem at two levels. Politically, it is the problem of the source of action of the acting being - where does action through which man partakes of the world rendering it changed, where does this action come from, what in man makes him act in-to the world? How is this insertion into time, the razor-cut that is the moment of action, to be called for and not only

received by virtue of the ontological relationship between the human condition of natality and human capacity for action, between the state of being born into the world as a unique novelty and the response to this state through bringing the new into the world?⁸⁴

Philosophically, it is the problem related to the understanding of the world. The burden of the philosophical tradition, in all its gravity as Arendt contends, cannot be fully grasped if one does not recognize that metaphysics, as suggested by its very name,⁸⁵ rooted all philosophy in the conception of the dual world, separating the world of ideas, located in the space of *meta-*, from the material world, of *physis*. If philosophy as a thought-project is however to be reconstructed on the ground other than metaphysics, the foundational dualism must also be overcome. But if Arendt understands man as an acting being, the being therefore fundamentally existing by appearing in the phenomenal world, it could be argued that she herself only performs an overcoming of the tradition that is a repetition of the Marxian inversion of the classical hierarchy of human activities, which placed *vita activa* above *vita contemplativa*, essentially leaving the dichotomy itself intact.

The problem of the source of action and the problem of dualism however are only two sides of the same coin. If action is understood as Arendt understands it - more than a mere re-action to the given situation, automatically triggered off by circumstances, but something that brings about something genuinely new while revealing the actor - looking for the source of action entails an inquiry into the connection between the inner processes of the human mind and, on the other hand, political action which 'constitutes a realm of appearances.' [Beiner, 1983:17] Speaking in terms of *inside* and *outside*, of that which makes appear without appearing and that which appears, is only one way of speaking of the world in terms of ideas and matter. If

⁸⁴ Arendt insists that "action, to be free, must be free from motive on one side, from its intended goal as a predictable effect on the other... they are its determining factors, and action is free to the extent that it is able to transcend them." [BPF, 151] In that sense, "action insofar as it is free is neither under the guidance of the intellect nor under the dictate of the will... but springs from something altogether different... which I shall call a principle. Principles do not operate from within the self as motives do... but inspire, as it were, from without..." [BPF, 152] By relating action to principle as its inspiration, Arendt opposes internalist theories of human agencies and radically externalizes action. Not only is the agent not an owner of the consequences and effects of action but what inspires action belongs entirely to the world, it comes to the agent from the world and is returned to it through action since principles are "manifest in the world as long as the action lasts, no longer." [BPF, 152]

However this discussion of principle does not entirely answer the question of the source of action. Arendt does not demonstrate here how all phases of this internal process of initiating action - goal-setting by reason, decision of judgment, command of will- are interconnected with the guidance of principle. Nor is it clear from this brief exposition of the concept of principle how principle that is general and universal as Arendt argues inspires a particular action which is the break-through into newness: how does new come about from something that Arendt's conceptualization suggests to be perennial, such as principles of honour, glory, fear?

⁸⁵ Though its name originally denoted merely Aristotle's book written after *Physics*, metaphysics as a term acquires a highly symbolic meaning, at least in the more recent philosophy and not least through the writings of Heidegger. It is to that symbolic meaning that this reference is directed.

therefore one seeks to link that which appears in the world, like action, to that which remains hidden, like the workings of the human mind, one is in fact asking the perennial question of the bridge between the world of ideas and world of appearances.

But that this is the 'perennial' philosophical question is true only insofar it is accepted that the understanding of this problem as the principal and perennial for philosophy is a problem in itself. In other words, the newly arisen political and philosophical situation to which Arendt continuously responded, impels the problematization of this question of the bridge between the two worlds based on the problematization of the conception of the world as dual. In that context, Arendt's concern with the source of political action – since the principle of natality is the predicate of the moment of beginning but not the 'spark' – may be read as an attempt at the final blow to the 'metaphysical delusion.' [LM/II:110]

Arendt's venture into the philosophy of mind must therefore be seen as a constitutive element of her political thought, critical of both political rationalism and voluntarism, but at the same time – her strongest philosophical statement against both materialism and idealism. This is so not simply because plurality and worldliness inherent to the mind faculties⁸⁶ place in the core of the very being as human a certain politicality, distinct from any 'natural sociability' as possibility is distinct from actuality and freedom from necessity. It is also because the principal concern that drives Arendt's inquiry is how to understand and how to conceptualize the link between thinking and acting, between ideas and phenomena, without contradicting the principle of freedom as defining of man. This is nothing less but the quest to capture the paradox: "of a living being that, though itself part of the world of appearances, is in possession of a faculty, the ability to think, that permits the mind to withdraw from the world without ever being able to leave it or transcend it." [LM/I:45]

⁸⁶ Arendt's three faculties of mind are inherently plural, in harmony with one of Arendt's principal philosophical claims; denial of the purity of singularity in anything related to men, anything of men or by men. In that sense, thinking splits one into two or joins two-in-One, willing is always also nilling and, ultimately, judgment is representative thinking, thinking by one in the place of many.

A terminological observation or caveat is due here. Arendt's terminology of *mental faculties* is adopted in this discussion since the text revolves primarily around interpretation and pursuit of the movement of her argument. The term *faculties* in Arendt's thinking of mind should not be understood in support of strict division of mind. In that sense, Arendt is close to Aristotle [*De Anima*, 9th chapter of 3rd book], where he states that there is no separation of soul into faculties. Namely, Arendt acknowledges that working of the mind is constant interaction of the three faculties but by using this term, she is trying to emphasize autonomy of faculties, while not arguing for their independence of each other. The term however may not necessarily be the most convenient in that sense however, for the sake of clarity, it has been retained here as have also been some other terms from Arendt's conceptual language.

Willing

Undoubtedly, and as mentioned also in Chapters One and Two, Arendt's works that preceded the Eichmann trial, excepting perhaps the earliest on Saint Augustine, could all be seen as parts of a mosaic of recovering the political, recovering it from the philosophical silencing and from the oblivion of political experiences which could lead to an understanding of the political different to the prevailing concern with governments and systems. They dealt with the silenced political project of philosophy (works later collected in *Essays in Understanding*), the phenomenology of action (*Human Condition*), the political experiences illuminating the threat to the political in a specific historical situation (*Origins of Totalitarianism*) as well as different conceptualizations of action and the political (*On Revolution*). It is as though this entire opus emanates from Arendt's statement: "The *raison d'être* of politics is freedom, and its field of experience is action." [BPF, 146]

What at least partly prompted Arendt to look at the philosophical matter of dual worlds as the question of highest political relevance, was the trial to Eichmann. In the *Introduction* to the first volume of the *Life of the Mind*, Arendt makes it clear that she is not abandoning political thinking for the sake of 'purely philosophical' meditations, but that she remains concerned with the questions which began to haunt her during the trial to Eichmann.⁸⁷

In the *Introduction* to the whole of the book, Arendt states her philosophic position as coming out of the death of metaphysics and, insofar the two had been equated, philosophy. In the opening lines of the first volume, this position is given a succinct philosophical statement: '*Being and Appearing coincide.*' [LM/I:19, italics by H.A.] The implication of this statement is that the project behind *The Life of the Mind* cannot be a pure philosophy of human mind but must have relation and relevance to the world, in the language of the philosophical tradition – the world of appearances, just as although "in our world there is not clearer or more radical opposition than that between thinking and doing... the principles by which we judge and conduct our lives depend ultimately on the life of the mind." [LM/I:71]⁸⁸

One of Arendt's fundamental propositions in the inquiry into the mind faculties is that will is the one mental faculty that has the power to

⁸⁷ Placing Arendt's last work in the context of her political theory against interpretations which see it as Arendt's return to the 'philosophical roots' in saturation with political issues, is justified also by the very design of the book: Namely, proceeding from thinking, *via* willing, to judging, Arendt's leaves off the discussion of one faculty to move to the other only when she concludes how that faculty relates to action. The trajectory is clearly from the least worldly to the most worldly or most political of the faculties.

⁸⁸ This intertwining of active life and life of mind, of the two worlds is evident even in the morphology of the terms Arendt employs. Namely, active life is differentiated into three categories: labour, work, action – all three straightforward and simple nouns, static substantives. On the other hand, mind faculties do not retain the names from the prevailing philosophical tradition – reason, will, judgment but are given in the form of gerund, an active, verb-related noun, suggestive of motion, dynamic: thinking, willing, judging.

move and that, not through the retention of the things absent in the form as they no longer are, but through the *attention* to the things that never have been and may never be, since they do not have to be. It is the faculty therefore that can make things happen, in other words – the faculty which belongs to the invisibles but can effect appearance. [LM/II:110]

The question therefore is whether it is in the faculty of will that the source of action – as precisely that which appears in defiance of necessity, spontaneously and *ex nihilo* insofar something enters the world where there was nothing, not even an awaiting empty space – can be located.

Arendt's engagement with the philosophical tradition in this inquiry is however most disillusioning. For the ancient Hellenic tradition, will simply is *not* unless it can be thought as an organ that helps men choose between given possibilities. Suspicious of future which they considered valid only insofar a mere derivative of the past through a causal chain, the ancient philosophers, according to Arendt, could not see any value in an 'organ' which, even if it existed, would be entangled in accidents and contingencies. [LM/II:15] In the Aristotelian understanding of the world, the new entered the world in the movement from potentiality to actuality, which reconciled the appearance of the new with continuity, and the continuity, as that which lasts, was the only valid philosophical concern.

In modern philosophy, as preoccupied as it became with the notion of future and progressive movement, Arendt however encounters the same concern with continuity and reluctance to accept any understanding of the world that would be based on freedom and contingency and stand apart from teleological itineraries. An intimation of a different view for Arendt appears only in Kant's philosophical system, emerging from his 'unconditional commitment to freedom,' the realization – noted with some surprise on his part – that other than in thought, nowhere else can there be absolute necessity, [LM/II:146] an intuition therefore that to think the world through freedom and contingency may be philosophically more valid than to think it in terms of necessity, order, causality.

But Kant's intimation however did not generate a concept of will that would be any more useful for Arendt's inquiry. Kant denies to will anything but the strictly executive function of the law, that is the categorical imperative. On the basis of this, Arendt places him together with other modern philosophers of progress, which was believed to embody the final reconciliation of necessity and freedom. The Moderns therefore no less than the Ancients, although looking at the problem from a very different angle, preoccupy themselves with reading a 'master plan' behind the chaos of contingencies, events and actions. Will there, if it at all is, must be seen as a motor of this movement, which may be bringing about the new but only the necessary new that fits the grand scheme.

Arendt thus associates the 'discovery' of willing with the Christian philosophers and their realization that I-will and I-can diverge. Namely, Arendt contends that a philosophy grounded in the concept of cyclical time, as she perceives the philosophy of antiquity, could not entertain the idea of the spontaneous action which breaks the old patterns and brings about the new. Consequently, such philosophy would not be able to conceptualise will as a faculty related to action. With Christianity however the cyclical concept of time is abandoned in favour of the linear time flow, which is based on the notion of uniqueness and unrepeatability of events. It introduces the non-derivative idea of future as that which never before has been. Arendt therefore considers the Christian philosophers to be the founders of the thought of will as an autonomous mental faculty through which men bring novelty to the world.

One of those thinkers had gone a step further, at least in Arendt's reading, when not shunning away from the unleashed will, the will free to bring into life anything and not just to choose amidst the presently 'offered.' As Arendt reads him, Duns Scotus rejected as heresy any interpretation of the world that would be based on absolute necessity, attributing the mind's interpretation of the reality as a result of the working of necessity, to the inability of mind to think away what already was there. This inability springs from the existence of the thinking ego that cannot think itself away. [LM/II:139]

Duns Scotus is important to Arendt for two reasons. Firstly, he understands the world in terms of freedom, not necessity. Giving the ontological priority to freedom, he clears for Arendt the philosophical ground for her reconstructive project. In other words, his philosophy testifies to philosophicality of Arendt's critique of the philosophical tradition.

Secondly, and more importantly, Duns Scotus develops a concept of will which, on one level, is not founded on command or imposition, the over-powering that would imply aspiration to sovereignty and annihilation of freedom, but on freedom itself. On another level, this concept denies the instrumentality of will, its subordination to the intellect, proposing instead that willing comes to rest not in the accomplishment of an end through action but in action itself: "the serenity of a self-contained, self-fulfilling, ever-lasting movement... the stillness of an act resting in its end." [LM/II:124]⁸⁹

⁸⁹ Arendt's recourse in the direction of Duns Scotus points to the limitations of narrow Aristotelian interpretation of Arendt's thought, even more obvious from her late works. *The Life of The Mind* – as it will be argued, in all three of its parts – constitutes an explicit statement by Arendt against teleological frameworks, and by divorcing will from executive function to it attributed in definitions of will as the instrument of choice, Arendt distances her initiatory notion of action from Aristotle's vision of *praxis* and his solution to the problem of absolute novelty. Aristotle's solution namely resolves the problem of the interruption to continuity that the new poses by dissolving it into actuality which originates from always already present potentiality. [LM/II:30] The newness of the new is

Such concept of will is key to understanding man as fundamentally free to decide on his doings and life, hence also responsible. [LM/II:18] Through the Christian thought, therefore, Arendt finds the way to place will in the context of freedom and responsibility as opposed to the context of execution and instrumentality. This directly responds to the question which the Eichmann trial posed to Arendt: how to endow agent with the responsibility for action without the assumption of sovereignty, that is the absolute control by agent over the consequences and effects of his/her action.

By contrast, to Arendt, will is the faculty of that which could occur yet could also remain unacted, that it is or it is not happens through will. [LM/II:6-7] Will is the faculty of the *yes* or *no* decision against necessities, the faculty through which men renounce all presentness, which moves and changes. The moment of the decision to act is unique: it could be – but it does not have to be. The origin of action is therefore in the principle of freedom, which the Will embodies – coming from freedom of the Will, each and every action could just as well not have happened. Thereof emerges the concept of responsibility as the burden of freedom.

The will wills and nills, argues Arendt, to will is always and already to nill. While willing, we are nilling until we take a decision and act. Drawing on Augustine, Arendt argues that this conflict within will is resolved not through another volition but through action itself. Action only redeems will from the whirl of willing and nilling. Action interrupts the activity of will by closing off all other options through the enactment of the chosen one. Through the *yes* and *no*, the principle of freedom is acted out but once the *yes* or the *no* has been said, will cancels itself as action is located not in the space of willing *and* nilling but in the space of *either/or*. [LM/II:102]

While Arendt does not elaborate this, the decision of will to say *no* is where action comes from. Namely, will can say *yes*, and this was the core of Nietzsche's yes-saying to life or the affirmative will, but from its *no* to the present and the existing, there emerges the new that could have just as well remained non-existent. It is the specific capacity of will to make things happen. On this ground, Arendt can therefore argue that action is coming out of nothing because there appears something where there was nothing but also in the sense that what precedes action is the *act* of Will, an act still residing only in the mind and does not exist as thing of/in the world.

thus dissolved into the return of the old, leaving intact the overall idea of time as a cycle that always only brings back, not anew.

In this light, the Aristotelian readings of Arendt's phenomenology of *vita activa* could be re-read in a more balanced manner to acknowledge Arendt's Aristotelian and Kantian threads insofar Arendt's guiding intention is to preserve "Kant's ideas of free agency as an end in itself and of human dignity as grounded in the strict autonomy of spontaneous action." [Beiner, 1983:31]

This however poses the problem of appropriating a theological framework for political action. [LM/II:19] The Christian dimension of Scotus' thought dictates a solution to the restlessness of will, which endlessly oscillates between willing and nilling: the stillness of a self-fulfilled act. This act is the act of love of the world as it is [LM/II:144-145], in acceptance and affirmation. Political action as the medium of political freedom, in contrast to religious or philosophical or freedom of being, is however meaningless if detached from the power to do as the power to change the world. It is the freedom of doing not of being that appears through political action.

It would therefore appear that Arendt's recourse to Scotus and other Christian thinkers was not much more than a genealogical detour unless however the notion of self-fulfilled act as love could be related to Arendt's notion of principles as driving forces of action. To understand the role of principles in Arendt's conceptualization of action, it must be noted that Arendt differentiates between two dimensions of action, the determined and the free. Insofar as the element of determination is present, it is meaningful to speak of motives and aims. The aim is what is given in the intellect and towards which then the intellect directs will that 'dictates action.' [BPF, 151] Inasmuch an act is free however it is 'neither under the guidance of the intellect nor under the dictate of the will... but springs from something altogether different.' [BPF, 152] That something 'altogether different' is principle, the notion of which Arendt receives from Montesquieu.

Free act is inspired by principles from without. The implication of this *without* is negation of solipsism but also of transcendentalism for the principles are property of the world. They refer to men living among men. Their role is not regulative but initiatory, they move to action through which they will be made manifest. [BPF, 152] While they include honor, virtue, glory, the principle of freedom is most relevant for Arendt given her understanding of man and his mode of being through free act.

To be moved to action by the principle of freedom, she deduces from analyzing American and Hungarian revolutions, is to act out of *love* of freedom. Loving, in Arendt's Augustinian understanding, is willing something or someone to be. It follows thereof that to love freedom is to want freedom to be, and freedom only is through action that brings into being the new. Drawing on Scotus' notion of will stilled in love, Arendt therefore finds a political answer to the restlessness and inner conflictuality of will, the answer opposed to the philosophical letting-be, through letting be as letting become.

This resolution of the will, which reconciles will and free act, while indebted to Scotus' conceptualization of will and Augustine's notion of love, could not however come from purely philosophical meditations. In order to grasp the potential resolution, Arendt had to engage with the history of political experiences, the doings of: 'men of action, who ought to be committed to freedom because of the very nature of their

activity, which consists in 'changing the world,' and not in interpreting or knowing it, whereas:

Professional thinkers... have not been pleased with freedom and its ineluctable randomness; they have been unwilling to pay the price of contingency for the questionable gift of spontaneity. [LM/II:198]

As Arendt portrays it, her turn to political history is a turn from philosophic to political freedom. The question however that seems unavoidable at this stage of Arendt's inquiry is why she ever took the step into history of philosophy in the pursuit of the conceptualization of will that could be related to *political* action. After all, it could seem that the inquiry meant nothing but revisiting her early critique of philosophical tradition dating back to the *Human Condition* in 1958 or even earlier, to the lectures from 1954, and the conclusion that philosophy cannot deal with human action and freedom embodied in it.

The stakes are however different insofar philosophical genealogy allows Arendt to problematize the tradition of voluntarism in political theory, which though focusing on will nevertheless perpetuates philosophical misconception of will. Surprisingly therefore for someone who is looking for a concept of will that would support the claim that will is the 'mainspring of action,' hidden in Arendt's critical genealogy of the concept there lies Arendt's critique of voluntarism, just as her deliberations on thinking treasure critique of political rationalism, as we shall see in the remainder of this chapter.

Uncovering one layer after another of philosophical tradition, Arendt exposes the unsuitability, for thinking of the political, of the philosophical concept of will, insofar it can at all be found, as a concept of either blind instrument or of a mental faculty that exhausts itself in "the inevitable recoil on itself of the willing ego." [LM/II:216] The former, as was argued, is related to both Hellenic philosophy and modern progressivism, both equally reluctant "to pay the price of contingency for the gift of freedom - the mental endowment we have for beginning something new, of which we know that it could just as well not be. No doubt the philosophers have always been more 'pleased' with necessity than with freedom..." [LM/II:195] The latter however originates from modern philosophies, such as Nietzsche's, born in response to and in critique of progressivist philosophical frameworks.

Arendt's genealogical critique in that sense is most indebted to Heidegger's critique of will, which constitutes an element of his critique of subjectivity as the underlying theme of his inquiry into the meaning of the Being of being. It is through will that the subject seeks to overpower that wherefrom the subject itself emerged, to subdue and subjugate, to absorb all that 'there-is'. That is 'absolute subjectivity':

The transcendental reduction to absolute subjectivity gives and secures the possibility of grounding the objectivity of all objects (the Being of these beings) in

their valid structure and consistency, that is, in their constitution, in and through subjectivity. [Heidegger, 1993:440]

Arendt's critique of will is a practical, political critique of the assumption of sovereign 'subjectivity' but the 'discontents' behind her practical critique resonate the ontological critique that underlies Heidegger's silencing of will in his work. Through will, an I is individuated, the I that is the author of volitions generating action. But that self-created willing I is "isolated from everyone else" in its responsibility for itself. [LM/II:196] Enclosed in itself, in all its strife for power, it is powerless because the world bends not to the self but to the many acting together. Just as Heidegger is attempting to understand the Being in the 'clearing', the clearing of subject that is, beyond or beneath the subject-centred sphere of cognition, so Arendt seeks to remove the political from the grip of the faculty which individuates, secludes and gives rise to perilous yet utopian aspirations to sovereignty.

The ultimate political expression of this all-defiant I that wills itself in isolation from the world is unlimited freedom, which in the political sphere paradoxically equals – the denial of freedom. [BPF, 164] The political concept that embodies radical and absolute freedom which annihilates itself, is sovereignty. Namely, to be sovereign entails that every I-will coincides with or incorporates I-can, ignoring therefore that every I-will of this I, as a being born not of itself and by itself but by others and among others, is always among the They⁹⁰ where the I-will may encounter the I-nill of some other I. In that case, my I-will and I-can will coincide if and only if the other I, or all the They, is subordinated or annihilated. In other words, sovereignty of this I 'can be purchased only at the price of the freedom, i.e. the sovereignty, of all the others.' [BPF, 164]

Paradoxically, Arendt is here in agreement with one political theorist who built his political theory on the voluntarist ground. Namely, Carl Schmitt, whom Arendt declares a champion of sovereignty in the history of political theory [HC], never mentions freedom in his theorizing of political sovereignty and sovereign decision. On the part of subjects, sovereignty assumes obedience. On the part of the sovereign, sovereignty is not the question of his freedom but of his right and duty in the face of existential threat, in other words – his sovereign decision is not a matter of free will but sheer necessity to which all, subjects and sovereign equally, must succumb. [Schmitt, 1932/1996:38]

So if a man were to be considered sovereign, the man would have to be infinitely sovereign, for sovereignty is meaningful only if infinite – finite sovereignty is self-denying. But, as it was argued in Chapter Three, from Arendt's Heideggerian conception of finitude of man, sovereignty cannot be an attribute of a finite being, therefore a being not given by itself and not self-contained. If sovereignty was equated with freedom,

⁹⁰ 'Plurality is the law of earth.' [LM/I:19]

then the conclusion would have to be that man is not free at all for man never is by himself.

The I-will that Arendt contrasts with I-can is a sovereign, non-political decision that most closely corresponds with command. It seeks to make appear through forcing. *A contrario*, I-can is always negotiated and limited by the I-can of others. It is conditioned by them. I-can stands in the direct link with Heidegger's letting-be although not in the sense of the unconditioned affirmation of everything that is but in acceptance of that which is the frame for action that can-be. Sovereignty implies the unlimitedness of subject's will whereas freedom, in the sense of political freedom which appears through political action, springs from the constant whirling of potentials within human community. Arendt's term for this process is 'consent,' [LM/2:201] derived from Latin *con-sentire*, thinking-with which is more than being in harmony or thinking the same as it implies active arrival to the common ground which spells boundaries as much as potentials.

For Arendt, therefore, will as understood by the political theorists of the voluntarist tradition and philosophers is another dead-lock of the 'professional thinkers.' It come from their profound inability to think the tension inherent to man as a being that is finite in its plurality, that has boundaries drawn by other singular beings, while it remains free within these confines is nevertheless free, not despite them but precisely through them. The confines are like the boundaries of our selves that are at the same time the lines where we touch the others, as Nancy suggests by the idea of the outer edge that always is exposed to the outside and never separates from but continues to communicate with the outside. [Nancy, 1991:4] Along these lines freedom as a political phenomenon is negotiated.

Throughout history of political thought, political thinkers have sought to respond to the dyadic problem of action and responsibility by exploring another mental faculty, the Reason, as the ruler of the will and the source of ideas wherefrom acts are derived and in reference to which they are justified. As it will be shown, Arendt's critique of voluntarism however does not compel her to embrace rationalism.

Thinking

Arendt's principal claim in her inquiry into thinking is that action can never come from thinking. Thinking by itself can never generate action. The assumption of the causal relation between thinking and acting Arendt equates with the automatic translation of thought into action. Namely, the idea or the 'model' of action would then be shaped by the mind, which and action would be reduced to an instrument of execution, a mere vehicle of ideas. What is at stake is annihilation of the *differentia specifica* of man as a being – freedom, which depends on action not being dictated, calculable, planned and therefore predictable.

In the sense of this guiding idea, Arendt on thinking can also be read as Arendt against the tradition of political philosophy that has up to the present day revolved around the question of applying the products or results of thinking to everyday world. Namely, a position contrary to Arendt's constitutes the tradition of political rationalism in many of its varieties. As remote as Straussian 'revived classical political rationalism' where the political doing is directed by the ethical notion of good [Strauss, 1989] may seem from American pragmatism that denies absoluteness of ends, and then both of them from Plato's notion of philosopher-king, all three of them are underlain by the conception of politics which subordinates action to thinking and equates thinking with knowing.

On the one hand, making politics a function of cognitive thinking understood in terms of instrumental rationality places politics 'beyond the competence of the ordinary individual,' [Beiner, 1983:1] professionalizing or technicizing political doing and eroding the responsibility of citizen.

On another level, however consequences are even graver. Thinking understood as knowing is uncompromising in its demand for consistency and logicity, in other words - truth. If a political equivalent were to be sought for truth, it would have been nothing else but dictatorship, Arendt argues, for truth is absolute, hence compelling, over truth there can be no argument. If therefore action were to flow directly from thought that is truth, both the quality of spontaneity and uniqueness of action would be lost: spontaneity because action would be reduced to the execution of orders, based on the pattern preconceived by the mind; uniqueness - since the laws of thinking do not differ but are universal for all, each and every one of us would act in the same way under the same circumstances.

The loss of spontaneity and uniqueness in action is coupled by the loss of spontaneity and uniqueness in thought understood as knowledge since the predicates of knowledge are precisely necessity and universality. The ultimate consequence is that everything that happens, through the working of actor, flows as a realization of that which, being absolute and universal, is valid for all. This necessity does not simply abolish contingency and accidents, as it is often understood, but annihilates its radical opposite, which is freedom. [LM/I:61] The instrumentalist understanding of the relation between thinking and acting therefore reduces action to the tight frame of means-ends categories, in a kind of revived Platonic project of substituting making for acting [HC, 225], which would entail nothing less but annihilation of the distinctly human capacity for new beginnings, that is the distinct meaning of human existence on earth in Arendt's thought-project. [LM/II:217]

The years of totalitarianism as the years of events engineered, of modeling human agency on one, pre-determined prototype, sensitized Arendt exceptionally to any possibility of such loss. For Arendt, keeping

action apart from thinking is therefore not meant to perpetuate the classical Platonic dichotomy between *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa* but to respond to the historical situation of totalitarianism. If action is directed by the mind, the automatism of translating ideas into acts spells annihilation of the 'miraculous,' the 'unexpected' in our lives, that which she equates with the appearance of freedom in the world. This is why, as Villa argues, Arendt saw it as not only a philosophical but also a political project to keep thinking and acting apart.⁹¹ In other words, it is a political matter to affirm conceptually the distinction between the two in the function of affirming the principle of freedom.

Arendt's inquiry into thinking must therefore develop a conceptual construction that would support both the autonomy and mutual relatedness of thinking and acting without interfering with the human capacity to radically alter the course of events and transform any historical framework into something new that could not have been envisaged nor, once apparent, can it be reduced to what preceded it. For this, Arendt works her way through by moving away from cognitive, Platonic thinking to the concept of Socratic thinking that is based on incessant questioning.

In a phenomenological analysis, Arendt identifies the main characteristics of all thinking which allow her to assert her understanding of thinking as counter-distinctive to acting. Thinking, as all mental activities, is engaged with the invisibles, with that which does not appear and is therefore not presented but re-presented by the mind. [LM/I:51] The fact that the 'matter' of thinking is not existent in the material reality is the fundament of the main power of the thinking capacity: the power to transcend the given, to deal away with it. [LM/I:73-74]

While transcending the world does not have to imply abandoning it, it often was understood as such by philosophers, who took for their task precisely the disappearance from the world. [LM/I:83] Contemplation was likened to the state of death, which extracts man from the world. Not to be in the world was thus taken for the condition in which the Eternal would reveal itself to the human sight, the sight that while man remains in the world is blurred by chaotic, circus-like commotion of everyday life. [LM/I:73]

That man's vision is blurred by the living itself and that death as an absolute withdrawal is closer to thinking suggests that thinking is

⁹¹ Villa is one voice, rather singular, among Arendt's critics who insists that any attempt at overcoming the profound tension between thinking and acting in Arendt's thought represents a serious misinterpretation of the guiding intuition of that work as a whole. He reads Arendt's distinction not only in phenomenological but also in normative terms on the ground of Arendt's critique of philosophical tradition and substitution of making for acting, whereby whatever appears in the world does not emerge from man's capacity for freedom but from an idea or model preconceived in mind, in isolation and in disregard for the fact that the world emerges and lasts through the plurality of actors and actions. [1999:103]

reserved for the condition of solitude. Being by oneself is essential for thinking just as being among the many is essential for action:

Action, in which a We is always engaged in changing our common world, stands in the sharpest possible opposition to the solitary business of thought, which operates in a dialogue between me and myself. [LM/II:200]

The dialogue in the above fragment refers to the inevitable reflexive nature of mental activities: that man is left by himself in thinking does not mean that Arendt now contradicts the understanding of human condition, fundamental to her work, as ineradicably plural. Man in the condition of thinking may be solitary but is not singular, for every-one is always two, the I and the self. This observation led the philosophical tradition to the notion of consciousness, which entails knowing-with, *con-scientia*. [LM/I:74] However duality cannot be equated with plurality because the main principle of this inner dialogue which unfolds in thinking is the principle of non-contradiction. This principle is taken by Arendt from Socratic principle that "living together with others begins with living together with oneself." [EU, 86] Living with oneself is however radically different from living with others insofar living with oneself, regardless of duality in thinking one-self, rests on the Socratic principle of non-contradicting oneself – "being at peace with oneself."

However, as remote as living with oneself may be from living with others, the two are still closer than the principle of non-contradiction and the principle of truth. The latter is the Platonic principle from whom derives the tradition of philosophical thinking as the quest for the truth, which for Arendt however equals knowing. Arendt invokes Kant's distinction between intellect and reason to argue that thinking cannot be equated with knowing. Knowing is concerned with its end-product and therefore directed by the thirst for the once wisdom and now, with the rise of sciences, knowledge of the world. [LM/I:57] It is an accumulative process which establishes a compelling correspondence between man's apprehension of the world and the world phenomena.

Unlike knowing or cognitive thinking, which seeks to near the Absolute behind and above the world so as to control and master, thinking is driven by the man's urge to read what is given in the world in relation to him who is a man. This reading, close to Arendt's concept of understanding, is another way of 'becoming at home' in the world, not by seizing the Archimedean point, that is – grasping the laws to which the world can be subjected in order to be rendered predictable and certain to us but by interpreting what that which is *means* to and for men. In other words – Arendt defines thinking as an open-ended pursuit of meaning. [LM/I:62]

Meanings as readings of the world however have no compelling force. They are not denied by evidence but are reinterpreted through the encounters with other readings and other meanings. In that sense, meaning is of no use in everyday life – neither certain nor verifiable, nothing can be built on such a non-founding foundation. Moreover, it is

not only non-productive in the utilitarian sense but it is also self-destructive, because it always starts anew by doubting its own thought, tearing its very own fabric. [LM/I:88]

A crucial political and ethical implication of this self-destructive character of thinking is the nihilistic undercurrent of all thinking – that thinking cannot arrive at anything certain and beyond doubt for it always starts anew through doubting and questioning means that nothing can be safe from it – no creeds and no principles and no habits. This is the inherent transcendentalism of all mental faculties that in thinking takes the form of denying givenness to everything given. And yet it itself, of itself, offers no substitute, for “what was meaningful while you were thinking dissolves the moment you want to apply it to everyday world.” [LM/I:177]

But this destructive and self-destructive character of thinking, its inability to generate or move and its capacity for undoing of patterns deriving from the source of all thinking, that source being question, contains a seed of practical relevance. The paralyzing effect of thinking that likens it to death may have meant the transcendence of the phenomenal world in the context of the Platonic and Heideggerian conceptualizations of thinking but Arendt sharply distinguishes between those and the Socratic way of thinking, where the meaning of paralyzing effect involves an ethico-political dimension. Namely, all thinking ‘interrupts any doing, any ordinary activities, no matter what they happen to be. All thinking demands a *stop-and-think*.’ [LM/I:78] In the situations when the world is in ruin, argues Arendt, this interruption is precious.

Arendt’s observations from the Eichmann trial made her re-consider the case for the political importance of thinking as a silent, internal dialogue between *I* and *myself*. During the trial to Eichmann, Arendt thus developed a precious insight:

Politically speaking, it is that under conditions of terror most people will comply but *some people will not*, just as the lesson of the countries to the which the Final Solution was proposed is that ‘it could happen’ in most places but *it did not happen everywhere*. [EJ, 233]

The concluding reflections on the trial and ‘banality of evil’ which was generated not by stupidity – nor by wickedness – but by thoughtlessness opened way to the later inquiry into thinking and its relevance for the world. [LM/I:4-5] Arendt found that, as much as thinking is a solitary activity tied to the inner world, its disruptive dimension and its paralyzing effect may prevent or pre-empt catastrophes in the common world. In the moments when the chips are down, when the torrent of events threatens to sweep away everything and everyone, thinking may be one single path towards ‘realizing what one is doing.’

In other words, each and every human is in the possession of that which could prevent a collapse of the world. That something is the thinking capacity which, when exercised, allows men to see "what they are doing," something Arendt was insisting on ever since the work on *Human Condition*. Consequently, thinking is relevant for action in those catastrophic situations when the world is crumbling and the actor is ultimately impotent, and the last resort is thinking, which may save him/her from taking part in the shattering of the world. [RJ, 106]

This moment, when thinking and acting touch, is perhaps best captured in Arendt's much loved and much revisited phrase 'when the chips are down,' the decisive moment, the moment when a storm is in the air or has even already started, the moment the coming of which can sometimes be heard like ticking of the time-bomb that is the future in the present. [OV, 18] In one of the most explicit and most suggestive passages on what this moment meant, at the end of the first volume of *The Life of the Mind*, the phrase unfortunately fell prey to the over-sensitive editing pen of Mary McCarthy. McCarthy accounts for this intervention through an aesthetically grounded justification:⁹²

I cannot say why the phrase grates on me, and particularly coming from her, who, I doubt, ever handled a poker chip. But I can see her (cigarette perched in holder) contemplating the roulette table or *chemin de fer*, so it is now 'when the stakes are on the table' – more fitting, more in character. [LM/II:248]

It is difficult to argue with such close friend of Arendt's over this, primarily intimate image, for what remains after the deceased is a crystallized memory, in Arendt's own words: "it is as though all non-essential qualities perished with the disappearance of the body in which they were incarnated. The dead are 'enshrined' in remembrance like precious relics of themselves." [LM/II:182] But while the image of the stakes on the table may denote the same gambling situation, the same entrapment of men in the workings of Fortuna which is the human condition in the universe ruled by a 'God who plays dice',⁹³ Arendt's original choice connotes something more. The chips embody, or stand for, the stakes in the game but their conversion back into the stakes retains an element of surprise, of unpredictability; what initially went into the chips may not be the same that will come out. More importantly, when the chips are on the table, Fortuna is not the only force at work. Around the *table*,⁹⁴ there are seated men, with playing cards in their hands, as they have been dealt to them but also with their skills, their principles, and, for Arendt perhaps most importantly,

⁹² In the earlier series of lectures *Some Questions of Moral Philosophy*, much of which constitutes the core of the volume on thinking, the phrase was retained. See p. 40 and p. 78 of RJ.

⁹³ Einstein's allegoric phrase occasionally quoted by Arendt. [LM/II: 196]

⁹⁴ *Table* is a very significant Arendt's metaphor, one that she found to fit perfectly her understanding of the common world as bringing together men, while not allowing them to encroach upon the distance which protects their unique individuality. [HC, 54]

their own judgment of the situation and capacity to decide upon their action.

To draw further on the initial insight into the phrase 'when the chips are down,' the stakes contained in the chips are never clear – there is no limit to what they may turn into. They deceive or delude – the chips represent the absent stakes but they may under-represent or over-represent. And it is easily overlooked that they *are* the stakes, but it is an asymmetrical relationship of identity, the stakes are not chips. In paradoxical twists and turns of the game, the only constant is this openness of the chips. Their vastness, their volume is unlimited, just as outcomes of catastrophes are boundless and potentially, world-shattering. However, how players respond to this destructive openness of the game is linked to their capacity for thinking, a capacity inherent to all men but not employed by all.

Thinking that, as Athens argued against Socrates, dissolves all norms and conventions is what limits the conduct of those caught in the whirl of historical circumstances, when the only remaining rule is that all rules are perverted and/or abandoned. Arendt maintains that those who always act only upon the rules, those that allow to be guided through and through by conventions absorbed without questioning, are the first ones to unlearn the rules of humane relating to their fellows. There is nothing to tell them that the chips are down and what is at stake in the chips. In absence or in dissolution of the external constraints, there are then no limits to what they can do. Those who are not used to listening to the voice within them are capable of doing virtually anything, since the voice that would make them face in all the clarity their past deeds, thereby confronting them with the one that is the ultimate other to the self - the past self, the self of the past simple tense that cannot be undone.

By contrast, the ones used to questioning are the ones who never rely on the external standards and who will take the state of no-rule with the same grain of salt as the state of rule. To understand how this is to prevent one from doing harm, it must be remembered that Arendt defined thinking as encounter with oneself. When the world is left outside, as it happens in thinking, there emerges my-self, the one person that I cannot escape and I cannot hide from when alone. As challenging as the appearance in the public may be, one appears as one wishes to be seen. But to oneself one appears only as one is or one does not appear at all, one remains concealed in the inner silence or covered up by the publicness. The encounter is then an encounter with someone who *is* the one because she *has become* such through her personal history. The one that we meet is not our essence, it is not a given one but the witness of our past. The myself that we find in solitude is the self remembering our deeds. So whatever we have put in the self through living, is what we shall find when we retreat into thinking. That one is the one that awaits us on arrival home from the world, argues Arendt, and asks whether we would want to be awaited by a murderer or a thief.

Arendt likens the ontological principle of, and demand for the unity of self, to the philosophical demand for truth and being in truth. In other words, the former is the ontological interpretation of the epistemological and logical principle of non-contradiction. What drives thinking is therefore not the pursuit of duality, which however is its precondition, but the pursuit of singularity *via* duality of the internal voices. [BPF, 244-246] Thinking may be undoing the patterns but it is ultimately in function of tying the threads of one pattern, the pattern of the self, into one, the fortress of one which may be placed in the world but is concerned only with preserving itself, unlike action that always is in the world, immersed in plurality: 'the presupposition is that I live together not only with others but also with my self, and that this togetherness, as it were, has precedence over all others.' [RJ, 153]

In other words, the concern of thinking is not a liveable world but living with oneself. The truly political question would be the question whether the world in harmony with our actions would be a world for men, in all their diversity and discord, or for one man only. Seen from the perspective of these other men, our actions are always, over and again, read as answers to the question whether the world can be shared with us or not, the question that led Eichmann to death as the verdict read: "[W]e find that no one, that is no member of the human race, can be expected to want to share the earth with you." [EJ, 279]

But to Arendt this is an ethical situation insofar thinking in this situation leads not to action but to non-action, restraint from action. The appearance of thinking in the world happens through the absence of action, argues Arendt. Namely, interruption of all other activities which Arendt describes as the elementary state of thinking, that is - 'to stop and think,' renders thinking and acting mutually exclusive. [RJ, 105]

Morally the only reliable people when the chips are down are those who say 'I can't.' The disadvantage of this complete adequacy of the alleged self-evidence or moral truth is that it must remain entirely negative. It has nothing whatsoever to do with action... Politically speaking - that is, from the viewpoint of the community or of the world we live in - it is irresponsible; its standard is the self and not the world, neither its improvement nor change. [RJ, 78-79]

Whether this potential for the political ever develops into the historical political for Arendt is not a matter of the givenness of the human condition, as it is not a matter of running some teleological course of the world history.

Arendt's further elaborates that the situation of the self in dialogue with the self is the situation of coming to terms with oneself and one's actions in the world. The world is present but ultimately - irrelevant. Within the framework of Christianity, this still meant something more than communings with oneself. The dialogue was between the self and

conscience which was understood "as an organ through which man hears the word of God." [RJ, 89] The word of God offers more than a disturbing testimony to one's deeds, it judges but it also guides to action. In the unforgiving and uncompromising dialogue with the self, the dialogue which allows for no concealment and silencing, nothing moves and nothing initiates movement:

Conflicts of conscience in secular terms... are actually nothing but deliberations between me and myself; they are not resolved through feeling but through thinking. Insofar, however, as conscience means no more than this being at peace with myself, which is the condition *sine qua non* of thinking, it is indeed a reality; but this, as we know now, will only say, I can't and I won't. Since it is related to one's own self, no impulse to act can be expected from it. [RJ, 108]

In this thinking of the impulse to acting, the source of action, as it will be referred to here, Arendt is communicating an historical problem, the problem hidden in the almost unnoticeable, the inserted '*as we know now*' in the above passage. This *now* refers to the situation of the world emerging from the absolute moral collapse of the World War II, when political tragedy ensued from an unacknowledged ethical void and the political implications of the philosophical situation exploded the world. It is therefore not only thinking of the source of action but thinking it in the situation when no framework of action is available, no guidance out of unpredictable and arbitrary, erratic motions of the will was to be found within boundaries delineated by either religion as the worldview or morality as the set of customary conventions or Reason, once the ultimate guide.

As beneficial as it may be in some situations, the clearing done by thinking is necessarily confined to the negative, the destructive, it is a point of break, a pause, not the point of something new born. Certain situations may indeed be the situations of insurmountable impotence, when non-participation or non-action is actually the only path to action. But writing in 1965/66, Arendt makes it clear that, while morally justifiable, the act through non-act is politically irresponsible "shirking one's duties towards the world we share with one another and the community we belong to." [RJ, 155] And the meaning of the political, while perhaps acting ethically is crucial in the situations of breakdown, is not exhausted in pre-emption of catastrophes. Moments of emergency are only one side of the coin: "the common and the ordinary must remain our primary concern, the daily food of our thought - if only because it is from them that the uncommon and the extraordinary emerge..."⁹⁵

In that sense, even when the thinking comes closest to action through pre-empting catastrophes, it is confined to ethical act, it relates self to itself. Arendt's interest as a political thinker is not the ethical and the

⁹⁵ Arendt, quoted in Kohn, 1990:118.

self but the political and the world. The problem of both willing and thinking can thus be described as the problem of solipsism. Both willing and thinking resemble the motion of a whirl, which is the self that powerfully draws everything around it as well as itself back into the very same point wherefrom its motion is generated. Thus the phenomenologically posed problems of the 'impasse of freedom' or the conflictual nature of willing and, on the other hand, of the paralyzing effect of thinking, resonate in fact the deeper problem for a political thinker such as Arendt – thinking action outside the solipsistic framework of human agency. In other words, the concept of the source of action in Arendt's conceptual framework must be brought in harmony with the two pivotal principles of the entire framework – the principles of plurality and freedom. Neither thinking nor willing however can be harmonized with the principle of plurality as they throw the self back onto itself.

Arendt's answer to this problem is intuited in the concluding words of the second volume of the *Life of the Mind* with "an appeal to another mental faculty, no less mysterious than the faculty of beginning, the faculty of Judgment..." [LM/II:217] Judgment is brought in as the mental capacity which should be able to preserve the non-instrumental character of action, its spontaneity, in a word - the principle of freedom embodied in the activity of will, but also to introduce responsibility into the narrative of free act that arises from being and acting in plurality.

Judging

The last stage of Arendt's Inquiry into the connection between the life of the mind and the life of action is dedicated to bridging a conceptual gap that would allow to conceive of action and actor in terms of accountability and responsibility of actor while not entailing the principle of sovereignty and actor's mastery over consequences. For Arendt therefore, overcoming the impasse of willing and thinking is not a matter of trying to exercise mastery over goals and consequences, to control the course of action, but it is an attempt to conceptualise action as predicated on freedom, the ability to break through the entrapment by inertia and automatism, and plurality, while not allowing the actor to escape the burden of responsibility.

Kirstie M. McClure rightly warns against attributing Arendt's Interest in judgment entirely to her reporting on trial to Eichmann.⁹⁶ [Calhoun and McGowan, 1997:59] While the trial may have helped Arendt to see in the most devastating clarity the consequences of the particular kind of thoughtlessness, that is – the inability to see the world perspectively, her insights into 'political' or 'representational' thinking can be traced back to the early 1950s essay on Socrates. Also in the essay on the crisis in culture, Arendt introduces the concept of taste, the basis of

⁹⁶ McClure's observation is reaffirmed by recently published Arendt's lecture *Introduction into Politics*, dated back to the second half of 1950s, where Arendt discusses judgment and refers to Aristotle and Kant as the only figures in the history of philosophy to grasp the utmost political importance of this mental faculty. [PP2:168-169]

aesthetic judgment, as laden with political relevance. On the other hand, the trial to Eichmann is one of constitutive experiences for Arendt's thought, matched in importance only by totalitarianism and American Revolution.⁹⁷

In the report on Eichmann trial, the presentation of the documentary evidence as well as Arendt's observations on the trial are pervaded by the main and most elaborated postulate of what could be regarded as Arendt's, somewhat rudimentary ethical philosophy – the ability to tell right from wrong is based on the ability to think. On this account, Arendt diagnosed Eichmann's condition as the one of thoughtlessness, total submission to the habits and routine never scrutinized, never tested against the particularity of the historical situation, blindly followed through. [LM/I:13] But what came out of the Eichmann trial is not only the idea of importance of thinking for telling right from wrong but the idea that such thinking that determines right from wrong is not a sub-category of thinking faculty but an autonomous mental faculty itself, which is not matter of ethicality but of the political as well. Namely, the phenomenological analysis of thinking in the *Life of the Mind* on the one hand and, on the other hand, the insight into Eichmann's thoughtlessness do not coincide. Whereas the phenomenological analysis is rooted in Socratic inner dialogue of 'me with myself,' thoughtlessness of Eichmann was diagnosed as the inability to see the world from the perspectives of the others, to represent to himself how others saw the world, their own positions in it and, ultimately, Eichmann's own doing. [EJ, 49] In the *Postscript*, written in the aftermath of the debate which the book had generated, Arendt however refers again to Eichmann's thoughtlessness but now introduces it as a problem of human judgment.⁹⁸ [EJ, 287]

As she reached the final volume of *The Life of the Mind*, Arendt shifted irreversibly the conceptual course.⁹⁹ Her earlier reading of Kant's aesthetics and political appropriation of his concept of taste in the essay on *Crisis in Culture* [BPF, 197-226] now merges with her attempt at understanding a particular kind of evil, which cannot be fitted into the 'corruption of human nature' and wickedness but seems to reside in

⁹⁷ Constitutive experiences are defined in contrast to derivative experiences, such as Little Rock controversy or Zionism. The latter are here regarded as derivative insofar Arendt's thinking can help their understanding but they themselves do not constitute examples in the sense of guide to thought, thought-generating.

⁹⁸ The difficulty of tracing Arendt's conceptual movements has given rise to the arguments of some Arendt-scholars that there are two theories of judgment in Arendt's political theory. This view has predominated Passerin D'Entrèves' interpretation, who distinguishes between one theory or one strand in Arendt's theory which relates to thinking in emergency, exceptional moments, and the other which refers to political thinking in general, as representative thinking. [Villa, 2000:250] Such approach does succeed in capturing Arendt's own ambivalent approach to thinking but does not account for Arendt's final philosophical decision to separate judging from thinking, the making of decisive distinctions in everyday situations from responding to the extraordinary.

⁹⁹ Some ambiguity does remain insofar the term *thinking* in the sense of denoting the process of judgment still occurs throughout *The Life of the Mind* but must be distinguished as mental *activity* from mental *faculty* of thinking or Reason.

certain blindness to the meaning of one's own acts. In *The Life of the Mind*, the thoughtlessness of Eichmann is finally reinterpreted as the failure or absence of *judgment*, the failure to employ the third faculty of mind. Judging as a faculty of mind autonomous with regard to both thinking and willing is what Arendt introduced at the end of the second volume on willing but never wrote. The most detailed elaboration is found in her lectures on Kant's political philosophy that would have probably constituted the matrix for the third and final volume of *The Life of the Mind*. Following Arendt in this inquiry into the life of the mind thus means to accept that it is an unfinished enterprise. Though incomplete, a substantial textual corpus remains to testify that Arendt's project on the life of the mind would culminate in the theory of judgment.

Judgment in the context of both Arendt's reflections on the Eichmann trial and her earlier encounter with the break with tradition relates to a specific historical situation of the devastation of moral precepts, the courses of action directed by what Arendt calls, with the undertones that would have been ironic had she not been haunted by the tragic sense of the world pushed over the edge of precipice, 'good society.' The condition of these frames crumbling, disintegrating, without however any unmediated and unalleviated facing with their irreversible decomposition, that was at the core of the turning of the world upside down, which must be differentiated from mere abandoning its time-honoured rules and must be seen for what it was: the perversion of all moral and political values that defined the past.

Such condition is vividly depicted in Eichmann's words that "everything was always in a state of continuous flux, a steady stream," [EJ, 152] and to this flux he found himself unable to resist.¹⁰⁰ As Arendt was warning already in the *Human Condition*, man's ability to grasp the meaning of one's actions, just as his ability to act, easily falls prey to this processual reality, of 'going with the flow:'

In the unlikely case that someone should come and tell us that he would prefer Bluebeard for company, and hence take him as his example, the only thing we could do is to make sure that never comes near us. But the likelihood that someone would come and tell us that he does not mind and that any company will be good enough for him is, I fear, by far greater. Morally and even politically speaking, this indifference, though common enough, is the greatest danger. And connected to this, only a bit less dangerous, is another very common modern phenomenon, the widespread

¹⁰⁰ While it cannot be made a matter of discussion here, there remains a question which Arendt never could entirely answer and close off: how much was this image of Eichmann as a 'cog in the wheel' genuine and how much of it was a product of careful crafting on the part of Eichmann himself, the effort "to strike his audience as a dedicated professional 'above' personal motives" but also his effort to persuade himself of his own goodness? [Vetlesen, 2006:96-97]. For the sake of the inquiry here, this question must be left aside in order to see where Arendt's interpretation of Eichmann, right or wrong, took her thought-project on the life of the mind.

tendency to refuse to judge at all. Out of the unwillingness or inability to choose one's examples and one's company, and out of the unwillingness or inability to relate to others through judgment, arise the real *skandala*, the real stumbling blocks... [RJ, 146]

Non-distinguishing, blending for Arendt is related to a certain indifference to the world. Refusal to judge is a danger of equating everything with everything, which transforms or rather, degrades the world shared by unique human beings into the marshes inhabited by indistinct creatures that are not persons – and for whom there is no limit to what they may do, as they "skid only over the surface of events, where they permit themselves to be carried away without ever penetrating into whatever depth they may be capable of." [RJ, 101]

In that sense, judgment in Arendt's work originates from the attempt to find the way to live in the world and to be concerned with the world beyond absolutes, which were themselves contingent products as Arendt's own historical experience had shown. Judgment in that sense is an attempt to think anew, rooted in the fundamental understanding of man as a beginning that therefore can begin. Beginning that a man is, is therefore not only a *potentia* for acting as beginning anew but for judgment as well insofar judgment is 'thinking' anew.

Even though we have lost yardsticks by which to measure, and rules under which to subsume the particular, a being whose essence is beginning may have enough of origin within himself to understand without preconceived categories and to judge without the set of customary rules which is morality. [UP, 321]

In a considerable portion of the interpretative literature, one finds the same argument predominating: notwithstanding the fact that any interpretation of Arendt's theory of judgment must contain traces of speculations since her work remained unfinished, her concept of judgment as an autonomous mental faculty is taken for a path towards reconciliation of the main conflicting strand in her thought, the tension between acting and thinking.¹⁰¹ Judgment is attributed the role of the bridge over the gap between thinking in solitude and acting in plurality, overcoming both the paralysis of thinking and raving boundlessness of action. Judgment, which Arendt considered a particular strength of her theory of political action, is brought in to resolve the problem of the dangerous spontaneity of action without endangering freedom.

By introducing the concept of judgment, Arendt is certainly concerned with what is considered a gap in her own theory between thinking and acting, between the interior of man that can do away with reality and the appearance of man in the world that is always entanglement with the world, without any objectifying distance.

¹⁰¹ See Beiner's essay in LKPP and Kohn's introduction to RJ.

However, as Arendt also recognizes, this is matter of a wider problem in the general, philosophical context of thinking the political: in that sense, Arendt's concern is not with reconciling but with overcoming, with escaping the trap of dichotomy which would dictate that either man in his (dangerous) spontaneity and existential unpredictability be subjugated to *ratio*, or that everything political is resolved into the raving boundlessness of willed but meaningless action, rendering thus the very concept of responsibility void of any substance and ultimately perverting unbound freedom into necessity of instinctive drives. Arendt thus endorses the Machiavellian demand that "political actors know what they are doing, even if and indeed because they cannot know what their actions might ultimately bring about." [Hansen, 1993:227]

At the same time, judgment constitutes a part of Arendt's (larger) confrontation with the entire philosophical legacy of dichotomous conceptualizations. From the beginning, Arendt has made it her project not to patch up the holes in the fabric of the same tradition which she, in her profound and radical critique, denounced as meaningless and mute in the clash with historical reality, but to find a way out of the maze of narrow, dead-end streets. One of such streets is also Kant's gap between theoretical and practical philosophy which coincides with the battle between Reason and Passion, between rationality of necessity and irrationality of freedom, fundamental to the understanding and thinking of the political for centuries. At the same time, Kant offers a glimpse of the exit from the trap.

While it can easily be argued that Arendt's theory of political action and active life in general is strongly influenced by Aristotle, Arendt's theory of judgment is primarily Kantian, and even based exclusively on Kant.¹⁰² It could seem that Aristotelian notion of *phronesis* as

¹⁰² It may seem peculiar that Arendt's only reference in the theory of judgment is Kant. Accepting that the theory is incomplete, it still must be observed that, in her other references to judgment, she does not seem interested in any other source but Kant and even then, only for his concept of aesthetic judgment. Any reference to the entire tradition of British moralists is missing although they anticipate Kant's thinking [Darwall, 1995:13], and despite the resemblance of their historical situation to Arendt's. Namely, British moralists responded to the situation of the dissolution of theological-metaphysical framework, which dictated ethical conduct on the basis of universal conception of good. [Darwall, 1995:4] Similarly, Arendt responds to the normative void left behind the horror of extermination camps, exploring the possibility of differentiating between *right* and *wrong* in the state of dissipated morality and, ultimately, the collapse of the world as the framework and ground of morality.

However Arendt does not place herself in relation to this tradition of moral philosophy. It is hard to say whether a complete theory of judgment would bring her thought any closer to the thought of British moralists, especially since as a rule Arendt is not systematic in her dialogues with tradition. Yet something in Arendt's thought suggests that the tradition of moral philosophy is not a horizon of her thinking on judgment. Firstly, Kant's architecture of mind is closely followed by Arendt, in affirmation as in opposition to it. More importantly for the specific debate on judgment, the focus of Arendt's attention is Kant's aesthetic judgment, not his concept of moral judgment precisely because she is preoccupied with judgment that is not grounded in laws or imperatives, internal or external. In contrast to British moralists, Arendt seeks neither a universal formula of judgment nor universal conditions for good judgment but the concept of judgment that responds to the uniqueness of an historical situation, particularity of a moral and political dilemma.

'embodied action' [Beiner, 1983:74] would be closer to Arendt's understanding of action as both speech and act. But the concept of judgment of concern to Arendt is pronouncedly removed from the Aristotelian teleological framework where political thinking involves, *inter alia*, reasoning about objectives and interests. The connection to Kant however suggests that Arendt pursued the concept of judgment compatible with her concept of action as an end in itself and with human dignity confirmed in autonomy of decision to act. [Beiner, 1983:31] Where it could aid her in maintaining the non-instrumental character of action, Arendt did not hesitate to follow the Aristotelian trail. But the conceptualization of judgment in the same, non-instrumental vein could not have been derived from Aristotle's philosophy, as Arendt read it.

In that sense, Kant also could be seen as a peculiar genealogical source: his entire philosophy is a grand teleological narrative of enlightenment (and the Enlightenment). The essence of his idea of practical reason is the concept of duty and the core of Kant's idea of ethical action is its grounding in the imperative nature of the ethical law. Nothing in Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason* leaves room for the faculty of judgment as Arendt understands it – the mediation between the universal and the particular as the ground of the autonomy of actor's decision.

Arendt was not unaware of that and her dialogue with Kant is meticulously weaved around Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, which relates only to aesthetics, leaving out ethics as the reign of law, therefore necessity, not of judgment. Arendt's own philosophical exercise in overcoming the duality of worlds thus finds in Kant of the *Critique of Judgment* a surprising wellspring. In Kant's system, judgment is given an explicitly reconciliatory role, standing between Understanding and Reason as a bridge over the gap separating theoretical philosophy from practical philosophy, philosophy of nature from philosophy concerned with freedom. [Kant, 2000:2, 13, 33, 39] Dislocating it from the narrow realm of aesthetics, Arendt derives from Kant's assertion of man's autonomy the ground for freedom of man, which would not allow mistaking freedom for sovereignty.

Central to Kant's understanding of how we appropriate beauty, how we see it as beauty, is the concept of taste, and he initially planned to write a *Critique of Moral Taste* rather than judgment [LKPP, 10] Kant develops the concept of judgment as the moral taste in close connection with the principle of freedom. At the same time it stands in sharp contrast to Understanding and Reason, which both must conform to law, and to the commanding force of desire:

An object of inclination, and one that is proposed to our desire by a law of Reason, leave us no freedom in forming for ourselves anywhere an object of pleasure. All interest presupposes or generates a want; and, as the

determining ground of assent, it leaves the judgment about the object no longer free. [Kant, 2000:54]

Judgment, that is - reflective judgment¹⁰³ that Arendt is interested in Kant's aesthetics, is therefore free on two accounts. On the one hand, judgments of taste are free of the dictate of concepts - to judge the particular beautiful is not predicated upon any concept or universal standard which would premeditate judgment but flows without mediation from the representation of the beautiful object. Thereof follows that judgment is not universal; the product of judging is not a universally valid truth but an opinion of a particular man in the particular circumstances of a historical community for which there can be no absolute rules. Judgment, argues Arendt, is what helps us to deal with particular situations, the situations which cannot be simply subsumed under universal principles, and such are all situations of human interaction because all human actions are generated by the particularity of each individual, corresponding to what is most unique about each and every one of us.

In the sense of dealing with the particular and the imperfect therefore judgment itself can claim no perfection because - just as action is about discriminating all other possibilities in favour of one - judgment is discriminative: it opens up one gate closing off all the other.

This judgment that knows no standards can appeal to nothing but the evidence of what is being judged, and its sole prerequisite is the faculty of judgment, which has far more to do with man's ability to make distinctions than with his ability to organize and subsume. [PP2:102]

Precisely because of this unboundedness to any rule, judgment is a matter of responsibility. It involves a decision on how to relate the particular to the universal, and as such, judgment tells almost more about the one who judges than about that which is judged:

We must 'live with' our having judged x as we did, for it will characterize *us* as being penetrating or shallow, insightful or banal; it is this enduring property of responsibility contained in our judgments that we must 'live with.' [Beiner, 1983:138]

The freedom of judgment from the universal and its predication on the particular is tuned in with the sensibility of Arendt who is a thinker deeply indebted to history as the constant engagement with the exceptional and the unique as opposed to the normal, the ordinary and the general. While one would not dare to argue that Kant had some preference for particularity over universality, it is clear that in his aesthetic judgment Arendt finds a mental activity akin to the human

¹⁰³ Reflective judgment is distinguished from determinant judgment which subsumes the particular under the given universal: "But if only the particular be given for which the universal has to be found, the Judgment is merely *reflective*." [Kant, 2000:17]

capacity for action which celebrates the particular precisely for its particularity.

At the same time, the element of responsibility involved in non-cognitive political judgments as deprived of the safe guidance by the existing rules is what Arendt finds missing in politics reduced to profession. Judgment cannot be taught and learned through the knowledge of the set of rules. It does not depend on any expertise, which is the condition of formal equality of all in judging. [Beiner, 1983:62]

On the other hand, the judging subject is not compelled by any rapport of attachment to the object – the judgment of beauty is passed “however indifferent I may be as regards the existence of the object of this representation.” [Kant, 2000:47] What is asked of the judging subject is not disinterest such as to assume that the object in concern is not a matter of *inter-est*, as Arendt explains – that which is in-between of the members of political community, since the basic presupposition of judging is not being indifferent to a certain problem, issue or concern. It is however disinterest in the sense of the freedom from strictly private interest, the modern interpretation of *inter-est* as *intra-est*, what is at stake for one individual in her particularity and in collision with *intra-ests* of other individuals. The lack of attachment presupposes that the object of judgment is removed from the judging subject into the in-between of the judging subjects that form up a community and that the judging subject can relate to the object without instrumentalizing it for one’s own purposes.

This problem is nothing but the perennial problem of actor and spectator that never seem to unite in one person. The spectator in this context would thus be the disinterested one, capable of judging by virtue of being free of attachment whereas the actor in the same context would be incapable of judging due to his involvement with the object. This distinction could be translated into the distinction between the ethical and political dimensions of action, the distinction which does not necessarily assume separation, although Arendt insisted on the division between ethics and politics, as has been pointed out in the earlier discussion of thinking. What her intimations on merging of spectator and actor through judgment suggest however is that her theoretical efforts have been directed at establishing and preserving the autonomy of political sphere but that she is not unaware of the interlacing of ethical and political dimensions in all actions.

In a short essay on collective responsibility [RJ, 147-158], where Arendt draws a line between responsibility in political terms and legally and morally established guilt, judiciary is defined as the institution of individualization and personalization of action, of singling out the specific actor behind a specific action in the sea of actions which human affairs always are. A similar function is performed by judgment in its ethical dimension. According to Arendt, man is in possession of judgment, the one mental faculty that places him in the position of

judge, who is the one that can read the meaning of actions. Arendt insists that one is one through action, neither in thinking nor in willing, but one assumes shape as one through action and to this, one may be returned through judgment. At the same time, Arendt attempts to give a prospective dimension to this faculty, in other words – to foreground its political dimension, linking it thus to the course of action that the actor takes, which allows to speak of the responsibility of actor, although the actor never ‘owns’ her act in all its consequences.

The problem of relating and merging the spectator-actor positions is responded to through taste as a concept central to Arendt’s Kantian understanding of judgment. Taste is not a matter of a solitary thinker but the idea of a man, any man, living among men and aspiring to win their approval. When an opinion is being formed, when the beautiful is being distinguished from the ugly, it is not the laws of truth that concern us¹⁰⁴ but the accord with those among whom we live and upon whom we are making a claim to agree with our opinion. The criterion of acceptability will therefore be communicability or publicness of judgment. [LKPP, 69] Arendt’s preference for the concept of communicability over the concept of truth reaches back to her early essays on *Existenz-philosophie* and also on Socrates [EIU], where the former clearly testifies to her indebtedness to Jaspers for this.¹⁰⁵ This is additionally confirmed and brought in relation specifically to her Kant explorations by Arendt’s letters to Jaspers. [Beiner and Nedelsky, 2001:100] Communicability is more than the ability to render a statement intelligible. It is based on the ‘common Understanding of men’ which is “the least to be expected from any one claiming the name of man.” [Kant, 2000:170]

This common understanding must be pre-supposed for all men, it is what is common to all men in all their plurality and what makes it possible that such unique beings communicate to each other. Kant’s notion of *sensus communis* therefore combines common sense with the sense of the common, of being in the world. *Sensus communis* appears in enlarged mentality so that, when deciding on particular situations, we re-present to ourselves others among whom we necessarily are since birth.

This is done through another faculty, closely linked with that of judgment, the faculty of imagination, which enables us to take the place of the others and on that basis claim their assent to the opinion we internally formulate. [RJ, 139-140] Judgment is passed in community: “Judgment, and especially judgments of taste, always reflects upon others and their taste, takes their possible judgments into

¹⁰⁴ “[N]o empirical ground of proof... would force a judgment of taste upon anyone.” [Kant, 2000: 157]

¹⁰⁵ In the essay on existential philosophy, Arendt develops an account of Jaspers’ idea of communication as the “pre-eminent form of philosophical participation.” Socrates, whom she explicitly relates to Jaspers in the quoted essay, in counter-distinction to Plato is central to both Jaspers’ and Arendt’s source of dialogical or discursive notion of thinking. [EIU, 183]

account... I judge as a member of this community and not as a member of a supersensible world... " [LKPP, 67] The key to the understanding of what it means to judge as a member of community is this 'taking into account' of others and their judgment. The one who judges represents to herself possible judgments of the other members of her community, not in order to contrast them with her (pre)formed judgment but in forming the very judgment.

On the one hand, it does mean that our common sense is the sense constituted by being among others and by their positions, which is what most of psychological theories of socialization maintain, though some corners of philosophy may not have been so comfortable with it. But it also means that we are not only amalgams of positions, which have formed our position but that we actively seek to bring into the judging process the positions and perspectives of the others.

Constituted of this looking at the world from different perspectives, judgment is the most political of three mind faculties, Arendt argues. It is what allows us to be our unique selves but be so in community with others, on the basis of a certain common understanding that is both made possible by the existence of community and perpetuates the existence of community. In judging therefore, Arendt discovers, one 'thinks in company,'¹⁰⁶ which assumes not so much a decision on thinking-with and thinking-against, which would be very Schmittean, but rather moving like a pendulum between one and the other. With judgment, Arendt infers man's inability to be sovereign as both existentially and ontologically determined - even if once there was no world any longer, not that it would be impossible for man to exist in absolute singularity, but that man never can be singular so long as he exercises his *sensus communis*.

Nor is judging about knowing something "in the light of the particular context." [Steinberger, 1993:68] The point here is not just the context and especially not cognition as premised on some sort of *techne*, therefore not available to all, but being able to place oneself in the world as others would be placed there and then see the world as they would see it, without however drowning oneself in this plurality of perspectives. To think in place of others draws not so much on them as they are but on their situation within the common space, within the world where we encounter them. It does not purport to some inner self, one's own or that of the others, but to the being in the world under certain conditions.

In judgment therefore, unlike in thinking, man remains in the world. Judging is constituted by imagining the others, and this is the ground of

¹⁰⁶ Singling out the specificity of Arendt's idea of 'thinking in company,' Diana Taylor points to Arendt's relationship to Kant's philosophy as one of strong influence but not that of follower or disciple: "While impartiality for Kant requires the existence of other persons, it does not require their 'company' in the strong sense of which Arendt speaks." [Taylor, 2002]

the intersubjective character of judgment which gives it the right to claim universal approval: "It does not say that every one *will* agree with my judgment, but that he *ought*." [Kant, 2000:95]

For understanding Arendt's idea of judgment as intersubjective, it is crucial to distinguish assuming the place of the others from compassion, empathy, sympathy, all of them permeated with the notion of passion/pathos as suffering: "You are not supposed to feel as they felt but to imagine through learning of their "feelings," "thinking," etc. how you would have felt, thought, etc." [PE, 2] The idea of suffering-with for Arendt is deeply apolitical and even anti-political, as she reveals in her analysis of the French Revolution in *On Revolution*. Her resistance to the commonality of *pathos* and through it, passion does not originate from the fear of the corruption of human nature, easily traced to the Enlightenment project of elevating mankind through Reason against the irrationality of desires and passion, but from Arendt's insistence on man as unique occurrence. Her argument is that the empathic feeling reduces men to the sameness of human nature while also assuming a certain cognitive absolute in emotions: by suggesting that we feel like another, we presume our own ability to know this another, to be this another, denying his/her uniqueness but also our own.

By exercising our judgment, therefore, we reach not only inside, into ourselves, we reach also towards others, imagined or re-presented others and instead of confining our thinking to our inner self, we go visiting. We take distance from ourselves and through this enlarged mentality, we form our position, we pass a judgment, which is not objective but is no longer subjective either – it is intersubjective,¹⁰⁷ [RJ, 141] rather like a river that is not all its tributaries but, once they have flown into it, it no longer is the original stream from the mountain spring either. This then is the measure of right and wrong, the measure of one's conduct:

Political thought is representative. I form an opinion by considering a given issue from different viewpoints, by making present to my mind the standpoints of those who are absent; that is, I represent them. This process of representation does not blindly adopt the actual views of those who stand somewhere else, and hence look upon the world from a different perspective; this is a question neither of empathy... nor of counting noses and joining a majority but

¹⁰⁷ It should be noted that in the lines where Arendt uses the specific term, *intersubjective*, she couples it with another term – *representative*, which was employed in her earlier thinking of judgment. It could be argued that precisely Arendt's discomfort about the term *subject* drove her closer towards the latter. Namely, Arendt explicitly denies validity to the political terms *subject* as suggestive of a particular understanding of politics in terms of ruling and subordination. In ontological terms on the other hand, its embeddedness in this *sub*, this being-(thrown)-under, ties it too closely to the notion of self as a hidden substance of man, entailing a being of man opposed to the appearance of man, against which Arendt posited his understanding of man as primarily a *persona* in the world. In that sense, representative or interpersonal thinking speaks directly from the center of her political- and thought-project.

of being and thinking in my own identity where actually I am not. [BPF, 241]

At the same time, enlarged mentality does not entail only 'visiting,' it also entails certain cleavages, certain disturbance to the comforting feeling of being with oneself, a certain unrest that comes from opening one's own house to those who are not us, who are *strangers*, always and necessarily so by virtue of being *extraneous*, that is – coming from the outside.¹⁰⁸ To judge does not mean just coming out of oneself to understand the world from within it, it also means being with the world when being with oneself, being oneself as being with the world.¹⁰⁹

In this coming and going, in this bringing in the world which is at the same time exteriorizing of the self through its displacement, one performs authentically political touchin and drawing of borders, that distinguishing which Schmitt was concerned with in his conceptualization of the political. Only in judging these borders are porous, more like membranes than like walls and fences. We draw them only to step over them, we exclude some perspectives to include some others, while constantly redefining those that we deem valid. For this, however we never have a guide or guidance outside the frame formed by the presence of others in this world.

The fact that Kant's idea of aesthetic judgment unites the uniqueness of man with the inalienable condition of human plurality is probably what drew Arendt to Kant:

[S]ociability is the very essence of men insofar as they are of this world only. This is a radical departure from all those theories that stress human interdependence as dependence on our fellow men for our *needs* and *wants*. Kant stresses that at least one of our *mental faculties*, the faculty of judgment, presupposes the presence of others. [LKPP, 74]

Sensus communis as a predicate of judgment corresponds to Arendt's refutation of all ontologies based on the singularity of man or universality of Man. It suggests that, insofar ontology is at all meaningful, it must entail plural dimension, which in a certain sense inscribes potential for the political into the very notion of human existence/being.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ "It does not indulge the fiction that "one can know what actually goes on in [another's] mind," an assimilationist fantasy by which I make myself so at home in your position that I erase the differences between us. As a visitor, I think my own thoughts but from the place of somebody else, permitting myself to experience the disorientation necessary for understanding how the world looks different to that person." Disch, in Calhoun and McGowan, 1997:136

¹⁰⁹ It is essential for understanding that it is the world that is invited and visited, and not the Other. It could be argued that Arendt is concerned with otherness, insofar it is related to plurality, but not in the Other, which is just the other side of the coin of self, not the Other of sovereignty, but the Other caught in identity of its own otherness.

¹¹⁰ This is not to say that politics is all of existence or that everything is political – which is the state of totality of the political that for Arendt must be equated with totalitarianism –

But the principle of community as retained in *sensus communis* is also the most contentious point of Arendt's Kantian theory of judgment, which exposes the theory to criticism both from the communitarian and individualist perspectives. From the communitarian end, enlarged mentality and common sense are seen as

transcendental categories: they don't connect judgments of taste to any empirical sociability... but merely specify conditions of intersubjective validity that are presumed when an individual subject presumes to judge something beautiful by reflecting on it *without* necessarily consulting the opinions or experiences of other judging individuals. [Beiner, 1983:96]

In other words, enlarged mentality is nothing but a formal condition of judgment, which cannot substitute dialogical/discursive practices but remains monological. Arguably, however, Arendt is precisely interested in the *formal condition* because her inquiry into judgment is driven by the concern for the workings of human mind behind actions in the situations when the practices of continuous communal exchange are somehow disturbed or altogether absent. Such was the situation of Eichmann, but if there is the formal condition, then the actor cannot be absolved of responsibility for his actions despite the situation.

It does not help however to try and support Arendt's concept of judgment by following Benhabib's Habermasian interpretation that relates Arendt's theory to public deliberation, nor by resort to Young's asymmetrical reciprocity of judgment which precludes the possibility of taking someone else's position but emphasizes the respect of irreducibility of the other to the one, and insists on opening, listening, taking interest.¹¹¹ Both are namely about *practices* and clearly, Arendt's

but that the possibility of the political is inscribed into us through the impossibility of our ontological sovereignty. This inscription, on the other hand, cannot be read to state that 'man is political,' which would be counter-intuitive to Arendt's insistence on politics as that which happens between men, in plurality that is: "[M]an is apolitical. Politics arises between men, and so quite outside of man. There is therefore no real political substance. Politics arises in what lies between men and is established as relationships." [PP2:95] Judging, as a mental operation *inside a man*, cannot be equated with the political. What it is, insofar it presupposes community and commonness, it is a human potential for the political, just as the human capacity to begin generates potential for political action. This however is only a premonition of the argument to be put forth in the following chapters though it demonstrates that the methodological move to be taken, the interpretation beyond Arendt in order to develop a possibility of different ontology has its strong grounding in Arendt's thinking.

¹¹¹ Both texts in Beiner and Nedelsky, 2001. As a detour, it could be argued that Young's reasoning would be closer to Arendt than Benhabib's firstly because Arendt's understanding of judging is underlain by her understanding of man's finitude before the uniqueness of others, which precludes any reducibility of one to the other and any appropriation of one by the other. On the other hand, contrary to Young's thought, Arendt would not be convinced by the idea of firmly allocated positions in the world as summed up in the following quotation: "In a heterogeneous public, differences are publicly recognized and acknowledged as irreducible, by which I mean that persons from one perspective or history can never completely understand and adopt the point of view of

theory refers to a mental operation: while one could question the rigidity of this distinction between mental operations and practices and broaden the understanding of practices, Arendt's framework retains the distinction explicitly.

A different strand of criticism would accept Arendt's intention to establish the formal condition reconciling individual responsibility and plurality as the human condition but would problematise precisely the presence of community in the process of judging. Enlarged mentality exercised by the judging subject calls into presence the subject's community through the act of representation:

One judges always as a member of community, guided by one's community sense, one's *sensus communis*. But in the last analysis one is a member of a world community by the sheer fact of being human; this is one's 'cosmopolitan existence.' When one judges and when one acts in political matters, one is supposed to take one's bearings from the idea, not the actuality, of being a world citizen and, therefore, also a *Weltbetrachter*, a world spectator. [LKPP, 75-76]

The underpinning of this idea is the condition of man who judges as a member of particular community. But the view acquired through the exercise of enlarged mentality is so to say synchronic, it maps what is already given, albeit through different angles but still angles defined by the space of the specific community. Therefore to call an absent community into presence through judging already implies a decision on *assuming* a community, even if absent: a decision already political and problematic.

Arendt's theory of judgment is thus rendered highly problematic through its core principle: enlarged mentality, which involves a certain principle of inclusion/exclusion or of drawing borders and discriminating against some world-perspectives, which suggests that it is grounded on a certain principle of community – in other words, assumes a community. The question is therefore whether community can be assumed and, even if so, what community is thus assumed – who is invited/visited in the process of representation? The principle of community in enlarged mentality is therefore under-defined.

From the individualist end but not only, the key problem is the danger of conformism: how is one is to relate critically to one's community and avoid falling into (political) conformism when judging, succumbing to the blinding effect of nearness?¹¹²

those with other group-based perspectives and histories." [Young, 1989:258] In Arendt's view, informed by the revelatory understanding of action, this would suggest social and experiential pre-determination of people in denial of freedom that enables everyone to be more than one's circumstances and identity.

¹¹² This is not the problem of prejudice. In the series of earlier lectures titled *Introduction into Politics*, Arendt is careful to point out the difference between judgments and prejudices, although prejudices once grew out of judgments and are used in quotidian life

In other words, though one may abstract oneself from one's own private condition and detach oneself from one's circumstances and affiliations, how is one to abstract oneself from one's own community? Even if one believes, as Arendt did, that human beings retain capacity to act against their contexts, they remain the beings always situated in their here and now, so: "How can one abstract oneself from this specific embodied being to include consideration of the differences of the 'concrete Other'?" [Diprose, 1994:14] It is the question of the autonomy of judgment, and one that must have rung very loudly for Arendt in Eichmann's justification of his conduct by "the simple fact that he could see no one, no one at all, who actually was against the Final Solution." [E], 116]

For an actor to be able to act into her community as its member yet so that she can change the community, judgment would have to incorporate both the insight into that which and that which is-not, on the one hand, and on the other – to see that which may or may not be but is not given in either is or is-not. This is not the problem of actor and spectator but rather the problem of the gap between the *pariah* and the actor, the one who can relate to community as if, or precisely because outside it, and the one acting in(to) it as its member.

In responding to these two, vital concerns however Kantian theory of judgment can help only partly. The communitarian critique of the ineradicable *intra*-subjectivity of judgment, of its confinement to the 'internal' world as opposed to the phenomenal world, its unrelatedness to the actual practices of deliberation and discussion would not be valid criticism for either Kant or Arendt. Namely, both of them are interested in pursuing that *in* man which fits him in the world.¹¹³ Therefore Arendt's primary concern in dissecting the workings of judgment, the process of judging itself, is to understand how this *internal* mental operation is of the world and how it refutes the dualism of the world, how it denies absolutely and irreversibly the singularity of man. The importance of communicability of judgment as the end-result of judging is so greatly emphasized and insisted upon by Arendt precisely because judgment as a product of judging is not an end-product. In the Socratic spirit, Arendt conceives of opinion as performative and distinguishes, as McClure points out, "between opinion as something forged through public examination, and opinion as something brought to public debate." [Calhoun and McGowan, 1997:64] One never judges for one's own sake: while one thinks in silence and often preserves thoughts to oneself, the final destination of judgment must always be the public

as standards for passing judgments. By contrast, the judgment which Arendt seeks to understand is judgment without standards, in the face of an entirely new situation. [PP2:102, 151-152] However, this judgment is passed in the exercise of enlarged mentality, which does not necessarily mean that the judging subject will rely on prejudice yet the borders of community will be observed since one judges as its member, as an insider.

¹¹³ However, there remains one important difference between Arendt and Kant indicating that Arendt's thinking is never divorced from the concern with the world in-between men whereas Kant's preoccupation remains the human mind.

sphere, which man inhabits by way of speech and action. Judgments are the very texture of speech. For this reason, judgment must always be made communicable.

The individualist critique is potentially more serious. Kant's solution however proves to be too Kantian for Arendtian appropriation. For Kant, man's common sense as the sense of the common, flows not from membership in a community but from the fundamental idea of mankind. What should not only unite actor and spectator but give them an insight into the world from the distance (though not impotence) of *pariah*, while not rendering them impotent as *pariah* often is, is the standard of judging, which resonates Kant's categorical imperative from his practical philosophy, the precept that action and judgment must be such so as to be generalizable into universal law.

It is by virtue of this idea of mankind, present in every single man, that man are human, and they can be called civilized or human to the extent that this idea becomes the principle of their actions as well as their judgments. It is at this point that actor and spectator become united...
[LKPP, 75]

With this notion of cosmopolitan citizenship, Kant brings his critique of judgment in harmony with his entire philosophical system but Arendt does not follow him in that project. She dismisses the universalist solution and turns to a different pathway within Kant's thought that she considers 'by far more valuable.'¹¹⁴ [LKPP, 76] The closing pages of the *Lectures* thus problematize the embedding of political *via* aesthetical judgment into the overall Kant's system, and Arendt seeks to find the standard of judgment which would not be a refuge in absolutes.¹¹⁵ At the same time, the alternative solution has to be related to Kant unless the entire construction of Arendt's Kant-inspired theory of judgment is to collapse.

Arendt's answer therefore, though undeveloped, explicitly points to Kant's concept of example and related *exemplary validity* of judgment. Example "is and remains a particular that in its very particularity reveals the generality that otherwise could not be defined." [LKPP, 77] The answer to particularity is itself a particular. What guides the one judging cannot be contained in general rules but in examples which are neither particular nor general. It is therefore the particular that has

¹¹⁴ Therefore, the concluding pages of Arendt's *Lectures* refute the following Bernstein's criticism: "We may desperately want to believe that there is something about human beings that cannot be transformed, something deep about the human self, the voice of conscience, or our sense of responsibility that cannot be obliterated. After totalitarianism, we can no longer hold on to this belief." [Calhoun and McGowan, 1997: 317-318]

¹¹⁵ One might dare to speculate/assume that, in thinking through the implications of judgment conceived of within Kant's entire philosophy and in relation to the categorical imperative, Arendt never lost out of sight Eichmann's claim to have acted on the Kantian principle of categorical imperative and the easiness with which the principle got distorted into the diktat of obedience, suggesting from the depths of historical experience that one may not so easily rely on the idea of attachment to the world and cosmopolitan citizenship. [E], 136-137]

acquired validity for other particulars, it has become something of a guide or, to employ Arendt's and Kant's term, a *schema*. [RJ, 143-144] As a schema, the particular historical person (or event) that acquires exemplary validity, loses the depth and totality of an inhabitant of historical place and time, and becomes an epitome of one virtue or vice, something of a metaphor in flesh and blood of that virtue or vice which beacons above everyday and allows us to recognize, without rules, these political and/or moral virtues and vices as such. Examples are available to everyone and are within everyone's reach, which means that judgment is not necessarily predicated on the personal wisdom *via* personal experience, but the experience of the world as a whole is treasured in these examples.

Exemplary validity also responds to the earlier discussed communitarian critique. If we are not engaging in the public discursive practices in the process of judging, if the others cannot correct our judging by relaying to us their positions in the world and with regard to us, if we are abandoned to our finite selves, Arendt's idea of guidance by examples means that through examples the judgment of the world will come to us. Examples are amalgams of situations, events and actors that are sources of meanings and commonness for a particular spatial and temporal community, the common reference point to be re-visited in the search for answers to questions posed by new situations. The examples that Arendt quotes to illustrate the concept of example are precisely heroic figures, that is - characters that grew greater than their immediate historical influence and have come to represent principles, such as Socrates, Jesus or Achilleus.

The problem however is broader, or deeper. Namely, the problem of conformism, tentatively speaking, is what the individualist critique could touch upon or intuit but could not disclose entirely and expose its core because the actual problem in all its depth emerges from within Arendt's thought-project, which is neither individualist nor communitarian. The problem is not a reflection of Lyotard's critique of all representation as always involving the omission, the forgetting, [Lyotard, 1990:28-29] which implies that something inevitably slips through from *sensus communis* as predicated on representation. But it does somehow, distantly, relate to the idea of the omitted, always omitted, not calculated, not reckoned with, unforeseen, the surplus - of freedom. Namely, one must recall the main requirement posed for the source of action such would be in harmony with Arendt's understanding of the political which is predicated on action as enactment of freedom that is bringing about the new in plurality. Judgment as Arendt conceptualized it is plurality incarnated in mental activity but it remains rooted in the past - the examples, which resonate Heidegger's call for the retrieval of possibilities handed down by tradition as in this retrieval, "Dasein may choose its heroes" [Heidegger, 1927/1996:352] - and the present, that which is given to the judging subject here and now. Simply put, how is one ever to sight the different and the new that is the defining dimension of action, through judgment which relies

on that which is – the circumstances of one’s community, and on that which has been – the examples?

It indicates a failure in Arendt’s thought identical to what she herself diagnosed as the embarrassment of all philosophy – the appearance of the new in the world. Does judgment, as linked here to examples and the present, not refute the understanding of action as breaking of the new into the given and the present? While the past can throw a revealing spot-light on the present, rendering its immediacy meaningful in a wider context, the past does not give birth to the new, unless one is prepared to accept a causal, deterministic framework, which Arendt is not. The present however always recoils back onto itself, as Arendt observed, the power of reality, its realness being the product of its actuality. [LM/II:138-139] If however judgment was related to future, as will is, freedom in action would be reduced to the necessity of execution of premeditated design.

What is clear from Arendt’s inquiry into the workings of human mind is the interplay of mental faculties, thinking that opens an interval in the time flow, the interval that there would never be if there were not the question to open the possibility of the non-givenness of the given; willing that throws itself into the future, and judgment, which relates the present to the past not through automatism of causality but through the wisdom of experience. Yet if the new is to come into the world, there must be something that interconnects the three and goes underneath and beyond the three faculties, without however reducing the three faculties to one or subjecting them to one.

The problem of the source of action thus reveals itself as the paradox of the being that man is, the being bound by here and now and yet the being, according to Arendt, capable of changing that here and now by bringing the new into it. The capacity of the mind that could be behind action would thus have to be a capacity able to step beyond here and now without however negating the reality as the condition of this *beyond*. The capacity of such power may not necessarily, and most certainly will not, offer a resolution of the paradox of human existence but could prove to incorporate and engage the dynamics of the paradox, the dynamics between freedom and necessity in human existence which Arendt tried to demonstrate and to foreground in her thinking of the political. As it shall be argued in the following chapter, Heidegger and Arendt – both in relation to Kant – offer interconnected intuitions and intimations about such capacity which both history of philosophy and quotidian life know by the name of imagination.

**Chapter Five:
IMAGINING A BEGINNING**

The thought of imagination in tradition of political philosophy is mostly associated with Giambattista Vico and his theory of *ingenium* as the response of human beings to the challenge of their natural environment. Vico introduces the notion of poetic wisdom springing from imagination into sociopolitical framing of the world – ordering of the world is not the work of practical reason no more than the understanding is the work of abstract reason: it is “the creation of humankind.” [Vico, 119] For Vico thus *inventio* is primary to *Ratio*. [Grassi, 2001:8]

Grassi follows rhetorical tradition of Cicero and then Vico, understanding the sociopolitical sphere as creation not unlike artistic, by human beings, through “this ‘ingenious’ metaphorical and fantastic activity [...] not realized in the framework of rational logic but in ‘common sense’ (*sensus communis*) through which we continually transform reality in the human context by means of ‘fantastic’ concepts.” [2001:100] But the working of imagination as Grassi defines it, through references primarily to the classical conceptualizations of this mental capacity, springs from similitude. Imagining is thus reduced to a rational albeit inspired conjecture of similarities, and the pendulum that imagination is in Kantian scheme of the mind, as a capacity equally close and remote to reason and senses, is moved closer to the more controlled end of reason, the orderly creation as opposed to fantastic bliss, in abandonment of Vico’s notion of the wildness of this untamable, tempestuous capacity as reflected in these Vico’s words: “Fantasy collects from the senses and connects and enlarges to exaggeration the sensory effects of natural appearances and makes luminous images from them, in order to suddenly blind the mind with lightning bolts and thereby to conjure up human passions in the ringing and thunder of this astonishment.” [Grassi, 2001:7]

Grassi retains the link of imagination to freedom as the fundamental principle of our existence in the world, freedom to create and recreate [2001:101] but his analysis shuns away from the darkness of imagination, from its excess which explodes in newness beyond any rational conjectural mechanism. Arendt’s most elaborate note on imagination also remains very much tied to that, intellectualistic and rationalistic concept of imagination. It is only in the scattered observations elsewhere (*Lying in Politics*) that her thoughts betray a glance into that which Heidegger calls ‘the abyss of imagination,’ imagination as other than rationality. In that sense, Arendt’s thinking of

imagination genealogically relates rather to Kant and Heidegger than the great and ultimately optimistic tradition of classical humanism.

However, while the work so far presents the reading of Hannah Arendt's thought, what follows thereof can only partly be regarded as *reading of*, much more is it *reading from* Arendt insofar what is read here – has never actually been written by Arendt. What is there is rather a constellation of fragments and intuitions, mostly unconnected, which do belong to Arendt's thought and work but remain on the margins as is often the case with those thoughts that the author herself fails to read through and thus sentences them to oblivion or silence of her interpreters.

In that sense, this chapter presents methodologically something of an excursus. It is not an interpretative reconstruction but an attempt to read from and beyond Arendt's project with the aid of dimensions merely intuited by Arendt although, if worked through, they would strengthen the project as a whole and develop its almost inconspicuous philosophical dimension.

Namely, it is widely held by Arendt scholarship that Arendt's theory of judgment was meant to crown the entire opus as the concept of judgment in Arendt's understanding, drawn by and large from Kant, linked together the universal and the particular, the world of ideas and the world of appearances, the necessary and the spontaneous. Some Arendt's statements on her work additionally prop up this reading of her work on judgment. It is undisputable that Arendt considered judgment most political of all faculties and therefore most relevant for the discussion of the source of political action.

Some of the potentials and limitations of that theory were explored in the previous chapter in order to argue that judgment could close the conceptual gap between human mind and the world, between thought and deed no more than the other two faculties of thinking and willing could. On the one hand, every occurrence of action as a coincidence of thought and event in the world is an explicit refutation of this dualism. Yet, as Arendt argued, philosophy found a way around this by introducing a divide between the two aspects or two dimensions of action, *archein* and *prattein*, to initiate and to do/execute. [HC, 222] Initiating is related to knowing/thinking, whereas action is reduced to mere realisation of thought. Hence it by itself is void of any meaning, its meaning is externalized and placed in the idea to which action models the reality. It has been pointed out that the principal implication of the conceptual gap between thinking and action is the meaninglessness of the entire political sphere as the sphere of action. The primary concern of philosophy then must be that which retains meaning, the idea, which however is located outside the political. The political on the other hand becomes a very marginal affair for philosophy. Political consequences are potentially even graver - freedom becomes only an option of contemplative life, active life which also is a form human existence in the world is destined to the absence

of freedom, its actors are disempowered to change the way they live together in the world. Thinking, on the other hand, divorced from the world lapses into nothingness of unlimited possibilities of abstraction.

Arendt's discussion of judgment constitutes another attempt in the history of philosophical effort to overcome this dualism. Traditionally, philosophy has seen in judgment as another conceptual puzzle, alongside action, insofar it could not have been confined entirely to one or the other realm, either to the ideational or to the phenomenal spheres. In judgment, the dualism of form and matter is overcome in the coincidence of the particular, that comes from the sensible world, and the universal, that belongs to the world of ideas. Bringing together judgment and action would then have the potential of closing the conceptual divide between acting and thinking, form and matter, particular and universal. But the previous chapter has exposed the limitations of judgment as a source of action - judgment does not afford the sighting of the new.

This chapter is thus guided by an intuited possible trail in Arendt's writing, in Arendtian scholarship mostly intact potential of some scattered fragments of thought or the thought in fragments. Reading from Arendt and beyond, it shall not and cannot suggest that Arendt would have followed the trail. Nevertheless it will seek to develop the potential of the intuitions and their implications by contrasting Arendt's unsystematic observations with Heidegger's work on the 'transcendental power of imagination' as the root of all cognition and then by correlating the uncovered to Castoriadis' 'discovery of imagination.' What should follow from the *excursus* is neither a systematic nor comprehensive discussion of the concept of imagination but an opening to a different philosophy and a different position of thinking of the political within that new philosophy, recognized in the concept of imagination and pursued through Arendt's intuitions and Castoriadis' theoretical explorations.

The importance of this question by and large overrides its philosophical context. This inquiry coincides with the question of whether we have the capacity that would imply that our freedom remains our inalienable capacity despite historical instances of closures, even total closures such as totalitarianism, of spaces for action, and that this capacity can be contained but not exterminated from human community. Yet any meaningful conceptualization of the source of action at the same time must take into account the fact that there is action *sometimes* and *sometimes* - there *simply* is not. In other words, the question or the problem must be posed outside or beyond the causal frameworks of world-understanding. At the same time, since the question is posed from within the space occupied or claimed by Arendt's thinking of the political, the concept to fill the position of the source of action within that space is required to observe the two fundamental requirements - the principle of freedom in action as the origination of the new and the basic human condition of plurality.

Representational dimension of imagination

Arendt's fragment on imagination, published as appendix to her *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, has not drawn much attention of her interpreters. In his interpretation of the *Lectures*, Beiner seems to accentuate the importance of this piece but primarily as 'an indispensable piece in the puzzle' of reconstructing 'the full contours of Arendt's theory of judging.' [LKPP, 79] Namely, Arendt's dwelling on imagination in this fragment of the seminar notes is relevant only insofar it provides the background for interpretation of the role of imagination in the process of judging by relating to the source of Kant's doctrine of schematism in his First Critique.

The fragment indeed elaborates what is said of imagination in the main body of the *Lectures*: through imagination, what is absent is made present, which means that imagination is, as argued by Arendt, a 'faculty' or, in the language of this project, a capacity of representation which allows the subject of imagination a certain distance from the imagined object, the distance that Arendt *via* Kant finds essential for impartiality of judgment, its uninvolvedness with the object which is now present not directly but as an image, an imprint on one's consciousness. [LKPP, 67]

Representation however is employed not only in this function of distancing the judging subject from the object of judgment but also underlies another, most political dimension of judgment – the distancing of the subject from its own self, abstraction from the private interests and conditions and assumption of an intersubjective position. Arendt's elaboration of the concept of common sense in the *Lectures*, on page 67 where she also discusses imagination, would suggest that common sense is, alongside imagination, another capacity employed in judging, whereby it is implied that the two are different and separate. In her discussion of enlarged mentality, however, Arendt explicitly evokes the 'force of imagination' to call into presence not only *that* which is absent but also *those* who are absent: "it makes the others present and thus moves in a space that is potentially public, open to all sides... To think with an enlarged mentality means that one trains one's imagination to go visiting." [LKPP, 43] In other words, common sense and imagination do not relate as two independent capacities necessary for judgment but without the representational power of imagination, common sense would not be possible at all.

As it has been argued in the previous chapter, enlarged mentality cannot be equated with empathy but neither is it to be understood as an internalized 'performance' of public deliberation though Arendt does speak of 'potentially public space.' The voices that come to the subject through the exercise of enlarged mentality are not voices other than its own self because the judging self is nothing but constituted by common sense, which makes one's judgment public rather than personal. Therefore imagination is the mental faculty that situates man in the world even in the condition of solitude and thus, as it has been argued

throughout, renders the entire discourse of sovereign subjectivity meaningless.

But this function of imagination is not confined to the process of judging only. Contrary to Beiner's interpretation, imagination can be seen in a context wider than theory of judgment, and this is demanded by Arendt's work taken as a whole, including the fragments or scattered observations on imagination. Those were incorporated in the author's work published during her life, as opposed to the seemingly rounded up piece on imagination in Beiner's edition which however was rather an asset of clarification meant for a series of lectures. Namely, Arendt explicitly reads Kant to argue that power of imagination, through its main product that is *schema*, is the fundament of all communication and all cognition, and this is the core of Kant's doctrine of schematism, which in turn is the core of Kant's *First Critique*, above all, but it is also crucial for his *Critique of Judgment*, through the concept of example and exemplary validity.

In terms of Arendt's intention with this fragment, exclusively within the context of the *Lectures*, Beiner's interpretation is however in no sense mislead or counter-intuitive. Arendt sketches out a rather rough account of schematism, rushing to establish a clear and evident link between *schema* and example, which at the end of her *Lectures* is identified as the principal and fundamental normative standard of judgment. In the schema that is produced by imagination, concept as the most abstract universal blends with intuition as the most concrete particular. To recognize the particular as *just that*, to utter any signifier, finally – to see *that* when looking at the multitude of various particulars and to be able to relate it to the specific linguistic form as the signifier for *just that* but also any such *just that*, there must be "in the back of our minds a 'schema' whose 'shape' is characteristic of many such particulars." [LKPP, 83] As this schema is essential for all perception and all cognition, so is it vital for communication:

This schematic shape is in the back of the minds of many different people... all single agreements or disagreements presuppose that we are talking about the same thing – that we, who are many, agree, come together, on something that is one and the same for all of us. [LKPP, 83]

Here Arendt touches on the more fundamental relating of commonality of common sense to imagination, which is the source of communicability – imagination provides a person not with the sense of the common as the inescapable condition of the person's existence in the world but as constitutive of the person's own consciousness. This clearly is the aspect that is of greatest interest to Arendt in the context of her theory of judgment.

The possibility that imagination underlies all cognition also drew Heidegger to Kant's doctrine of schematism. In *Kant and the Problem of*

Metaphysics,¹¹⁶ Heidegger works through primarily the first edition of the First Critique to demonstrate *inter alia* that cognitive faculties are all rooted in imagination.

Arendt, drawing on Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, attributes to imagination as a mental faculty its grounding of all perception, cognition and communication. This entirely coincides with and corresponds to Heidegger's interpretation of Kant, more so than to Kant's own reading of his own work. Namely, as Heidegger noted, the second edition of the First Critique testifies to Kant's abandonment of his original understanding of imagination. [1929/1997:115] Heidegger however by and large ignores Kant's decision and considers the original conceptualization of imagination essential for his entire project and crucial for understanding of the earlier written *Being and Time*.

Although Heidegger's lectures on Kant appeared only after *Being and Time*, Heidegger remarked that they should be read as the proper introduction to his earlier work. As the title suggests, Heidegger's reading of the First Critique is not guided by an intention to reconstruct 'theory of knowledge' but the intuition that in this *Critique* Kant establishes the ground of metaphysics.¹¹⁷ As Heidegger explains, 'the problem of metaphysics' is the problem of the *possibility* of metaphysics, and Kant's discussion of the possibility of *a priori* synthetic judgments is precisely an inquiry into the possibility of metaphysics reinterpreted as fundamental ontology, the science of being of the beings. In Heidegger's reading of Kant, the possibility of forming 'a priori synthetic judgments' is essential for ontological knowledge as the knowledge of the 'Being of beings' or of the being as such, regardless of the specificity of each particular being, [Heidegger, 1929/1997:5-6] which is the task of fundamental ontology that Heidegger is constructing in his writings.

At this point of the argument, it may be necessary to state that it is of no relevance for this work to establish to what extent Heidegger trespasses the boundaries of interpretation and instrumentalizes Kant's work for the purposes of his own project, without respect for the letter and the spirit of the *Critique* and disregarding Kant's own 'Kehre' between the first and the second edition. What is important here is to understand where Heidegger's interpretation takes him, how this corresponds with Arendt's intuited understanding of imagination and finally how the two conceptualizations of imagination part ways.

Heidegger is aware of the importance of the move that he is preparing to take, reading Kant against Kantianism, as it flows directly from his

¹¹⁶ A series of lectures which followed after the publication of *Being and Time* where already in the *Introduction* Heidegger referred to Kant's doctrine of schematism as Kant's (undeveloped) intimation of the fundamental connection between 'I think' and time.

¹¹⁷ This distinction refers to the debate between neo-Kantians and their epistemological interpretation of Kant and Heidegger's insistence on the ontological core meaning of the First Critique, the most famous disputation taking place in Davos between Casirrer and Heidegger. See Appendix IV to Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics, pp. 193-207.

method, indebted to phenomenology as outlined in *Being and Time*: "To the things themselves!" [1927/1996:28] He is inquiring about the possibility of the knowledge of the essential but he does so after having grasped the fatigue of the tradition that purported to the same inquiry with at best indifference and at worst - contempt for existence. Heidegger's insistence on giving equal weight to reason and senses throughout the discussion of imagination as the power that unites the two reflects his effort to abandon the dead-ends of philosophical tradition, which insisted on the quest for the meaning of existence without ever touching existence itself.

Heidegger exposes what he considers the most original and fundamental finding of Kant's work: that the possibility of *a priori* or ontological knowledge lies in the power of imagination. As far as Kant's own work is concerned, he points to the transcendental power of imagination as the mediator between intuition and understanding that are the two elements of knowledge. Heidegger insists however that the first edition of the work attributes to imagination more than a mediating status: it is not just another, connecting element of knowledge equal to the other two, but is primary to them. Both the possibility of intuition and of understanding as well as their mutual connection are rooted in the transcendental power of imagination. As such, transcendental power of imagination is the ground of 'the essential unity of ontological knowledge,' [1929/1997:137] that is - the ground of understanding the Being ontologically, prior to and primary to anything received through the perception of beings in their multitude.

Kant's 'turn' between the two editions of the First Critique however involves, as Heidegger does make explicit, Kant's abandonment of this idea of imagination as the root of intuition and understanding and retreat to 'pure reason' or understanding which assumes this foundational role of imagination: "The transcendental power of imagination no longer functions as independent grounding faculty, mediating in an original way between sensibility and understanding in their possible unity. Rather, this intermediate faculty now falls, so to speak, between the two separate grounding sources of the mind. Its function is relegated to the understanding." [1929/1997:115]

Heidegger relates this Kant's turn to the challenge that imagination as the foundation of reason would present for the entire history of philosophy. History of philosophy is a history of the supremacy of reason over sensibility, and imagination in Kant's understanding is associated with intuition or sensibility: "What is to happen with the venerable tradition, according to which Ratio and Logos have claimed the central function in the history of metaphysics?" [Heidegger, 1929/1997:117] In other words, imagination as the ground of reason would mean that reason is rooted in the 'baser faculty:' "How is the baser faculty of sensibility to be able to constitute the essence of reason? Does not everything fall into confusion if the lowest takes the place of the highest?" [Heidegger, 1929/1997:117] This presents the core of the problem which Kant encountered from within the long

tradition of philosophers' celebration of Reason ever since Plato: if Reason is rooted in imagination which unites reason with senses, the medium of non-appearing, eternal and absolute essences with receptivity of mere, illusory experience of the worldly chaos, then the Reason is degraded as the instrument through which men could be guided beyond ephemera and the fundamental understanding of men as rational beings, through reason as their *differentia specifica*, must be abandoned as well.

In that sense, Heidegger's insistence on what he considers the original Kant's discovery is a rebellion against the 'tyranny of reason' as the source of the ontological knowledge in the philosophical tradition, which takes the form of theory of imagination. The implications reach beyond the possibility of the understanding of essences. Namely, Heidegger relates his findings on imagination to Kantian practical reason and thus to practical philosophy as a whole. Kant's doctrine of schematism, to which the concept of imagination is fundamental, is found both in his discussion of pure reason as in his practical philosophy (*Critique of Judgment*). Just as *a priori* synthetic judgments, so do aesthetic judgments present Kant with the difficulty of linking concepts, which unite many particulars in its oneness, to intuitions, which correspond to the multitude of particulars. What brings them into relation which subsumes many diverse intuitions as representation that affect the mind under one and the same concept? In response, Kant develops the concept of schema, which is the product of imagination, that relates the two. Thus also in aesthetic judgment imagination mediates between the universal rules of reason and aesthetic experiences.

As to the practical reason, which is concerned with ethical conduct, Kant adamantly excludes the working of imagination. Practical reason is principled on the categorical imperative, the law that is, and the moral *ought* leaves no space for the unpredictable and the contingent, which is the proper matter of imagination. But Heidegger, in a brief section, explains how practical reason just as the pure must be rooted in the transcendental power of imagination. Namely, the moral law is a matter of 'pure spontaneity' (in the sense of self-affecting, self-determinatin, contrary to the reception or 'suffering' of external influence) insofar it is given by reason to itself. Moral law thus corresponds to pure concepts of pure reason, also coming from reason to itself. The respect for the moral law must then be pure receptivity, which corresponds to pure intuition insofar the subject does not receive the respected law from the outside but from within, from pure reason that gives the law to itself. Having demonstrated that, at least originally, Kant postulates that pure spontaneity and pure receptivity are united in the common root, which is the transcendental power of imagination, Heidegger concludes that practical reason would also have to be grounded in the transcendental power of imagination.

Since Kant demonstrated that the third mental capacity, that of judgment, is entirely predicated on imagination, what follows from Heidegger's 'violent' interpretation of Kant is therefore unity of the

Kantian architecture of mind through transcendental power of imagination.

What Heidegger explicated through the interpretation of Kant, Arendt performs implicitly, through her phenomenological analysis of the three faculties. It has already been observed that her notes on judgment base that capacity on imagination as the power to represent what is absent. The same is true of the other two capacities. As it was observed in Chapter Four, thinking is predicated on remembrance, which is a specific type of representing/recalling of the occurrences in the past. Willing on the other hand, in the same chapter, is projecting into the future, which entails placing before the mind something that is absent, in other words – presenting to the mind:

Every mental act rests on the mind's faculty of having present to itself what is absent from the senses. Representation, making present what is actually absent, is the mind's unique gift, and since our whole terminology is based on metaphors drawn from vision's experience, this gift is called *imagination*... [LM/I:75-76]

Namely, imagination as the power to represent is crucial to all mental operations insofar mind never deals directly with objects but only with their representations received through intuitions:

... all our intuition is nothing but the representation of phenomena... What may be the nature of objects considered as things in themselves and without reference to the receptivity of our sensibility is quite unknown to us. We know nothing more than our own mode of perceiving them... [Kant, 2003:35]

What follows thereof for Kant, as for Heidegger and Arendt (with the caveat that Arendt and Heidegger are not concerned with knowledge in the sense of science, the search for truth therefore, but rather the understanding as the quest for meaning), is that all knowing is representing, insofar all knowledge is based on received intuitions of the given that are representations, not presentations. [Kant, 2003:1] This is the meaning of Heidegger's concept of finitude in his interpretation of Kant – the closure of the mind in the framework of the already given, the inability of mind to give to itself the object of intuition and to know it directly, without mediation of representation – “inner dependency of thinking upon intuition,” [Heidegger, 1929/1997:41] which is a representation of the objectively or materially present.

That all mental powers are predicated on our power to represent what is absent is not equal to reducing mind to imagination. Arendt strongly and explicitly opposed any reductionism in understanding man or anything of man outside the fundamental human condition of plurality:

What is so remarkable in all these theories and doctrines is their implicit monism, the claim that behind the obvious plurality of man's faculties and abilities, there

must exist a oneness – the old hen pan, 'the all is one' – either a single source or a single ruler. [LM/1:70]

But while all three capacities are interdependent and while Arendt seeks to evade monism, as does Heidegger [1929/1997:98], the order of priority can nevertheless be established: the power of representation or imagination preconditions all mental activity. Neither thinking nor willing nor judging are imagining or about imagining only but are only possible through imagining. Thereof the peculiar, dynamic though not determinative, relationship of imagination to other mental activities, engendered by the peculiar position of imagination as it "does not belong to the realm of *logos*, which presupposes it."¹¹⁸ [Castoriadis, 1997:242]

Arendt finds that this "peculiar nonconnectedness [of transcendental power of imagination] to the being" [Heidegger, 1929/1997:91] establishes a very close relationship between imagination and metaphysics as the philosophical project of transcending the given and grasping that which is not materially present, the essences behind the existents. Arendt further observes that it is this ability of imagination, "to make present to the mind what is absent from sense perception" that places it at the heart of metaphysics which seeks to capture a "glimpse of the nonvisible," which is the reality that does not appear, the reality of Being behind appearances.¹¹⁹ [LKPP, 80]

Imagination therefore occupies this extraordinary position in-between of mental faculties. This in-betweenness is the simultaneous 'receptive spontaneity' and 'spontaneous receptivity' of imagination, its being an intuition that however intuits without the need for the presence of the intuitable, that is – of phenomena or beings, while at the same time attaching to the multitude of the intuited an abstract unity of a concept, which allows existents to be observed and recognized as units of a certain *genus* or category. [Heidegger, 1929/1997:90-91]

But Heidegger also intuits one other potential of imagination when he writes of Kant's notion of 'formative power' or the faculty of forming, asserting that imagination is "a faculty which is not dependent upon the presence of the intuitable, it fulfills itself, i.e., it creates and forms the image." [Heidegger, 1929/1997:91] What Heidegger touches on here is the unique capacity of imagination not simply to reproduce what has already been stored in memory (representation) nor to connect (association and comparison), therefore not its function of a bond between the given, the present, but its ability to present what is not.

¹¹⁸ Castoriadis further elaborates this peculiar position of imagination in history of philosophy. While Plato, reducing imagination to 'imaging' that is imitation of ideational forms, places it under the sway of reason, both Aristotle and Kant associated it with sense/intuition.

¹¹⁹ Arendt's note succinctly recapitulates the whole of Heidegger's project in the interpretation of Kant – to lead philosophizing away from metaphysics, which is concerned with the Other or the Beyond of the material reality as a whole, to ontology, as Arendt says – "the science of Being" or the understanding of the being/existence of beings.

Imagination thus enables us to transcend reality, hence Heidegger's consistent reference, not to imagination but to the 'transcendental power of imagination,' suggesting therefore that imagination is the 'root of transcendence.' [1929/1997:137]

At the same time, the power of transcendence also renders the relationship between metaphysics and imagination ambivalent insofar metaphysics is not concerned with the beyond of phenomenal reality in the pursuit of the non-being but in the quest for Being, that which is the true and eternal, ever-present in the beings appearing in the world, mutating, finally disappearing. Imagination however produces images, which are neither particles of objective, phenomenal reality nor eternal essences but mediating between these two 'realities.' Images are no longer lasting than beings, often less. They are elusive and fluid. This means that "imagination both empowers and inhibits the metaphysical drive to presence." [Sallis, 1995:7] It is an instrument of metaphysics insofar it reaches the invisible but at the same time, it is an instrument that refutes the drive of metaphysical inquiry, "the ideal of presence," [Sallis, 1995:27] by its blurring of the distinction between the present and the non-present.

The workings of imagination are peculiar and possibly even inherently contradictory, unless we settle for two types of imagination as Castoriadis proposes in his *Discovery of the Imagination*. [Castoriadis, 1997:213-245] The definite article in the title already suggests that Castoriadis' purports to deal with *the* imagination properly so, imagination as a creative power, which Castoriadis opposes to imagination that merely represents. Yet it may be that such sharp distinction is useful only analytically and one should not let it slip out of sight that imagination is never either/or – it represents in order to recreate, it recreates when representing.

Castoriadis explains this problematized/problematic role of imagination in philosophy through its dualistic nature. Metaphysics instrumentalizes representational imagination but it also seeks to reduce imagination to that instrumental role as a means to 'occultation' of 'radical imagination.' [Castoriadis, 1997:214] Just as Kant shun away from primacy of imagination to understanding or reason, so did Aristotle – from imagination not as a power to represent but as a power to bring to sight that which has never been and may never be.¹²⁰

Imagination thus stands beyond affirmation and negation. While its representational or reproductive power may be the instrument or, as Heidegger argues, the 'root' which is the predicate of all workings of the mind, imagination is not reduced to recollecting and reordering representations of reality. Transcendental power of imagination which Heidegger foregrounds then is not exhausted in the ability of human

¹²⁰ Castoriadis however emphasizes that Aristotle nevertheless suggested how imagination was neither thought nor sense insofar both thought and sense fell under the laws of truth and falsity, whereas true and false were meaningless categories for both the fabric and the fruits of imagination. [Castoriadis, 1997:242]

beings to near the 'Being' behind the reality of appearance, to bring the being that already is, though invisibly, to some mode of presence. It is not about transcending the present as the phenomenal but the present as the given. That imagination is the ability of man to be independent of givenness or determinacy of the present, unmediated and mediated, in Castoriadis' economy of the term, which is the definition of freedom.

Thus what Castoriadis recognizes as a "scandal of imagination" [1997:245] is inextricably tied with what Arendt diagnoses as 'embarrassment' of philosophy with the possibility of occurrence of the new in the world, against the laws of necessity and causality. [LM/II:29-30] Expanding our discussion of imagination at this point in order to include Castoriadis' work is therefore not justified only by Castoriadis' autonomous theoretical treatment of imagination but also by this connection between his and Arendt's thought of freedom, the connection that Castoriadis never explicitly acknowledged but which has been elegantly uncovered and explored in Linda Zerilli's piece on the 'problem of the new.' [2002] That connection points to the common ground between the two theorists that the problem of imagination should be read as the problem of freedom insofar imagination is the source of freedom within human being.

Originary dimension of imagination

Genealogy of the concept of imagination according to Castoriadis is the history of its 'occultation' in the mainstream philosophical tradition which is "the elaboration of Reason, homologous to the positing of being as being-determined, or determinacy." Even when the concept of imagination which resists this determinacy bursts into the works of philosophers such as Aristotle and Kant, [Castoriadis, 1997:213] the problem is solved through its subordination to a higher capacity, as Heidegger demonstrated in his Interpretation of Kant. As to Heidegger's attempt to systematically develop the concept of imagination beyond the silence of tradition, Castoriadis acknowledges that Heidegger's work on Kant reopened the question but that this re-discovery ends up in silencing of the question. [Castoriadis, 1997:215]

Namely, Heidegger does not omit to acknowledge what he considers to be a 'productive' quality of imagination, which must be distinguished from its reproductive or representational capacity. But Heidegger's productive imagination is also distinct from Castoriadis' creative imagination. In Heidegger's interpretation of mental powers, imagination is intuition, therefore creative imagination would necessarily be creative intuition. However Heidegger argues that such intuition could be attributable only to a non-finite, divine being insofar it does not intuit the given intuitable but "creates the being itself in the intuiting." [1929/1997:92] By contrast, productivity of imagination does not of itself give reality to its presentations, it does not materialize them, it is not fabrication of the image in reality:

The productive power of imagination forms only the look of an object which is possible and which, under certain

conditions, is perhaps also producible, i.e., one which can be brought to presence. The imagining itself, however, never accomplishes this production. [Heidegger, 1929/1997:92]

This explanation of the distinction between the productive and the creative imagination in Heidegger's discussion seems obvious to the point of being unnecessary. The fabric that imagination uses in production is always already given, implies the prior existence of reality into which imagination inspires the potentiality of difference but only inspires, breathes-in, without ability to actually place something into it. Imagination does not give to the mind the objects of sensibility, the objects are already there.

But this is not to say that imagination does not give anything to reality. Imagination is not entirely cut off from reality, it communicates with reality although the imaginary is not real in the sense of being actual(ized). The workings of imagination are not bound by reality, they are neither determined nor caused. What is given by imagination breaks the confines of reality as the given. Imagination allows for relating what could be in and of this reality, thus opening the space for the new which cannot be reduced to either rearrangement of the existing or its negation. As Heidegger argues, being a mental capacity - imagination does not *itself* produce or create. But Heidegger overlooks the fact that imagination originates or generates creation, which is not reality but comes about or acquires reality through another human capacity - action.

Unlike Heidegger, however, Arendt touched on this particular relating of imagination to reality, the relating wherefrom all causal determinations are absent in her observations on lying. The observations are indeed fragmentary and unsystematic, found in *Between Past and Future* and in the essay on the crisis over the Pentagon Papers and the problem of nontruthfulness of politics. Yet they convey an important 'discovery' of Arendt's, a common root of the two occurrences of the public sphere, lying and acting: Both lying and acting are possible only because there is imagination: "In other words, the deliberate denial of factual truth - the ability to lie - and the capacity to change facts - the ability to act - are interconnected; they owe their existence to the same source: imagination." [CR, 5]

In that sense, imagination is originary insofar it is conducive to the phenomenon which, as it was argued in Chapter Three, brings something new into the reality, places something that however is not an object into the world - human action:

He [the liar] is an actor by nature; he says what is not so because he wants things to be different from what they are - that is, he wants to change the world. He takes advantage of the undeniable affinity of our capacity for action, for changing the reality, with this mysterious faculty of ours that enables us to say, "The sun is

shining," when it is raining cats and dogs. [...] In other words, our ability to lie [...] belongs among the few obvious, demonstrable data that confirm human freedom. That we can change the circumstances under which we live at all is because we are relatively free from them and it is this freedom that is abused and perverted through mendacity. [BPF, 250]

Both lying and acting place human being among all beings in particular and unique relationship to reality as both the limit and the potential to be worked with. The distinction between lying and acting is grounded in the distinction between telling and doing the difference. Lying does not effect any difference nor does it change anything in the fabric of the world. It denies, often parodies and ridicules reality but never leaves a mark on it. Action by contrast always spells change to the pattern of any given situation: "A characteristic of human action is that it always begins something new." [CR, 5]

By rooting acting, as lying, in imagination, Arendt in fact relates imagination and freedom, since action is the appearance of freedom in the world. Action is a manifestation of man's ability to be conditioned by his situation but not bound by it. But this ability to free ourselves or to be free from the given, as we see here, is indebted to the freedom of mind that rests in one of its faculties yet neither thinking nor willing nor judging on which Arendt's investigation in *The Life of The Mind* centred. The finding crucial for Arendt's inquiry into the source of action, and by and large ignored by the interpretive literature, is the conclusion that without freedom of the mind, which is imagination, practical freedom would not be possible either:

We are *free* to change the world and to start something new in it. Without the mental freedom to deny or affirm existence, to say 'yes' or 'no' – not just to statements or propositions in order to express agreement or disagreement, but to things as they are given, beyond agreement or disagreement, to our organs of perception and cognition – no action would be possible, and action is of course the very stuff politics are made of. [CR, pp. 5-6]

Imagination creates an opening for a break with reality by disclosing the contingent fabric which reality is made of. It uncovers the given as contingent by showing that "things might as well be different from what they actually are." [CR, p. 5] This is achieved through *estrangement*, a concept employed in literary theory to describe the deautomatization of perception. Around this concept, Victor Shklovsky [1989] developed his modern theoretical appropriation of Aristotle's notion of poetic language as characterized by "something foreign, something outlandish about it."¹²¹ What is foregrounded by artistic performance is not the familiar that is the ground for recognition but the unfamiliar in objects, that

¹²¹ Quotations here are taken from the first chapter *Art as Device*, pp. 1-14.

allows for what Shklovsky calls the 'vision' of object or phenomenon. In harmony with his literary approach to interpretation as reception of art liberated of the traditional non-literary dimensions and elements of interpretation,¹²² Shklovsky postulates the purpose of this artistic device as the very process of perception, where perception is not a passive but an active process, fully engaging human creativity, demanding and labourious:

Ostranenie is a form of world wonder, of an acute and heightened perception of the world. This term presupposes the existence of so-called content (*soderzhanie*) if we understand by 'content' deferred, slowed-down, attentive examination of the world.¹²³

In her recent piece which relates art theory to political thought through the concept of estrangement, Svetlana Boym [2005] explores political meaning of estrangement in much greater depth than it can be done here. Boym develops the political genealogy of estrangement as artistic device in Victor Shklovsky's work in contrast to Ginzburg's interpretation of estrangement as an escape from reality, removal from the world. Thus Boym argues that the distinction must be established and observed between estrangement *from* the world and estrangement *for* the world which overrides art as framework and becomes the device of public life in totalitarian states. [2005:584]

Estrangement *from* the world is historically rooted in the Stoic philosophy and then transmitted through Christian and romantic detachment from the world and withdrawal into man's inner spaces or spaces of inner freedom.¹²⁴ Estrangement *for* the world, by contrast, is what Boym finds to be the core of Shklovsky's philosophy of art but also wider, existential and political underpinning of his literary theory. The world is not abandoned – estrangement precisely – arises out of the constraints imposed by the world, the constraints that would compel paralysis were it not for the possibility of the "Knight's move" or moving sideways when the straight is banned. [Boym, 2005:589]

The perception and ultimately cognition thus produced differ from the perception and cognition that are the subject matter of various theories of cognition, namely cognition as re-cognition, subsuming the unfamiliar manifold particulars of the phenomenal world under the familiar singular universal of the conceptual apparatus. This alternative

¹²² While the limitations of this text do now allow for developing this theme, it is worth noting the parallel between Shklovsky's and Arendt's projects of liberating literature and the political of extraneous influences, the restoration or institution of autonomy of literary and political enterprises. The common thread seems to be that of freedom.

¹²³ Shklovsky, quoted in Boym [2005:599].

¹²⁴ Boym does not note the possible distinction between the two kinds of estrangement, which could be represented as Machiavellian distinction, elaborated in Arendt's works, between ethical-theological and political dimensions of the same concept. Namely, the detachment performed in estrangement from the world phenomenologically resonates the distance established between the subject and the world in thinking which gives rise to ethical considerations as distinct from political engagement which involves the subject with the world.

perception is creative or recreative, it engages with reality by bursting through it, by doing away with its realness, by abandoning the conventional for "an exercise of wonder, of thinking of the world as a question, not as a staging of a grand answer." [Boym, 2005:587] Such perception is 'labourious' and demanding. The 'vision,' placed in inverted commas also by Shklovsky, is not sighting in the sense of the metaphysical vision that captures the true essence but observing the new in the existing, as if through special lens. Through this vision, the phenomenon or the object is recreated by author and it originates again as the new, thus requiring another creation, or re-creation by the art spectator in the aftermath of the artist's creation.

Towards the end of his life, Shklovsky restated his conceptualization of estrangement, seeing in it "the resonance of beginning" or a "cornerstone of artistic unpredictability and freedom that reflected the transformations of the modern world." [Boym, 2005:582] This allows Boym to bring estrangement as artistic device in direct relation to the political in Arendt's conceptualization as a realm of freedom but she does not pursue the parallels between estrangement and political freedom any further. Namely, Boym's argument is primarily though not exclusively historical: under modern condition which for both Arendt and Shklovsky is characterized by automatization, homogenization, routinization to the point of numbness, the condition that culminates in totalitarianism but, as it has been argued here, is not exhausted in totalitarianism, under such condition freedom *is* (as) estrangement.

Boym does offer a valuable conceptual insight though – that estrangement is "a way of seeing the world anew, a possibility of a new beginning that is fundamental for aesthetic experience, critical judgment, and political action." [2005:602] Estrangement can thus be read as that what allows for freedom, not merely an artistic or aesthetic device employed politically under specific historical circumstances, but the fundamental *modus operandi* of imagination as release from the determinism of the present. In that sense, the sense that is not elaborated in Boym's article, freedom is not reduced to estrangement – since political freedom is not about perception of the world but acting it into it. Nor do the two merely coincide historically. Rather, freedom is 'freed' as our capacity through the working of imagination that is estrangement. Estrangement therefore is what allows us to perform our appropriation of the world which is given to us, not ours yet meant for us and it becomes so through our acting into it.

What this exactly means within the horizon of the political and thus what it means in the sense of imagination as a political capacity, that is, what it means to overcome the given, to trespass the frontiers of the present, can be clarified only through clarification of the concept of the given, hence: what is the given, how to define the given? The given to actor is defined or delimited by the situational and the subjective. In other words, the confines of human existence are the world and the

subject, neither of which we give to ourselves. Overcoming the given¹²⁵ thus means transcending the boundaries of the world as it is here and now for us and the boundaries of subjectivity.

Recalling that for Arendt action means the opposite of inertia, just as artistic estrangement leads to the de-automatization of perception so does estrangement in *praxis* spell the de-automatization of behaviour. It allows for the overcoming of the given by demonstrating the contingent foundations of that which is considered the given. The demonstration is mediated through the imaging of something that is not really and actually, it is not properly present and given to the senses and to the mind through the senses. It entails therefore removing the grip of the 'is,' of the being, and stepping out of the present as the entrapment by the existing.

In that sense, Imagination must be distinguished from both the Aristotelian *phronesis* and Machiavellian *virtù*, as both presume that judgment "does justice to the situation at hand." [Vetlesen, 2006:78] By contrast, imagination does justice both to the possibilities and the impossibilities of the situation at hand. What does it mean? We must recall Heidegger's observation on the principal feature, and power, of imagination – that "peculiar nonconnectedness to the being." It means taking account of the unbelievable, reading the unwritten, between the lines of reality. In that sense, we recall the first requirement posed on the source of political action – that it incarnates the principle of freedom as the appearance of the new in the world. Imagination is the power of mind that allows for the appearance of freedom in the world.

It could however be asked what distinguishes the estrangement by imagination from the transcendent quality of other mental capacities, following Arendt's architecture – thinking, willing, judging? Thinking is abstracted from reality, willing is the capacity that projects what is not and what will be, judgment is the *situ* of representation of the absent, that is – the transcendence of subjectivity in the mind. It has been argued in the previous section that imagination underlies them all, that the power of transcendence that these three capacities possess is sourced by imagination. Does it then hold that transcendence is not actually achieved by imagination but that, in Kant's understanding, imagination mediates between the three faculties of reason thereby facilitating transcendence but not possessing the capacity itself?

The distinction is most pronounced against willing of which, as Arendt insists, political freedom is not a phenomenon, in other words – will does not generate political freedom. [BPF, 151] Willing is equated with command yet imagination is never compelling. Imagination does not push the actor towards the actual goal or destination, as it does not

¹²⁵ Overcoming here must not be understood as doing away with the given. The given returns always, as the novelty of yesterday is solidified through habitual routine into a pattern. Overcoming in that sense is more like transgressing, that is always in the dynamics of going astray (in its positive as in negative connotations) and coming back to the set path, only to go astray again.

unfold before her the actual course of action through rationalization. Imagining is a window into a different reality, without however compelling the subject to move in that specific direction, as it is the case with willing. The sight of the different is not a model or a goal but the sight of the very possibility of the existing being different. It neither is nor has-been nor will-be but a *may-be*.

Unlike will that is about determining the goal and unlike rationalization that is about determining the path towards the goal, imagination has no determinative dimension. It does not reckon with consequences, and imagining is not an exercise of consequentialist reasoning. Imagination merely opens up the space of possibilities and impossibilities, breaking the enchainment to the present and the given. But there is no automatic translation into action. Imagining generates a fracture in reality, however what will be brought into being, as Arendt says, is given neither to cognition nor imagination. [BPF, 151] But it is through the uncovering of the invisible fabric of reality that the new can come into being, because the new itself is that which is invisible in the old:

It is in the very nature of every new beginning that it breaks into the world as an 'infinite improbability,' and yet it is precisely this infinitely improbable which actually constitutes the very texture of everything we call real. [BPF, 169]

In that sense, what action is to Arendt, creating *ex nihilo* is for Castoriadis. This understanding of creating anew may seem to stand in contradiction with Arendt's assertion that, while action is beginning of the new, "this does not mean to start *ab ovo*, to create *ex nihilo*." [CR, 5] But the two thinkers are actually referring to the same. Arendt highlights that to begin anew does not mean that we begin in a void of past, and Castoriadis, who defines human community as *social-historical*, thus emphasizing that the temporal framework is not only important but is constitutive of community, would not disagree.

To create *ex nihilo* for Castoriadis means not the absence of the past but a negation of determinism in creation that would reduce creation to production and reproduction, reminiscent of Arendt's critique of substituting making for acting: "something is new when it is the position of a form neither producible nor deducible from other forms." [Castoriadis, 1997:392] This definition of the new is in close correspondence with Arendt's insistence on the miraculous quality of new beginning, which is never "bound into a reliable chain of cause and effect" and always is "as though it came out of nowhere in either time and space." [OR, 206] In other words, both Castoriadis and Arendt seek to refute the causal determinism through their definitions of the new, which embody the understanding of the conditionality of human existence as "conditions of possibility, not necessity." [Zerilli, 2002:544]

Arguably however philosophy has always known this removal from reality, through thinking. Thinking itself is unbound by reality, it is

removed from being in the world in the sense of the Socratic inner soliloquy. Yet it remains bound by the fundamental law of that dialogue, the law of non-contradiction, which establishes the unity of oneself, identity of self with self. It may be argued as Heidegger did that this identity in fact rests in difference, that I is I implies that oneness is in fact interrupted by this 'is' and that sameness is in fact unity. But the requirement of unity is not removed nor is it invalidated despite the thinking interruption. Imagination on the other hand knows of no such constraints. One can imagine oneself out of oneself just as one can imagine oneself out of a certain situation or imagine an object or a phenomenon away. Unlike thinking that seeks to reconcile one with oneself, imagination places one in the void of identity, identity as recognition exerted by oneself to oneself.

It follows thereof that the 'peculiar unconnectedness to being' of imagination which Heidegger notes can be read not only as the flight of imagination from the deterministic framework of the present situation but involves also the unconnectedness to the being of the self, the subjective as it was termed here, the actor as s/he is, who s/he is.

Imagination is often related to expression of artistic subjectivity however. It would follow thereof that imagination is not the source of removal from self but the epitome of self brought into the world. Castoriadis however foregrounds the desubjectivized concept of imagination or imagination as the property of community, not of the creative individuality. Castoriadis draws his examples mainly from arts in order to illustrate the peculiar workings of imagination which seem to create *ex nihilo*. However it is not artistic creation that he is concerned with nor does he believe that such creation is the sole privilege of arts and individual artists. He is concerned with the creation of the world by those who live in it, the creation which was treated in the history of philosophy as being of lower order, a deficient creation therefore not creation at all, but mere production, the repetitive emulation of ever the same forms.

Castoriadis reads the creation proper from the social-historical forms through which a community emerges, lives and understands itself, be it culture, laws, institutions as "the very object of praxis is the new, and this cannot be reduced to the simply materialized tracing of a pre-established rational order." [Castoriadis, 1987:77] Praxis in that sense is about "the intention of transforming the real, guided by a representation of the meaning of this transformation, taking into consideration the actual conditions and inspiring an activity." The same understanding of this originating capacity of human plurality is more than explicit in Arendt's concept of action as innovation which generates power to call something into being only through acting in concert, not through individual acts of individuals.

The notion of creation or origination as properties of community may be the only response to the one question that gapes wide open in any discussion of imagination - whether, by resort to imagination, in all its

indeterminacy, we are not pushed to the verge of irrationality in political doing. Imagination is not a matter of decision nor a matter of competence, by contrast to thinking or judging.¹²⁶ However the problem with the latter remains their implicit intellectualism, and Arendt's thinking seems both ambivalent and ambiguous on that. Thoughtlessness of Eichmann on which Arendt insisted may have seemed plausible but it additionally problematized the concept of judgment: if judgment belongs to everyone as a power of human mind, how can it be that Eichmann did not exercise it or, implicitly, did not possess it? If however it does not belong to everyone, can we at all postulate anything like moral responsibility without assessment of the competence of judgment?

Imagination by contrast, while also a capacity of intellect, seems not to be exactly *intellectual*. Being seated in between sense and understanding, as Kant observed, imagination is not ruled and directed by intentionality. As it works in images, it eludes any control. It strikes the consciousness and its power similes that of the power of revelatory vision. That uncontrollability, suddenness and force of vision is the strength of imagination but also that which makes it only a response but not an answer to the problem of action. It cannot be called forth, and while it can be engaged, it cannot easily be harnessed. Positing imagination as the source of political action then amounts to not much more than a return to Kierkegaard's madness of moment, to Benjamin's awaiting of Messiah, to Derrida's playful undecided in all decisions.

But if Castoriadis' creative or Arendtian (as not exactly Arendt's or only implicitly so) originary imagination is not the question of individual power, neither is it to be understood within the psychological framework but social and historical, the spatial and temporal framework that is a community. It does not mean that imagination is not exercised by individuals but that it is not a private affair, not a matter of loose and amorphous fantasizing but a matter of 'socially constituted' individuals [Castoriadis, 1987:178] just as action is not a matter of individual, singled out heroic figures but a matter of the 'web of human relationships.' [HC, 183]

An imperfect response to the limits or rather uncertainties of imagination this however is. Imagination is a refutation of intellectualism and elitism in the theory of human agency. Freedom can be only free, "political freedom is the leap," and "always surprises itself," [Nancy, 1988/1993:78, 82] and there can be no premeditation of free act. Yet this makes imagination only a response, not a solution to the problem of the source of human action, and it is also something of a betrayal of this very project insofar it is no more controllable than arbitrary will, not only a "step into the open, with no guarantee about

¹²⁶ "Though man is the thinking animal, to engage in thinking, in the strong sense of letting thinking take its own course, without being able to tell, let alone control where that course will eventually end, is not something every individual is likely to do." [Vetlesen, 2006:64]

the final outcome" [Žižek, 2002:152] but also that which cannot be called forth.

This precisely is Arendt's fundamental argument on action and Castoriadis' principal thesis on imagination: they are freedom incarnate where freedom is the end of certainty and beginning of responsibility. As De Beauvoir observes, the absence of divine being as the ultimate, the absolute that inspires meaning into the world and existence does not abandon man to the nihilistic, overpowering and unlimited license but gives birth to freedom in the sense of "definitive, absolute engagements" of man with the world which renders man responsible. [1976:16] Man is responsible for that which he himself may not have created as a physical entity but has recreated or reshaped through the institution of community and its perpetuation, as both Arendt and Castoriadis argued.

But this argument then begs the question, how imagination is different to judgment which, as Arendt argues, is about abstracting from one's own perspective in order to broaden the vision, to 'enlarge thought' beyond the confines of the subject. In other words, how does imagination better respond to the requirement posed by the condition of plurality as the condition of all political than judgment? Arendt in her work does not go very far from bare instrumentalization of imagination in the function of judgment. Forsaking her revelatory remarks on the originary quality of imagination as the root of action, Arendt asserts that "the power of imagination is linked most closely with that wider manner of thinking [judgment] which is political thinking *par excellence*, because it enables us to 'put ourselves in the minds of other men."¹²⁷

In the previous chapter, judgment was problematized as constrained by the present situation which involves the subject's community. In harmony with her understanding of plurality as the ineradicable human condition, Arendt cannot conceive of subject in any other way but as constituted by her community, and, as has been argued in Chapter Three, she considers the divide between individual and community non-sensical both empirically and theoretically, much as Castoriadis does:

But how could we think of society as the coexistence or the composition of elements that are held to pre-exist or that are supposed to be determined [...] from elsewhere, when these so-called elements do exist as such and are only what they are in and through society? One could not compose a society - if this expression were meaningful - except with individuals, who themselves would already have to be social, who would already contain the social within themselves. [1987:178]

¹²⁷ The quote is taken from Arendt's essay on *Freedom and Politics*, in Hunold, A (ed.): *Freedom and Serfdom: An Anthology of Western Thought* (Dordrecht; D. Reidel, 1961), p. 207, here quoted from Beiner, 1983:14.

Yet what constitutes the subject is not the world in totality but a share of the world which mediates the presence of the world in the life of individuals, the specific social-historical as Castoriadis termed it or specific community in the specific space and time. The limits of that specific community in specific space and time are the limits of judgment and the judging subject – the limits that imagination however does not know.

But the transcendence of subjectivity through imaginary estrangement which, as was argued here, is the mode of working of imagination and the form of its relating to reality that must be distinguished from enlarged thought or enlarged mentality insofar as it does not assume that one can ever know the position of the other. In other words, imaginary estrangement accepts the limits of recognition. What it does is not to project one into the place of the other but to dis-place the one. Displacement is not dislocation in the sense of movement but in the sense of baring one of the situation, detachment that transforms the familiar into the unfamiliar and thereby challenges the embeddedness of subject into one's 'own' situation and subjectivity. It uproots the subject and pushes the subject into reality that is now a *terra incognita*. Then both the one and the other become the other, both are alien to where they are and who they are. It is the situation of the two main characters of Orhan Pamuk's novel *The White Castle* [2002] who are pushed towards each other from two alien(ated) worlds, the 'Occident' and the 'Orient' and who do not have the common ground to build on nor do they succeed in reaching each other through *logos*, through the discourse which only entrenches them deeper in their own positions and their own subjectivity. The two are finally brought together through joint venturing into that which is uncommon and new to both.¹²⁸

In her historical and philosophical interpretation of the American Revolution and the beginning anew vindicated precisely through its newness, Arendt singles out a historical incident that, as argued earlier on, best exemplifies the emergence of the political bond and the foundation of a new political, that is common space not from the commonality of roots. But the common is discovered through venture into the unknown generating the new time series, as Arendt described it, or the new era established by the very venturing.

It could be retorted of course that it was neither the roots nor the uncommon but the commonality of situation, as it is argued by a rather well established theory of the rise of American polity (to abstain from following its meandering into diverse variations and conceding that this reference in passing fails to do justice to the body of literature). But the situation was precisely recognized as shared by the actors of the political scene in becoming, through estrangement of the 'given' which was the British sovereignty. Once the possibility was sighted that the

¹²⁸ Paradoxically somewhat, while the venturing into the new brings the two characters into the together, that together dissolves into a mere exchange of subjectivities, where the self becomes the other and vice versa but it also becomes ironically, if not also tragically, clear that being-other is done in the same way as being-self.

British monarchy might have been but did not *have to be* the framework of their living together, the would-be founders of the new polity recreated their movement, from rebellion to revolution, from contesting what the actors saw as the violation of normative framework to contesting the framework itself and its ground. [OR, 44] This novel situation and the novel response to it constituted the new ground for a new political space.

In the sense of Arendt's political project therefore, foregrounding imagination distances Arendt's political theory from both rationalistic and voluntaristic accounts of action and from the deadlock of this opposition in political philosophy. Political action does not come about either through rational calculation or through blind force or through pale blending of the two. It is generated by the ability of human mind to be in the world and yet see it not as given and unalterable but as always embodying a possibility of originating the new, the distinct. Imagination is the mental capacity which communicates with the two fundamentals of the political as Arendt understands it, the principle of freedom as the overcoming of the given and the condition of plurality as the necessary prerogative of all action.

Following Kant's assertion that "the denial of transcendental freedom [would] involve the elimination of all practical freedom,"¹²⁹ Heidegger seems to have come very close to the same conclusion of Arendt's in the development of transcendental power of imagination: "We have already observed that positive freedom, considered in its practical sense, is equivalent to autonomy. Its possibility is grounded in absolute spontaneity (transcendental freedom)." [1930/2002:19] But Heidegger's discussion of imagination as transcendental power remains captive to the discourse of 'representational productivity' or reproductivity, in denial of this originating power that Arendt discovers.

Castoriadis recognizes in Heidegger's reduction of imagination to production the fallacy that has always plagued metaphysics, the paradoxical obsession of the science of the transcendental with physical creation, the matter that is. That production never reaches the heights of creation, reserved for deity, is the idea that gave birth to the idea of finiteness of man: "Man is a 'finite being' because he can create *nothing*." From this idea of finiteness of man as the consequence of his lack of creativity, Castoriadis reads the ultimate limit of metaphysical thought: the idea that creation proper is only naturalized creation, creation of matter in matter. Paradoxically therefore, metaphysics as the science of the transcendental, science that purported to reach beyond the phenomenal world or the world of matter, recognized as creation only natural creation: "All the rest, which he makes exist out of nothing, does not count; the standard of being, for these non-materialist philosophers, is a speck of matter." [Castoriadis, 1987:199]

Thus Castoriadis' critique of the 'occultation' of philosophy discloses

¹²⁹ Quoted in Heidegger, 1930/2002: 20.

itself as the critique of the philosophical objectification of creation, the insistence of metaphysical ontology on the quest for the essence of the rigid naturals and its oblivion for the 'artifacts' of human interaction, be those works of art or frameworks and patterns of relating within a community. However plausible this critique may seem in terms of the metaphysical tradition of philosophy yet it does not hold entirely for Heidegger's thought. Namely, while earlier Heidegger's works seem to insist on work as the modus of engaging with the world, that is mediated through the use of things present-at-hand or tools and objects as material, his later writings foreground much more strongly and explicitly works of art and even more, language. In Heidegger's explorations of the ways of unconcealment of Being, references to *polis* are not rare either. It is therefore misleading to accuse Heidegger of entertaining the paradoxical metaphysical obsession with the being as the tangible, material reality.

Rather, as the following chapter will attempt to demonstrate, the reason for Heidegger's blindness to the originary quality of imagination is related to the essence of Heidegger's attempt to overcome the tradition of metaphysics and establish fundamental ontology in the sense of the inquiry into being beyond all beings.

Namely, overcoming of metaphysics for Heidegger is entwined with overcoming of *Metaphysica Specialis* as the knowledge of beings, the knowledge that passes over the question or problem of *being* which is beyond but also within all specific beings without being a *being*, an entity or appearance in the sense of object. This overcoming in Heidegger's work takes the form of return to *Metaphysica Generalis*, which is ontology proper concerned with *ens*, that is being as such or existence as such regardless of the forms of existents or existing entities [1929/1997:5-6]

Heidegger propounds that such ontological knowledge is predicated on the existence of transcendental imagination or imagination as transcendental power. The matter of the possibility of ontological knowledge, that is - transcendental cognition independent of experience of specific beings, is for Heidegger a matter of the possibility of all philosophy [Heidegger, 1929/1997:7-9], as ontology is not only the foundation of philosophy but "philosophy is ontological" or must be reconstructed into ontology as inquiry into being, not into specific beings "because philosophy in principle does not relate to beings."¹³⁰ [Heidegger, 1927/1982:11]

The ground of the transcendental power of imagination as the prerogative of ontology and hence all philosophy, the ground therefore

¹³⁰ History of philosophy is for Heidegger the history of oblivion of being as such, the question of what it means to be and what it is to be, [1927/1982:14-15] and he sees his task in renovation of the origins of philosophy as a way to retrieving philosophy [Pöggeler, 2005:89], in the sense of questioning of existence beyond concentric cognitive circles of scientific mapping of beings as objects.

of the possibility to know being as being not as a being or to know of existence without the existent and thereof also the existent, is time or rather, temporality. Heidegger's interpretation of Kant thus culminates in the discovery that "the transcendental power of imagination is original time," the essence of which is "developed primarily from the future." [Heidegger, 1929/1997:131] Transcendence or freedom can thus only be understood through the concept of original time.

If however the transcendental power of imagination, as argued, cannot be reduced to representation only but must be seen in its originating dimension as well, as a potential source of the new, what is its root then, and what are the implications for philosophy? Would then ontology thus rendered possible not be different from Heidegger's fundamental ontology and would it not effectively embody the principle of the political or the what Arendt defines as the fundamental principle of the political – bringing about of the new in the world? In other words, would this not be a *political* ontology if the power of transcendence is the power to originate the new?

Heidegger's analysis of the transcendental power of imagination is based on his fundamental ontological proposition. Espousing Kant's notions of transcendence of imagination in the form of pure synthetic judgments, which allow for judgments beyond those reached through reasoning on the experienced reality, Heidegger develops the argument that the transcendental power of imagination or its power of transcendence is possible because of the roots of imagination in time. Time is the ground of all understanding as it "needs no further horizon in order to make sense." [Blattner, 1999:25] Temporality is the totality in which beings are given whereas temporality itself is not as a being, does not exist as an entity, either a creature or an object, but 'temporalizes' itself'. What would be, and could there be, the ontological ground to assert the originary power of imagination as derived from Arendt's intuitions?

The following chapter will demonstrate that beneath the originary dimension of Imagination there runs a different kind of temporality to that which Heidegger conceptualizes. This different temporality is that of the human existence understood as the beginning, the breakthrough of the new. As such, it testifies to the primordially of knowledge, understood in its broadest sense as relating to the existing - the ontic for Heidegger - which lies not in receiving or interpreting of the received in affirmation but in acting into the world. Ultimately, this entails a different course of philosophy that flows from the principle of the political as the sphere of freedom to act.

**Chapter Six:
BEING-IN AND BEING-TO THE WORLD**

The trails of Arendt's and Heidegger's explorations of imagination have run entwined and then parted on the creative or originary dimension of this mental capacity, as the line of argument in Chapter Five sought to demonstrate. Namely, the fundament of Heidegger's understanding of human existence is the concept of finitude, the inescapable condition of givenness of man in denial even of artistic creation, which is a creation of no lower order than the material or rather, biological creation, as Castoriadis argues in his critique of the narrowness of metaphysical understanding of creating. The last chapter ended on the question, why Heidegger cannot see it differently, why is it that his analysis of imagination – arguably, more systematic than either that of Arendt or Castoriadis and certainly more ontological – is somehow aborted on this point?

The form of this question, perhaps its tone as well, could be misleading insofar it seems to place Heidegger at the centre of the following inquiry, suggesting a transformation of this dialogue with Hannah Arendt in the pursuit of philosophy of freedom into hermeneutic dwelling within the horizon of Heidegger's thought. However, enclosed inside the 'shell' of this question there lurks the question of the entire metaphysical tradition of philosophy – what is it that blinds metaphysical philosophy to the human capacity of freedom, seated in originary imagination and manifested through action? Why is it that metaphysics could not and cannot see and recognize the originating, creative potential of human existence? Finally, how can philosophy escape the entanglement into the web of metaphysical errors and omissions?

Heidegger, as the one who attempted the overcoming of metaphysics without overcoming philosophy as a tradition of thought, constitutes the most logical point of the inquiry, particularly in the light of his foregrounding of imagination and even more so – of freedom:

Freedom is the condition of the possibility of the manifestness of the being of beings, of the understanding of being. [...] The question concerning the essence of freedom is the fundamental problem of philosophy, even if the leading question thereof consists in the question of being. [Heidegger, 1930/2002:207]

The key to this problematic tension, which also leads to unlocking the hidden potential of philosophy, should be sought through Heidegger's analysis of imagination which, while oblivious to its originary capacity,

also proceeds to a more fundamental level than either Castoriadis or Arendt in the sense of investigating the ontological, as opposed to both anthropological and psychological, roots of imagination.

Time and imagination

In moving his analysis beyond Kant, Heidegger shows how transcendence/freedom that lies in imagination and is manifested in the world through the connection between imagination and action, is grounded in original time. It is in this sense that Heidegger's work on Kant's conceptualization of imagination can fully be grasped only if seen as preparatory for the *Being and Time*.

We must recall that what Heidegger is looking for is the possibility of the pure, ontological knowledge which is his term for Kant's 'pure synthetic judgments,' that is - judgments that receive nothing from experience but form the basis of all experiencing or are the condition of all experience. Heidegger's analysis has shown that pure intuition and pure understanding, that are the two elements of pure cognition as intuition and understanding are elements of all cognition, emerge from the transcendental power of imagination. This transcendental power of imagination is in Kant's system a synthetic power - its conjoins the multitude and the oneness, multitude being that which is the material of intuitions and the oneness being the corresponding concept.

As Kant conceives of it, the synthesis can occur in three modes: apprehension, reproduction and recognition, which Kant relates to three elements of all knowledge: intuition, imagination, understanding.¹³¹ Heidegger then proceeds by following what he considers the principal trail in Kant's analysis of the three modes of synthesis, of which "the proper goal [...] lies in demonstrating their intrinsic and essential belonging together in the essence of pure synthesis as such." [Heidegger, 1929/1997:125] The breakthrough in Heidegger's interpretation lies in the following question: *if all representations are united in this threefold synthesis and if each of the three modes of synthesis produces representations, which are the fabric of all our knowledge as it is precluded from direct access to any entities, and if time is at the bottom of all representations, according to Kant's argument from the Critique of Pure Reason [28], is it not then that it is "the time-character of this synthesis which makes everything uniformly submissive in advance?"* [Heidegger, 1929/1997:125] What Heidegger is asking here is whether it is not time that grounds what for Kant is pure synthetic judgment and for him - ontological knowledge.

¹³¹ Heidegger points out Kant's inconsistent use of the term *imagination* which was previously treated as a root of the other two elements whereas here it becomes again "just one faculty among others." In order to be able to pursue his own project, Heidegger states that this imagination as element of knowledge must not be equated with the transcendental power of imagination as the root of sensibility and understanding as elements of knowledge. [1929/1997:124]

In developing the argument out of this intuition, Heidegger analyses the three modes of synthesis through explication of their 'time-forming character.' Heidegger finds Kant sufficiently explicit on the time-character of apprehension and reproduction: apprehension forms the now and reproduction is dependent on mind's 'ability to retain', which presupposes bringing together the conception of the earlier time with the now. [Heidegger, 1929/1997:126-127] The third mode – recognition, which is the mode of synthesis that comes about from pure thinking or understanding, does not have time-character in Kant's analysis, because pure reason cannot be temporal. Kant asserts that its propositions must be universally valid regardless of time, which compels Heidegger to a painstaking analysis. What he discovers through that analysis is more than the time-forming character of synthesis as recognition or its relatedness to future – the discovery for him confirms the primacy of future for the notion of original time, the discovery that forms the basis of his fundamental ontology as worked out in the *Being and Time*.

In order for the unity of synthesis to be achieved however the three dimensions must be linked:

And yet, when the mind again returns from its going-back into the past, when it returns again to the directly present being in order to set the former in unity with the latter, who then tells it that this being which is now present is the same as that which it previously abandoned...? [Heidegger, 1929/1997:129]

The link is provided through concept – it is a function of concept to bring together a multitude of diverse perceived entities or phenomena. Concept is produced by thinking/understanding. But it must be produced prior to representations or else it is not pure. This means that the synthesis of reproduction is primordial to other two modes of synthesis: it forms for them the horizon of identification, i.e. recognition of the beings they grasp and allows the perceived to be recognized as the *once already* or previously perceived:

Kant gives this synthesis of identification a most appropriate name: its unifying is a reconnoitering. It explores in advance and is 'watching out for' what must be held before us in advance as the same in order that the apprehending and reproducing syntheses in general can find a closed, circumscribed field of beings within which they can attach to what they bring forth and encounter, so to speak, and them in stride as beings. [Heidegger, 1929/1997:130]

The meaning of recognition here is not cognition repeated but reconnaissance, advance of cognition whereas cognition is then recognition of that already given by concept in what is encountered, perceived, grasped. This means that the concept *anticipates* what is not already there and has not yet been – the time-character of recognition is therefore future. Heidegger thus concludes that the unity of synthesis

is allowed by the unity of time, that is: "the transcendental power of imagination is original time," the essence of which is "developed primarily from the future." [1929/1997:131]

Heidegger may appear concerned here with finding the ground of 'ontological knowledge' on which the very possibility of metaphysics is predicated. But Heidegger's primary concern is not metaphysics or rather, it is metaphysics but only insofar he shares with Kant the conviction that "the grounding of metaphysics precisely [is] a return to human nature." [1930/2002:142] Namely, in *The Essence of Human Freedom* man is distinguished from other beings through as "by virtue of the fact that he knows himself," [1930/2002:172] which echoes the famous line from *Being and Time* that Dasein is question to itself. *Being and Time* is exposition of this question as the question of Being behind beings or the question of the meaning of existence, which should be the proper task of metaphysics as Heidegger understands it. So the possibility of ontological knowledge is more than the possibility of metaphysics, and it reaches beyond neo-Kantian epistemological readings of Kant, which Heidegger refutes in *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*. It is the possibility of being authentically - in awareness of being, that is. That is the highest stake of Heidegger's analysis of imagination.

Having exposed the rootedness of image as the power of transcendence in the unity of original time, Heidegger performs the final move of the argument - the original time is self. To prove this, Heidegger does not start from the assertion that self is time but that time is self. The verification process goes back to the elementary proposition of Kant's Transcendental Analytic that time is a pure intuition. If it is pure, it cannot come to mind through experience, that is - from the outside. That means that it affects the mind, impresses it, from the inside. However, it cannot be conceived of as existing alongside the self, separate to it and other to it, since that would again mean that it is external to it and is formed outside and as such it is a subject matter of experience and does not exist *a priori*. Therefore it can only be that time is formed through self affecting itself:

Inner sense does not receive 'from without,' but rather from the self. In pure taking-in-stride, the inner affection must come forth from out of the pure self; i.e. it must be formed in the essence of selfhood as such, and therefore it must constitute this self in the first place.
[1929/1997:134]

By arguing that time constitutes self, Heidegger accomplishes what he has set out to do when approaching Kant's First Critique as the ground for, if not ground of, metaphysics: he has constructed substantive introduction to *Being and Time* by disclosing the fundamental connection between being and time through ontological, not anthropological analysis. What Heidegger's interpretation of Kant on imagination has shown is that the fundamental connection between being and transcendence as freedom runs through the concept of time,

revealing therefore that the question of the Being of beings is rooted in the triangle freedom-being-time. Investigating the sources of imagination, Heidegger constructs an ontological argument, as opposed to the psychological argument (or, in Heidegger's terms, *anthropological*) which we find in Castoriadis' explorations of radical imagination.

If we now recall the grounds of Arendt's political thought in the principle of natality (as it was elaborated in here in Chapter Three), we observe the contours of a similar triangle – **man** is occurrence of **freedom** manifested in the breaking of the **time** continuum through birth which inspires man as a being with capacity to begin anew in the world. What can this mean – that Arendt's project is a political implication of Heidegger's? On the contrary – if it is taken only in this genealogical sense, it would suggest the grounding of the entire edifice of Arendt's political thought in Heidegger's fundamental ontology, the science of the Being, into which, according to Arendt, metaphysics developed.¹³² In that case, Arendt's critique of metaphysical legacy in philosophy would be contradicted by her own project: it would mean that of the world of human affairs one can speak meaningfully only through the reference to the working of some 'invisible hand.' [LM/II:179-180]

Or would this suggest that Heidegger's fundamental ontology is essentially political? That the question of Being is the question of freedom and that the question of freedom is the fundamental question of all philosophy, does it not cast a very different light on Heidegger's project of *asking the question of Being*, demanding of us to ignore Heidegger's (albeit rare) remarks, such as the one in the *Letter on Humanism* on thinking that is *not* to tell us how to live, thinking beyond and aside of *praxis*, as of *theoria*. [1993:259]

Žižek offers a reading of Heidegger that responds to this question affirmatively:

Heidegger's ontology is... in fact 'political'... his endeavour to break through traditional ontology, and to assert as the key to the 'sense of being' man's decision to adopt a 'project' by means of which he actively assumes his 'thrownness' into a finite historical situation, locates the historico-political act of decision in the very heart of ontology itself: the very choice of the historical form of *Dasein* is in a sense 'political', it consists in an abyssal decision not grounded in any universal ontological structure. [Žižek, 2000:20]¹³³

¹³² "[B]y looking at appearances... one becomes aware of, gets a glimpse of, something that does not appear. This something is Being as such. Hence, metaphysics, the discipline that treats of what lies beyond physical reality and still, in a mysterious way, is given to the mind as the nonappearance in the appearances, becomes ontology, the science of Being." [LKPP, 80]

¹³³ Žižek here argues against now almost standing criticism of Heidegger's project presented in *Being and Time* as "still caught in the transcendental-subjectivist procedure of first establishing the 'conditions of possibility' of the sense of Being via the analysis of *Dasein*." [Žižek, 2000:23]

Žižek's interpretation of Heidegger's early project concurs to a certain degree with Nancy's understanding of Heidegger's late concept of *Gelassenheit* as active: "Letting be, which is always the contrary of 'laissez-faire' or 'letting-happen,' will ceaselessly have to decide, at every moment, its 'ethical' relation to the existence its lets-be." [1988/1993:143] While it could be argued that Žižek allows not entirely valid reduction of all Heidegger to *Being and Time* and, also early, analysis of Kant, Nancy's argument is more attentive to late Heidegger's thought. In another piece, Nancy argues that: "Fare-senso non e' quindi fare del senso,¹³⁴ ma far essere l'essere, *lasciarlo* essere (... secondo l'ambivalenza del *lassen* tedesco: *bauen lassen*, far costruire=lasciare, donare all'attivit  di costruire come tale; *sein lassen*, lasciar essere=donare, consegnare all'attivit  d'essere in quanto tale). Il lasciar-essere non e' una passivit , ma e', appunto, l'agire stesso. E' l'essenza dell'agire in quanto l'agire e' l'essenza dell'essere." [Nancy, 2005:20-21] In other words, *Gelassenheit* or letting-be is not a passive condition of being along other beings but action of all actions or even action for all acting – in translation, it is "the essence of acting insofar as acting is the essence of existence."

Acting and relating as essence of all existence necessitates a different understanding of fundamental ontology which uncovers its fundament as essentially ethical. Giving sense to existence is entirely in opening and relating of *Dasein*, not passive conducting of the (pre)given sense of (the) Being through man. [Nancy, 2005:38-39, 42] Nancy's placement of ethics in the centre of Heidegger's project of fundamental ontology admittedly presents a voyage much beyond Heidegger's writings but it is at the same time a deeply Heideggerian voyage pervaded by Heidegger's work even if wider and further-reaching. [Nancy, 2005:31-32]

In the light of this interpretation of Heidegger however Arendt's philosophical contribution can hardly be read as a critique of Heidegger and her own explicit critique of Heidegger in the second volume of *The*

Žižek's critique of Heidegger focuses rather on Heidegger's escape from the madness inherent to modern subjectivity, the failure – characteristic of the tradition of philosophy – to recognize and incorporate into his philosophy "the point of 'madness' that characterizes the Cartesian subjectivity, the self-withdrawal of the *cogito* into itself, the eclipse of the world." [2000:63] Žižek's interpretation of Heidegger's omission is not however Freudian but Lacanian: it is not the Unconscious as wild, untamable, animalistic and obscure dimension of human being that resists capture and comprehension by *logos*, and that ontological discussions silence but the rational, disembodied ego, ego without its worldliness, bared of existence in the here and now.

¹³⁴ Nancy's understanding of sense remains true to Heidegger's insistence on removing the silt of epistemology over ontology. Sense is not that "in terms of which something becomes intelligible as something" [Blattner, 1999:151], it is not a matter of comprehension, not a property of the 'object' of understanding, "less [...] something to be discovered and more [...] an *investment* you make in selective activities and events." [Connolly, 2002:168] Sense is a matter of *praxis*, the giving of sense, acting and relating: "Essere e' fare senso [...] Questo 'fare' non e', pero', un 'produrre'. E' agire o condursi." [Nancy, 2005:17]

Life of the Mind is entirely misplaced. According to Nancy, Heidegger does offer the ontology of Dasein as acting and relating being, which would imply that Arendt's project within the framework of philosophy is simply a translation of this *praxi-cal* core of existentialism into political theory or frames of political *praxis*.

However there remains a fundamental difference between the *politicized* or even political ontology that Arendt offers and the ontology with *ethical* core. The sense that is given to existence in Nancy's reading of Heidegger recoils back to Dasein, whereas political ontology grasps that acting involves not mere relating but changing, bringing about the new, doing something to the world. The difference between ethics and politics as core of fundamental ontology is the difference between Dasein as constituted by Mitdasein or of which the world is constitutive, and Arendt's notion of man as beginning and beginner, the one not only constituted of world but constituting the world. While both ethics and politics are forms of *praxis*, and forms of interpreting *praxis*, the distinction between the two is the distinction between *praxis* as comportment and *praxis* as acting out the new, giving the new to the world.

The strength and originality of Arendt's foundation or source of a difference, in *praxis* rooted philosophical thought lies therefore in Arendt's grasp of the primordially of newness, as the tangible presence of freedom in the world, for man's rapport with the world. Prior to man's relating to the world through giving sense to his existence, man does to the world by his very appearance.

Nancy's interpretation of Heidegger is legitimate insofar it is placed on the horizon of ethics. While that is an important step out of the metaphysical confines of traditional ontology, it does not reach far enough, out of the confines of ontological subjectivity in the quest for meaning: the centre is still *Dasein*. That is where also Žižek errs in proclaiming Heidegger's fundamental ontology – political: the decision by *Dasein*, on which Žižek bases his argument on politicality, remains a decision for *Dasein* while nothing is changed in the world. The *Augenblick* is only a moment of giving the meaning but it is a meaning for the subjectivity, irrespectively of whether it is understood as an individual entity or a collective one since both are oneness opposed to the plurality of the world. *A contrario*, Arendt introduces ontological thinking of the meaning for the world as a totality of human singularity, human plurality and the historical community of the two. Arendt's teaching, much quoted here, "to think what we are doing" must therefore be read as *to think what we are doing to the world* which is entirely woven of our actions and us as being us through those actions. This constitutes Arendt's contribution to post-metaphysical philosophy beyond Heidegger, which can be derived from the analysis of the contrasting concepts of time found in the centre of Arendt's and Heidegger's ontologies.

Towards thinking of time

The concept of original time or primordial time in Heidegger's early/earlier writings is usually interpreted as antipode to vulgar or ordinary time. To retrieve oneself from this ordinary time, Dasein must enter anticipatory resoluteness through the mood of *Angst*, anxiety which is "disclosive attunement" revealing to Dasein that though being in the world, it is not at *home* in the world. Why Dasein is not at home in the world, fundamentally and ontologically, can be understood only in terms of the connection between thrownness into existence, into some unchosen, unwilled *there* and some unchosen, unwilled *being*, and on the other hand - finitude of this unwilled, given existence for, as worldly as this being is, its final destination in the world is the departure from it.

To be gripped by this unhomeliness of thrown and finite being leads Dasein to what would seem as a nihilistic understanding of itself as a being whose ultimate possibility is "the impossibility of existence in general" [1927/1996:262] and yet whose essence is this absurd existence towards non-existence. The way to live, the mode of being that arises from the mood of anxiety, is by being towards non-being, which is the meaning of resoluteness. What this means is firstly to accept and affirm existence as a path to nothingness and then, more importantly, to derive its course and meaning from its finiteness. The resolve thus is a leap towards the possibilities arising from the ultimate existential impossibility, the possibilities that uncover themselves only to the sighting from the grasped impossibility.

In everyday life, in the present as the portion of chronological time, those possibilities are not visible to Dasein that concerns itself with things of which the world is made, not with itself and its existence in its most fundamental sense. Anticipatory resoluteness of Dasein is rooted in this way of being as always being-ahead-of-itself as from the moment of birth, Dasein is moving forward, in the direction of its end. However, in the inauthentic mode of being, that is - everyday life in the midst of various concerns and preoccupations, this end is concealed from Dasein, it is left to fall into oblivion. But precisely as the matter of evasion, forgetting, constant effort of Dasein to conceal from itself what is its ultimate certainty, it remains present in human existence. [1927/1996:259]

How is then this being-in-the-world that is Dasein then in the world, what is the mode of its being in the world? The being of Dasein is care, [1927/1996:191] which means that Dasein is not simply in the world by the side of other things and beings but that is concerned with them, it handles them, it takes care. Care is constituted of understanding, attunement/mood and falling prey. These three constituent dimensions of care correspond to the three modes of temporality - future, past and present, bearing in mind though that Heidegger is reluctant to employ these three concepts except in relation to inauthentic temporality, the meaning of which is precisely in oblivion and obscuration of past as the always open *having-been* - not the

closed was, future as ahead-of and not as a non-presence of not-yet, and the present as the knot of threads from having-been and from ahead-of in situation rather than a reality of a given instant.

Neither understanding nor attunement is resoluteness that is the taking up of Dasein's potentiality. And the dimension of care that is a mode of Dasein's most active involvement with the world, however, is the one which takes Dasein farthest away from its being disclosed as thrown and finite: falling prey, which always entails that Dasein is concerned with beings and things in the world other than its own being. It is the being-in-the-world in which Dasein forgets itself and hides from itself what determines it – its powerlessness over its natality and its mortality but also its power that is in-between.

But Heidegger interprets this in-between or the present of falling prey as entrapment of Dasein. The fallness into the present "creates the impression that things could not be otherwise than they are, there is nothing else to disclose. Practices and understandings that are in fact contingent take on the appearance of naturalness." [Villa, 1996:128] Heidegger is thus trying to escape the entrapment by present which is always the present, at-hand, en-present-ment as the prison of the given, which is taken as it is, without anticipation of the destination point and thereof retrieval of its possibilities. In this, Heidegger explicitly follows Hegel's (critical) understanding of 'now' as 'enormously privileged.' The question for Heidegger is therefore why philosophy ignores temporality as a whole of past, present and future that Dasein, as extension in time but also retention, is:

But the time focused upon for understanding the meaning of Being is a specific time understood as the constant presence of the present. This poses for Heidegger the question of knowing why the present is being privileged in this fashion. 'Why can't the past and the future claim such a right? Shouldn't Being be understood from temporality as a whole?'¹³⁵

Taminiaux's question here strikes an important cord of Heidegger's inquiry – the concern with the wholeness of Dasein. In exploring the being of Dasein, Heidegger finds Dasein a being whose being is in becoming, as always coming-into-presence and still always not-yet. This unwholeness is not a missing of a part but, as Heidegger argues, the being of Dasein, what it is, is always not-yet:

And if existence determines the being of Dasein and if its existence is also constituted by potentiality-of-being, then, as long as Dasein exists, it must always, as such a potentiality, *not yet be* something? A being whose essence is made up of existence essentially resists the possibility of being comprehended as a total being. [1927/1996:233]

¹³⁵ Taminiaux, 1997:7. Further on (p. 43), Taminiaux quotes Heidegger's lecture course on *The Fundamental Concepts of Greek Philosophy* in support of this argument.

It must also be differentiated from 'any imperfection of *cognitive faculties*.' [1927/1996:236] It is unwhole not as a whole that can be completed but through the negation of wholeness. The whole is a property, as Heidegger argues, of the between birth and death, the 'connection of life' which ties together the two ends of existence. [1927/1996:373] This Heidegger's notion of unwholeness is present in Arendt's refutation of given, substantive identity and location of the whole *who* only in the stories that emerge in remembrance of the who.

But behind Heidegger's understanding of unwholeness as the being of Dasein there lies the assumption that "a wholeness constituted by being-toward-the-end is possible in Dasein itself, in accordance with its structure of being" [1927/1996:240], and the inquiry is driven by the ambition to uncover the possibility of Dasein as a whole: "And have we actually exhausted all the possibilities of making Dasein accessible in its totality?," [1927/1996:237] is the question from which Heidegger develops his argument of death as the utmost ontological possibility of Dasein to grasp itself:

Thus the task arises of placing Dasein as a whole in our fore-having. However, that means that we must first unpack the question of this being's potentiality-for-being-a-whole. As long as Dasein is, something is always still outstanding, what it can and will be. But the 'end' itself belongs to what is outstanding. The 'end' of being-in-the-world is death. This end, belonging to the potentiality-of-being, that is, to existence, limits and defines the possible totality of Dasein. [1927/1996:233]

Heidegger's phenomenological analysis seeks to abandon this enpresentment by uncovering primordially of future even for the inauthentically existing Dasein that never is content with being in the now, always reckoning with what will be and weighing the now on the scale of what will become of this now in the now that is yet to come. This means that future is primordial for Dasein, regardless of inauthenticity or authenticity of its mode of being.

For the inauthentic Dasein however this focus on the future is restrained by what is given in the present. Future appears in the guise of consequences and goals, which set the standard for the being of Dasein in the present but are at the same time derived from the present possibilities. Although it seems that the choice of goals determines the options of the now, the inauthentic Dasein actually derives the goals from the options that offer themselves in the now, the obvious ones. Heidegger's insistence on reversing this relationship and interpreting the future as not derivative to the present but the source of the present can thus be read as a critique of utilitarianism. To project oneself into the future does not mean to reckon and calculate in utilitarian terms but to cast both past and present in a different light, drawing them from concealment and uncovering the undercurrents of

possibilities hidden by the obvious possibilities of any now. To say therefore that Dasein is futural does not mean simplistically that Dasein is determined by its mortality but that it defines itself in the present through the recourse to future, to what it wants to become. Also, to say that Dasein is futural however does not mean that Dasein is not also through being from the past and being in the present. But the meaning of past and its bearing on the present are derived from future, the primary context or horizon of interpretation is future. Recourse to future is a break through the fetters of the ever-present present.

For the resolute Dasein there open up possibilities concealed by the present. Dasein focused on the present covers up to itself these possibilities as it is essentially an unwhole being. This is not to say, or not only, that Dasein is blinded by the noisy, colourful spectacle of the 'innerworldly things' but because its vision narrowed to the present is deprived of the sight of the nullity at the core of its very existence. That about Dasein which *is* not but can only be anticipated ahead of its every now, ahead of the entire nowness is what Dasein is about and what gives it wholeness.

Why can these possibilities not be seen in the present? Because they are not *present*, they are neither things nor facts whose existence would be independent of Dasein and of its way of being in the world and to itself. Existence which sights the ultimate point of its existence as its fundamental impossibility likens a ray of light refracted in water, revealing that which never has been there, and even as it shows itself, it *is* not *there*, but belongs to the resolute Dasein.

Seemingly paradoxically, although not present, the possibilities revealed to the resolute Dasein have always already been. The sighting of the present by the Dasein projected into the future is not direct but runs through past, the sight is mediated by what was given to Dasein when it was thrown into existence. [1927/1996:385] The gift of thrownness is the gift of existence – Dasein does not come into being by itself, it always owes itself. What this suggests is that interpretation of Heidegger's being towards death cannot be grasped unless the wholeness of Dasein is understood as coming from being towards birth as much as being towards death. To be towards birth is to take up the gift of existence, to receive the unwanted gift of existence as a being-in-the-world. To be towards birth is to hear the call back which discloses Dasein to itself as a being guilty – "the 'voice' of conscience somehow speaks of 'guilt'." [1927/1996:280] Heidegger insists on the close kinship between the words 'guilt' and 'indebtedness,' giving the word *guilt* meaning of debt for existence not willed and not brought about by the one who exists.

In anticipatory resoluteness therefore existence is grasped and seized by Dasein as a whole in resistance to the lostness of Dasein in the everyday flow of instants. To grasp the existence as a whole does not mean encounter with death, which is a very common understanding of Heidegger, but the grasp of the totality of existence in resistance to the

everyday, successive temporality. Dasein is therefore not only called forth, towards recognition of its finitude and retrieval of its true, concealed possibilities for it as a being-in-the-world, as opposed to those possibilities that present themselves in everyday. Dasein is not only summoned to see its fallness into the *They*. It is also called back, into the understanding of its own thrownness into existence, its givenness of itself to itself which Dasein has to accept in order to be able to reappropriate the limits of givenness as possibilities of existence:

The summons calls back by calling forth: *forth* to the possibility of taking over in existence the thrown being that it is, *back* to thrownness in order to understand it as the null ground that it has to take up into existence.
[1927/1996:287]

It follows therefore that the resolute choice or decision is never breaking with the past for the past is not closed to Dasein, nor is it behind it - as it "does not *follow after* Dasein but rather always already goes ahead of it." [Heidegger, 1927/1996:20] This is why Heidegger insists on terming this mode of temporality having-been: unlike the past, which passed, having-been has not passed but enters the present of Dasein in the form of uncovered possibilities, given insofar as Dasein is given, chosen in so far only Dasein can recall them back and recognize them as possibilities.

In the *Introduction to Being and Time* however Heidegger speaks of a different past, that is the tradition:

... Dasein is also entangled in a tradition which it more or less explicitly grasps. This tradition deprives Dasein of its own leadership in questioning and choosing. [...] The tradition that thereby gains dominance makes what it 'transmits' so little accessible that initially and for the most part it covers it over instead... It bars access to those original 'wellsprings' out of which the traditional categories and concepts were in part genuinely drawn.
[1927/1996:21]

How is then possible that tradition or the shared heritage, wherein the origins of Dasein and its possibilities rest, at the same time covers over the genuine possibilities of Dasein and, on the other hand, guides Dasein, as a source of its actions? The answer is not to be sought in the concept of tradition but in the notion of the resolute Dasein. Dasein existing inauthentically is not without past or without its having-been, its existence is rooted in the world into which it was thrown, therefore in the world as it has been, but those roots are dead, ossified frames which perpetuate the oblivion of Dasein to its existence as a road into nothingness. The 'wellsprings' of inherited but untaken possibilities remain hidden to Dasein that lives by taking care of things, by handling and producing things, not by asking questions. The wellsprings become visible as the wellsprings of possibilities only to the Dasein gripped by anticipatory resoluteness. Dasein is 'dispersed' in the everyday

concerns and can be concentrated only through anticipation: "Only being free for death gives Dasein its absolute goal and pushes existence into its finitude." [Heidegger, 1927/1996:384] Death is the framework of existence, and as such, it is not only an expected cessation of existence but the of direction for existence, and to be free for death is to let oneself be as a finite being, the possibilities of which are always different to those of the being that would understand itself as infinite. It follows thereof that to push existence to its finitude is not to live to the end, through succession of instants as they come, but to exist from this finitude, where finitude is the womb of existence and not only its final point.

How does then this Dasein occupy the place in the world, how does it appropriate its generation as its historical *locus*, retrieving and repeating its inherited possibilities, evading the conservation that would petrify the past? Heidegger argues that Dasein that takes up its inherited possibilities only then *is* "for its time."¹³⁶ [1927/1996:385] Bringing its past/having-been into its present/now-time *via* future, recalling and retrieving itself from the indifferent flow of time, Dasein is whole.

The first section of the Second Division of Dasein on *The Possible Being-a-Whole of Dasein and Being-toward-Death*, where death is defined not as the fact of *physis* but as the ownmost *nonrelational* possibility of Dasein [Taminiaux, 1997:8], thus constitutes the centre of *Being and Time*. [Adorno, 1964/2003:118] For Adorno, Heidegger's obsession with wholeness as ultimately totalitarian and fascist: "that which tolerates nothing beyond itself is understood to be the whole. The least trace which went beyond such identity would be as unbearable as anyone who insists on his own individuality is to the fascist – no matter what remote corner of the world." [1964/2003:114] But it is also, as Adorno points out, a return to metaphysics of the one, identical to itself, complete, whole, final and present. It is the framework that cannot grasp what Heidegger has defined as the essence of human

¹³⁶ Guignon observes that crucial for understanding of this resolute Dasein that is for its time is the notion of *situation*. [Dreyfuss and Hall, 1992:139] Once again, therefore, Heidegger denies the objectification or being-at-hand of existentiell categories, insisting that it is through resoluteness of Dasein that they are called forth. Dasein does not recognize the situation as independent to itself but it puts itself into a situation, wherefrom it reads its possibilities.

Situation for Heidegger has two meanings, which blend in the notion of the 'held moment.' The primordial, ontological and 'borderline situation' is being-towards-death, it is the situation of finite existence. [Heidegger, 1927/1996:308] But there is also the actual situation, between ahead-of and having-been, which however cannot be equated with the 'state of affairs' [Dreyfuss and Hall, 1992:139] that is the ground of reckoning with in the everyday life of Dasein:

For the they, however, situation is essentially closed off. The they knows only the 'general situation,' loses itself in the nearest 'opportunities,' and settles its Dasein by calculating the 'accidents' which it fails to recognize, deems its own achievement and passes off as such. [Heidegger, 1927/1996:300]

The situation therefore is not something that is *there* but it is the reading by Dasein of the "world-historical in its actual situation." [Heidegger, 1927/1996:391]

existence – always becoming, beyond unpremeditated change that however defines human existence. In other words, Heidegger's project is rendered problematic not in terms of its political implications – that never were of much bearing for Heidegger's work – but philosophically, as an inquiry into the meaning of Being of beings that seeks to abandon the legacy of metaphysics.

While Heidegger's concern with wholeness of Dasein is problematic, there remains the possibility that his fundamental ontology as a project is thereby not rendered futile. The problem behind Heidegger's notion of Dasein is not that he is concerned, as so many before him were, with the wholeness of human existence. It is rather that wholeness is closed off as a possibility to human existence, and this points to Heidegger's fundamental misunderstanding of how human existence exists.

Arendt's entire thought stands in refutation of Heidegger's idea of wholeness of existence. To assume wholeness as possibility of human existence is to fail to grasp the paradox fundamental to human beings: as a being, one is finite but capable of doing the deeds that will be as infinite in their consequences as is infinite the diversity of human beings. In that sense, Heidegger's fundamental ontology appears as retreat back into metaphysics whereas Arendt, through the notion of beginning that succeeds in capturing the paradox of human condition: the finitude of man as a natural being and the infiniteness of man as an acting being, manifested in the unpredictability of both their actions and the consequences and effects of those actions which develop endlessly, rendering the future infinitely open and any attempt at control or command of the course of events – futile. For, as finite as Arendt's actor is, s/he is not a whole in the sense that whatever is brought into the world through his/her action, is always new and will have a course uncontrollable by its author. The only certainty that remains is that the appearance of actor always renders the world changed, which is the dimension of human existence that Heidegger does not grasp and allows his fundamental ontology to slip back into metaphysics.

Thinking time and being

Arendt's concept of beginning pervades her understanding of the meaning of human being. In that sense, the meaning of human being is for Arendt, as for Heidegger, inextricably tied with time. The parallels are most evident in the rupturous nature of both the *Augenblick* and the moment of action. Arendt and Heidegger share the attempt to conceptualize time against the conceptualization offered by the metaphysical tradition of philosophy or metaphysics of presence: "Time as such, however fluid and even fugitive its flowing, is held fast for all of philosophy in the dimension and grasp of presence (the having-been-present, the being-present, the being-present-to-come)." [Nancy, 1988/1993:111] For Arendt as well as Heidegger, the Moment entails going out of the ordinary flow, out of the inertia.

Heidegger contrasts the *Augenblick* to the time of everydayness as stretching from the present in which Dasein loses itself:

The Moment "temporalizes itself *primarily* from the future. However, the vulgar understanding of time sees the fundamental phenomenon of time in the *now*, and indeed in the pure now, cut off in its complete structure, that is called the "present." One can gather from this that there is in principle no prospect of explaining or even deriving the ecstatic and horizontal phenomenon of the *Moment* that belongs to authentic temporality *from this now*. [...] The now is not pregnant with the not-yet-now, but rather the present arises from the future in the primordial, ecstatic unity of the temporalizing of temporality. [1927/1996:426]

There remains for Heidegger the question of the passage from the inauthentic to authentic. At first sight, Heidegger's own response may seem misleading since he notes that the Moment can never be derived from the now. [1927/1996:427] Yet while the Moment is not in the now, Dasein can be projected out of the now, into the Moment, through anticipation of death and the call of conscience which it invokes.

Heidegger's distinction between the authentic and the inauthentic temporality is not an analogy or a reflection of the ancient opposition between *chronos* and *kairos*. When he argues that the Moment that is the *Augenblick* cannot be derived from the ordinary time, which is objectified in the world as an endless sequences of nows and is measurable, Heidegger is preparing the ground for his ultimate assertion: that the temporality which 'temporalizes'¹³⁷ itself as *Augenblick* is the primordial temporality wherefrom temporality understood as time, the time of everyday life is derived.

For Arendt, the moment of beginning is also somehow distinct or distinguishes itself from historical time. The way Arendt conceives of the moment of action, as undetermined by either its motives, i.e. past, or its goals, i.e. future [BPF, 151] suggests that the moment of action somehow steps out of the temporal flow. In the light of Arendt's critique of the tradition of political philosophy as hostile to movement and ephemerality, this stepping out cannot be equated with the *nunc stans* that overcomes all temporality transforming it into motionless point: "For Arendt, temporality, far from having to be overcome for man to be, is the source of his possibility for action in which his being is intensified."¹³⁸ [Young-Bruehl, 1982: 495]

¹³⁷ Temporality *is* not, the verb *to-be* is meaningless for time because time is not an object in the world nor does it have being but can be understood only as temporalizing, as 'being' in its own distinct mode of appearance. [Heidegger, 1927/1996:328]

¹³⁸ That being is intensified through action however presents a misrepresentation of Arendt's non-foundationalist, performative notion of man as acquiring a *who* only through appearance in the world, the appearance that appears through action. Acting is more than intensification of a pre-existing being, acting brings human being into existence as a human being not a simply an entity, an object in existence that can be depicted through

In terms of relating to temporality therefore, Arendt departs both from the philosophies of eternity – by embracing time as the proper site of politics understood through action, and from the modern political theories of the uninterrupted, automatic processes dictated by the laws of necessity. The latter departure is performed by locating political action in the moment which interrupts automatism, to open to the new. The new is situated in the horizon made up of the past and its possible futures, as in Kafka's parable. But it is something that no other thing in the world has ever before been – nor could it have been expected as it had never been necessitated. This is the sense of beginning *ex nihilo*: the new comes from someone, not from no-one and not out of nothingness, but it is where nothing has been and nothing has been foreseen to be. Beginnings, as origins, have thus always been the fabric of mysteries, she points out, and could never be incorporated into the ordinary time flow, to be an instant among other instants:

It is in the very nature of a beginning to carry with itself a measure of complete arbitrariness. Not only is it not bound into a reliable chain of cause and effect, a chain in which each effect immediately turns into the cause for future developments, the beginning has, as it were, nothing whatsoever to hold on to; it is as though it came out of nowhere in either time or space. For a moment, the moment of beginning, it is as though the beginner had abolished the sequence of temporality itself, or as though the actors were thrown out of the temporal order and its continuity. [OR, 206]

The notion of a different temporality brings Arendt close to Heidegger's discourse of inauthentic/authentic, and Arendt also employs the terms 'ordinary' and 'extraordinary' in her phenomenological analysis of action. Thus the notion of action is rendered in terms of the extraordinary as opposed to the everyday: "it is in its nature to break through the commonly accepted and reach into the extraordinary, where whatever is true in common and everyday life no longer applies because everything that exists is unique and *sui generis*." [HC, 205]

Developing this notion of the extraordinary Arendt relates primarily to the experience of the Greek world after Homer, where action remains the one proper way of distinguishing oneself from the others but sheds its heroic dimension through the foundation of *polis*. The *polis* was the place for the extraordinary translated or incorporated into the ordinary, where the extraordinary was the ordinary: "from beginning to end its foremost aim was to make the extraordinary an ordinary occurrence of everyday life." [HC, 197] On this basis, it could be argued that Arendt does not share with Heidegger the ontological divide between the authentic and the inauthentic. On the other hand however, it is not so

answers to the question *what* but a *who* that appears through the drama of acting and relating.

certain that Heidegger himself insists on the divide. Heidegger's claim is that the authentic cannot be derived from the inauthentic but the two are necessarily entwined and conjoined in the mode of being of Dasein, just as political action as understood by Arendt is a break in the time flow and may seem as stepping out of the continuum, while it actually does not extract man from either the world or time but discontinues one time-series only to start a new one that will once again be discontinued by human action.

Both in Heidegger and in Arendt therefore the inauthentic/ordinary and authentic/extraordinary cannot necessarily be grasped fully in the form of opposition, as Villa observes, but as a dynamic, [1996:130] between the two inseparable modes of being concerned with the world:

In falling prey, nothing other than our potentiality for being-in-the-world is the issue, even if in the mode of inauthenticity, Dasein *can* fall prey *only* because it is concerned with understanding, attuned being-in-the-world. On the other hand, *authentic* existence is nothing which hovers over entangled everydayness, but is existentially only a modified grasp of everydayness. [Heidegger, 1927/1996:179]

Equally so, Arendt's miracles are the fabric of existence, [BPF, 169] the extraordinary bears the meaning of the ordinary. Namely, through this breaking in and breaking through time, the time as indifferent, neutral flow is abolished, and the process emerging from the moment of beginning is no longer an irresistible flux of time but man's bond to the world, man's active presence in the world through this investment, which never is complete, rounded up, substantive, but always continues and demands further actions. However Arendt's concept of action as beginning must be thought not only as opening into the future but as seizing the potentials of the past never closed. Thus every moment of action is not just an instant or a point on the passage from past to future but the center from which both past and future radiate in a different light, cast by the new beginning, and many diverse facets of the world, many of its hidden potentials would remain invisible without the beginning anew.

The present in which the past has to be recognized is however never given for Arendtian actor, just as it is not for Heidegger's resolute Dasein: the actor calls forth a situation, as it was the case with the American Revolution, when an event of rebellion developed, through actions of men, into a revolution that instituted an entirely new world order by founding a new body politic. [OR]

It is therefore not an accident that Arendt never ceased to revisit the example of the American Revolution. It remarkably embodies her notion of action as the breaking point in the present. The breaking point is paradoxically rooted in the possibilities of the past – which in this case were the examples of the originary experience of the political, the living and doing of the political such was unknown to the

contemporaries of the Founding Fathers – but it inserts the new that becomes the ground of the future of that historical community, the future that no exercise in thinking and reckoning could have envisaged before the action took place.

In that sense, Arendt's concept of beginning can also be read as a precedent – as that which, by drawing on the energies of the past and the opportunities of change fallen into oblivion, steps out of the course of time and forces events in a different direction, though not simply as an unexpected stimulus but as a new foundation for the new. In this concept of political action as precedent, there blend the Heideggerian/Benjaminian seizure of the 'missed possibilities' of the past, Machiavellian moment of response to the workings of Fortuna in the present and Roman act of founding not the future but for the future.

Precisely at this point however, the point of the new inserted into the present to open up future, Arendt and Heidegger diverge. The new is what happens in Arendt's moment of beginning, the new *via* action is the contents of the Arendtian moment. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger relates resoluteness to action that responds to the situation: "Understanding the call, Dasein lets its ownmost self *take action in itself* in terms of its chosen potentiality-of-being." [1927/1996:288] But essential for bringing *Being and Time* into the context of Heidegger's late(r) works and understanding, paradoxically, both Arendt's closeness to and departure from Heidegger is the idea of 'action in itself.' What this action is, becomes clearer from the following: "Resolute, Dasein is already *acting*." [Heidegger, 1927/1996:300] Guignon interprets this as authentic action, which:

... calls for a clear-sighted sense both of one's indebtedness to the repeatable possibilities of history and of one's actions as woven into the 'mission' shared with a wider community. In Heidegger's account of authentic action, there is the suggestion that such action involves a break or a rift – a severing of ties with that crowd in order to take a *leap* into the future.[...] But it is important to keep un mind that, for Heidegger, authentic actions are still bound up with the shared undertakings of a historical community. [Dreyfuss and Hall, 1992:141]

The break, the recall of historical possibilities (Benjaminian *missed*), the response to the historical as opposed to merely the current situation of the community – all these notions communicate most closely with Arendt's concept of action as beginning, which, as argued, is always a precedent, that which in the present opens to the future by responding to the past. Although, as it has been argued, Arendt is indebted to Machiavelli for the idea of *virtù*, Arendtian actor does more than responding to the whirls of Fortuna, which always is a matter of the current situation, of the present. Heidegger and Arendt both recognize

that the fabric of the present is woven of that that has been, which has to be recognized in the present.

Yet the *Augenblick* only holds itself to the open, where the emphasis is not on *holding* as halting, the absence of action but on the *open*, which means nothing else but taking up its groundlessness, the nullity of existence that has no essence and *is* through the rush to its own annihilation, spends itself; to be held in the open is not to cover up this nullity but also to uncover the possibilities of existence hidden by the everyday forgetting of one's own rush into death: "Authentic disclosedness, in other words, neither removes itself from its 'there' nor creates a world of its own; rather, it is a mode of activity and understanding that breathes new life into the familiar." [Villa, 1996:132] Heidegger therefore speaks of 'mode of activity' in relation to the content of *Augenblick* but the verbs that he uses in describing what fills this moment are all suggestive of passivity in the sense of immobility - *holding, halting, being held*. Namely, Heidegger insists that the *Augenblick* is not a site of happening, in a sense, it is more about ad-vent than event:

In resoluteness, the present is not only brought back from the dispersion in what is taken care of nearest at hand, but is held in the future and having-been. 'In the Moment' nothing can happen, but as an authentic present it lets us *encounter for the first time* what can be "in a time" as something at hand or objectively present. [1927/1996:337]

It is not to say that Heidegger's moment is not about rupturous, even absolute change but it seems that it all about a peculiar change entering *Dasein*, not the world, as P. Poellner explains: "... an absolute discontinuity, the *Augenblick*, in which the world *as a whole* changes for *Dasein*, while nothing *within* the world has changed at all." [Friese, 2001:70] *Dasein* therefore does not depart from the world, does not abandon its inauthentic existence yet, from *Augenblick*, the world emerges intact.¹³⁹

The problem arises in trying to reconcile this absence of change in the world with what seemed to have been Heidegger's understanding of

¹³⁹ It may seem that the words of Karl Jaspers best bridge the gap between the two lines of thought, Arendt's and Heidegger's, bringing together moment of action and moment of vision: "Where a development in time seems to have given us possession of it, all can still be betrayed in a moment. Conversely, where a man's past seems to be mere factuality, weighing him down under endless contingencies to the point of annihilation, he can nevertheless at any moment being as it were from the beginning through sudden awareness of the unconditional." [1951/2003:58] While these words testify to the freedom of man against the time flow and continuum of events, the statement is nevertheless strongly tilted towards the remaining metaphysical and theological traces in philosophy through the reference to the unconditional and the vision, suggesting something alien to both Heidegger and Arendt - the Being behind existence as an entity, as something that is independent of existence, graspable as other than existence and attributed to it.

retrieving "in order to transform it into a beginning."¹⁴⁰ What is then the activity that Heidegger speaks of in *Being and Time* where summoning of Dasein to its true potential is read as acting by Dasein? It is "to hear the call authentically means to bring oneself to factual action." [1927/1996:294] The answer lies in Heidegger's understanding of activity. Already in this early work, there is the intuition that Heidegger will eventually move towards understanding of thinking itself as acting: "Resolute, Dasein is already in *acting*. We are purposely avoiding the term 'action.' For in the first place, it would have to be so broadly conceived that activity also encompasses the passivity of resistance." [1927/1996:300]

As Arendt argues in her last completed work, Heidegger of the *Being and Time* thus intuits his later connection between thinking and thanking or thinking as thanking: "a thinking that expresses gratitude that the 'naked That' has been given at all." [LM/II:185] The being that thinks is a being indebted for its own, given existence and in thinking, it is thanking for being given at all. The climax of Dasein's response to the call therefore becomes not acting in full consciousness of its own most possibilities as a thrown and finite being-in-the-world. What Dasein *does* is to gratefully think of the Being: "That the attitude of man, confronted with Being, should be *thanking* can be seen as a variant of Plato's *thaumazein*, the beginning principle of philosophy." [LM/II:185]

Heidegger's understanding of thinking as activity at the core of his notion of *Augenblick* leads Arendt to conclude that, in his project of overcoming metaphysics, Heidegger actually returns to the ideal of Platonic philosophers, the silence of vision and the silence in vision. Heidegger's project of overcoming the metaphysical tradition turns out to be the reversal into tradition, which however seems to have been inevitable from the moment Heidegger asked the question of the meaning of Dasein as the question of Being.

The question remains however why Heidegger, albeit concerned with understanding being from within existence that always is in becoming therefore changing, does not grasp freedom of man in terms of acting. This problem can be approached from more than one angle in Heidegger's work. One significant cue is found in the mode of temporality wherefrom the temporalization of *Augenblick* originates. The *Augenblick* temporalizes itself out of future - its source lies in the finite future of Dasein. The moment of beginning emerges from the present. In Arendt's work on action, future does not speak to the present nor is the future bespoken to the present, it must rather be the present to speak *into* the future, which is the proper meaning of the already analysed concept of promise. Nothing can be derived from future but future itself has to rely on the present to make it, the future, be.

¹⁴⁰ Guignon analyzes the quote from Heidegger's *Introduction to Metaphysics* (1935) which suggests that retrieval is not simply a reinterpretation but a creative interpretation. [Dreyfuss and Hall, 1992:138-139]

This however does not mean that the present as Arendt conceives of it is always here/there and the moment is placed within the present that always is already there. This metaphysical notion of the present *present* is alien to Arendt's understanding of the human condition as insertion between past and future.

Arendtian present as the space between past and future is the fighting ground¹⁴¹ that, without man, would erode under the tide of both past and future, there would be no marked now, only a flow of future into the past. The present or this now in between is presented only through the battle of man to keep the past and the future apart in order to insert his own presence into the time-flow. Man's insertion is the proper occupation of the space between the no longer and the not yet not as something that is present, always there, available, for human beings, but that emerges only through the break. The present is the mode of temporality where action does not occur but, as Arendt understands it, it is itself brought about by human action. Arendtian present is the ground to be won.

Existentially, the present is the insertion of man's presence between two absences, the before-birth and the after-death. As an insertion, it interrupts the automatism of flow between past and future in denial of all automatism. Since man is to be understood as such an interruptive insertion herself, the primordial temporality, the temporality through which human being means, for Arendt is therefore not one of the modes of chronological temporality but the very interruption as such in the form of beginning. Yet in the form of beginning, interruption is more than just an interruption: it is the very discontinuous of the temporal continuum wherefrom the continuity unfolds. The present or the in-between is thus the playground of possibilities for men. In that, the present itself is only a possibility, not something given, not Hegel's privileged now that is unconditionally always there and which Heidegger appropriates to criticize the predominance of the present in philosophy.

After the interruption, that can take place only between past and future, as the past and the future do not lend themselves to human intervention, nothing remains the same. Through the present that appears in action man touches the past and the future of that present, and as the one is retold and the other foretold, the flow is no longer directed from the past towards the future or from the future to the past, but they both stream from the present of the human action, which is the source of the meaning. If however action in the present is grounded ultimately in the future and that future is finite, closed, done, [Heidegger, 1927/1996:330] stretching itself not forward but back, into the past, then the action can only be affirmative of what is revealed as future – sources of the new are sealed by this closed future.

¹⁴¹ Arendt's concept of the present is best developed in the *Preface* to BPF.

In the concept of beginning Arendt thus captures the paradox of existence, of *ex-sistere* as standing in appearance, emerging and becoming which involves the duration of this becoming as mode of being, the continuity of the rupture to continuity. The underpinning of Arendt's political conceptualization of action as beginning is here revealed as existential.

The question must finally be asked: why cannot Heidegger see the temporal mode of present as anything but the present, confined to the limits of the given? The answer reaches to Heidegger's most fundamental ontological proposition, his understanding of Dasein: for Heidegger, Dasein is a being-IN-the-world. Understanding man through beginning, however, Arendt can offer her own 'fundamental ontological' proposition, to use Heidegger's philosophical language although counter-intuitively to Arendt's own idiom. Arendt's proposition is that of a man as a being-TO-the-world that never ceases to bring new into the world, just as his own bare appearance in the world has been an absolute novelty. Namely, in the concept of man as beginning, Arendt offers a reinterpretation of Dasein as a being-in-the-world, arguing that though man is in the world, he is so in the particular way that reflects the gift of freedom bestowed upon him through birth - "by the *initium* man is insofar as he is an acting being" [BPF, 170], therefore changing, for in action "a We is always engaged in changing our common world." [LM/II:200] Freedom thus must be understood not as the condition of openness but as the act of man. By contrast to Heidegger who "locates individuality, and indeed freedom, on the level of being, Arendt locates these notions on the level of action." [Vetlesen, 2006:76]

In other words, Heidegger's concept of time as self-affecting of mind, which retains the seed of his Kantian deliberations, fails to capture the fundament of man's existence: man appears among others and affects the world before her mind can affect itself. Primordially does not lie in the mind but in the world, which however does not suggest that time is 'objective' but that time cannot be equated either with 'self' or the world but only with their relating to each other, with man as being-to-the world that generates time through this being-to.

The argument in Chapter 6 suggested how it was possible for Arendt to grasp this inescapability of acting in human condition: it is the concept of time not as "transcendental subjectivity [which] transcends itself in order to create the possibility of the objectifying encounter, the opening up towards other entities" [Bourdieu, 1991:61] but as a continuum broken by human appearance, or rather - the continuum created only by the interruption which transforms the sheer shapeless fluidity of course into past and future, broken and at the same time linked by the present as interruption, the present not as a tyrannical now but as the ground beaten by acting of men.

Although perhaps of all Heidegger's disciples, she is most distant to the kind of inquiry that Heidegger considered properly philosophical, that is - ontological, Arendt develops a project that offers a movement beyond

metaphysics, thus the project that was Heidegger's principal philosophical ambition. Namely, Arendt's work constitutes a reconstruction of philosophy beyond metaphysics, a reconstruction grounded in the political as the ontological – not in the ontological as the political.¹⁴²

The inquiry of political ontology is not an inquiry into the totality. It was the truly problematic problem for philosophy, as Heidegger did and taught it, to reduce the question of human freedom to substantives and totality, failing to see that freedom is not the relatedness as a static property or an attribute which 'belongs' to beings, and so can only be investigated in relating, not in solid and unmovable essences. Political ontology as understood and put forth here thus never asks 'what is...' questions. Not through deconstruction therefore but only through the dislocation of questions can philosophy leave the confines of metaphysics.

¹⁴² The question that cannot be raised here is the question whether one ought to substitute political philosophy here with practical philosophy in general. Following Arendt's understanding of human existence would however suggest the contrary. Namely, what Arendt is saying is that fundamental to *being in* and *being to* the world, which is defining of being as human being, is the political, not the ethical. This argument could be confronted with Nancy's understanding of existence, which ex-ists insofar it cannot be but projected outwards: unlike Being, there is no being, no existant in concealment from this outwardness. In other words, the ethical, the relation to the Other which is inclining, is already in the being "whose exemplary reality is that of 'my' face always exposed to others... never facing myself." [Nancy, 1991/2004:XXXVIII] In that sense, the ethical is necessarily there before the political although Nancy reads the above as "the archi-original impossibility of Narcissus that opens straightaway onto the possibility of the political." Nancy thus points to the way of understanding the political as contained in the inevitable exposure to the other, as always there.

But in Arendt's thought the political is not contained in being-in-common but in acting-in-common. While this mediated presencing, through alterity, invests in the moment of political community the ethical dimension, going outside itself, being-towards the other, it conceals a certain necessity in the ethical, which distinguishes it from the political. The ethical can be both passive and active, one always stands in relation to others, one *is* to others, whereas the political is emergence from this necessity of being to others, towards the freedom of acting this relation out. In that sense, even non-ethical is ethical insofar it is tied to the inescapable exposure to the Other even of the one who murders the Other, the ethical is *necessarily*, whereas the non-political can never subsumed under the political but the political emerges only if there is (also) the possibility of non-political. The political is that which happens when there is a possibility of both non-political and political, in that friction which is an opening towards a decision towards taking up the being-in-common, taking up of existence in-common without entrapment into either sovereignty of autonomous individual or necessity of community. In other words, the political is about freedom, which defines human existence.

**Chapter Seven:
TOWARDS A DIFFERENT PHILOSOPHY**

What pervades Arendt's entire project is the comprehension that the metaphysical tradition can be overcome only through displacement of the fundamental philosophical questions, not through the reconstruction of those questions within the metaphysical framework, which is how Heidegger approached the problem. The very act of asking the question that involves *is* implies acceptance of the metaphysical tradition which violates or overlooks the fundamental fact of human condition upon which Arendt bases her project: before man *is*, she *is-to-the-world*, every being as human is already and always being-to.

It follows thereof that the fundamental questions of the human condition are the questions of the doing. As Arendt defines it in the *Human Condition*, the demand upon thinking is to "think what we are doing." This question formulated in the present continuous tense, suggestive of now and not a standing, eternal now, but a specific historical now of the specific, historical we who are doing, contrasts sharply with Heidegger's question of the Being of the being. Heidegger's question, though aware of the conspicuous presence of *is*, remains trapped within that *is*, the constant, substantive presence of metaphysics. Following the implications of Arendt's understanding through, an inquiry into meaning must be based on the acceptance that "you begin to experience meaning less as something to be discovered and more as an *investment* you make in selective activities and events." [Connolly, 2002:168]

In a sense therefore, the departure point for Heidegger's and Arendt's inquiries is the same – in Heidegger's words, "To the things themselves!" Both share the idea of the fundamental, and central, question of philosophy: freedom, and freedom which is manifested in human engagement with the world. Heidegger and Arendt also share the ontological framework wherefrom they read the meaning of man or, closer to Arendt's language, the meaning of being in human condition, which is time.

But there Heidegger's and Arendt's inquiries part ways. Heidegger's main preoccupation is the Being, of which Dasein or human existence is only one medium of unconcealment (and concealment). Even if at the beginning of his philosophical work, Heidegger poses the question from the position of Dasein, his later turn leads him to asking the question from the Being itself. In harmony with his interest in Eastern philosophies, visible particularly in his late dialogues on language and thinking, Heidegger's philosophy begins to distance itself from European philosophy just as Eastern painting distinguishes itself from European.

The figure of man assumes its natural dimensions against other entities that populate the world and nature, the centrality of his figure abandoned or at least disturbed.

From the very beginning of his inquiry into possible thinking beyond metaphysics, Heidegger has problematized the 'is-ness' of Being, or the understanding of the Being of beings in terms of the presentness such as that of the beings as entities or occurrences of the world. The painstaking effort to remove his thinking from the metaphysical language of the traditional thinking of the Being in terms of being, is nowhere so evident as in Heidegger's *Dialogue on Language*, [1959/1982] where through the recourse to Japanese, the language as remote as possible from "our Western languages [that] are languages of metaphysical thinking," [Heidegger, 1957/2002:73] Heidegger seeks to remove himself from the trap of metaphysics.

In the *Discourse on Thinking* Heidegger takes on the role of the Teacher, the role which also pervades the part of Inquirer in the *Dialogue on Language* where he may asking questions but is effectively a mentor in the broader context of the venture towards a different language just as in the *Discourse* he leads on the path to new thinking. It is of course one and the same project of transcending representation. At the same time and despite his role of the one who has stepped ahead, the guide, Heidegger appears as profoundly bewildered himself by that he can name yet not describe, that is - the openness or the region in which every being is encountered. [Heidegger, 1959/1966:67]

Following Heidegger's intuition in exploring a different language, Derrida explores the potentialities of *Es gibt*, [Derrida, 1992:19-22] as distinct to the *there is*, relating the former to giving not in the sense of givenness, that is - the present as conditioning and determining, but in the sense of *gift*. Leaving aside the course of Derrida's entire inquiry, of which this is only a fragment, it should be observed that Derrida's emphasis of *Es gibt* echoes Heidegger's late attempt at conceptualizing the openness or the 'region' which is letting-be, which gives being and time to each other in a way that does not *present* them in the metaphysical sense, does not join them to the beings proper or beings present. This giving is *Ereignis* or event or the event of appropriation, which indicates that Heidegger has never abandoned his original project of overcoming the thinking in terms of presence, of being. To think the being as coming from event is the culmination of that project. There is no event, event only comes.

One could ask, whether it is not that in this ontological understanding of freedom as letting beings be by seeking to see them, seeking to allow them to appear for what they are, Heidegger is not - intentionally or unintentionally - laying the ground for practical freedom such is exercised in judgment, as Arendt conceptualizes it, freedom to free the beings of the world to themselves, in the sense of liberating their meaning as opposed to their sheer being. In its practical interpretation, this freedom becomes self-responsibility, which relates to Heidegger's

concept of authenticity as taking up of one's existence in what is most its own.

But it is clear from these Heidegger's late 'communings' that *Ereignis* although demanding to be thought as coming, happening, is not an event in the sense of actuality. Its happening happens through thinking that is waiting in releasement. Releasement must be understood as 'higher acting' – higher than "found in all the actions within the world and in the machinations of all mankind... yet no activity." [1959/1966:61] What Heidegger through the notion of action without activity seeks to think is the action unrelated to will – a problem that for Hannah Arendt's explorations was no less important. As Arendt noted in her final critical interpretation of Heidegger's project, Heidegger's flight from will, which assumes the subject's grip of the world as an object, leads him to the absolute denial of will.

Why is will so problematic for Heidegger? Arendt contends that "[i]n Heidegger's understanding, the will to rule and to dominate is a kind of original sin." [LM/II:173] For Heidegger after the 'turn', willing belongs to the same domain as thinking predicated on representation. It is the domain of Subject, which Heidegger finally came to equate with the domain of unfreedom and to contrast with the region wherefrom the Being is coming. The representational thinking captures and imposes its schemes of values on the world, objectifying in order to grasp of the subject. Willing projects, rules, commands, imposes, denying in actuality and not only in conceptualization the authentic, immediate beingness of beings as they are, without the Subject. The world and the Being are then in the power of the all-powerful Subject, which must be understood as the fundamental metaphysical category. The Subject embodies the absolute and ultimate principle of valuing all that is, in denial of freedom of all other beings to be let to be: "Every valuing, even where it values positively, is a subjectivizing. It does not let beings: be. Rather, valuing lets beings: be valid – solely as the objects of its doing." [1993:251]

In order to pursue further his project of asking the question of the meaning of Being, Heidegger has therefore finally abandoned the way of thinking beyond metaphysics through thinking man as the only being that can ask this question, finding that man asking the question of the Being can only be 'thrown back upon himself' to ask what he himself is. [LM/II:173] Arendt's recapitulation of the movement of Heidegger's inquiry captures the essence of the much discussed turn in his work. Asking the question of the Being thereof becomes impossible for Heidegger from within the language of the subject or the self. The Being must be allowed to come forth and be listened to.¹⁴³

¹⁴³ The quoted Arendt's recapitulation runs directly against not so infrequent criticism of Heidegger's work, and also against the distinction between his work and her thought, on the ground of solipsism in the core of this philosophy, "the fundamental solipsism entailed in the Heideggerian notion of *praxis* as being-in-the-world." Taminaux, 1997:14.

For that, thinking must humble itself by abandoning its representational frameworks, in order to return to the "region, an enchanted region where everything belonging there returns to that in which it rests." [Heidegger, 1959/1966:65] The region is equated with openness that frees all beings to themselves and to think from within the region is not to present that which is thought but to let it come to the thought. To think in affirmation of this openness, which is not a locus or an occurrence/entity but a sheer event of opening and offering the being, a being itself to the world, means to take the path towards overcoming of the finitude of man, the finitude understood here not in terms of death but in terms of the deficiency of man as the subject.

Thinking in that sense situates itself "in the region [where] everything is in the best order only if it has been no one's doing." Heidegger, 1959/1966:71] The region of no-one's doing means the region beyond the subject's intervention and interference with beingness of other beings. It is the region of humbleness of thinking and philosophy that could possibly spring forth, of which Heidegger is by no means certain, but should this philosophy happen – it would renounce all arrogance of capturing the world and the Being.

To think the Being is therefore to thank in recognition of thrownness and indebtedness for existence. Thinking then is not even the inner dialogue between the I and the self, as Arendt understands thinking, but only the silent call to which Dasein should respond by silence. [Heidegger, 1927/1996:296] So even that inner movement, of thoughts, is halted in the moment of call, as Arendt observes [LM/II:185], in receiving the Being. The being that is thrown into the world remains therefore chained to its givenness that it can only be aware of but never change, it is given itself and it is given the call to think itself and that which surrounds it.

Heidegger himself has never explored the implications of this thought or thinking for practical philosophy or *praxis* in general. He explicitly renounced any such dimension of philosophy in the much quoted interview to *Der Spiegel*. Yet Heidegger's fundamental ontology appears to converse with the experience of the world that had gone through the horrors of the Second World War. That at least can be deduced from a well-argued interpretation put forth by Caputo in his attempt to read a different. Non-metaphysical philosophy from the tradition of hermeneutics derived from the works of Kierkegaard, Heidegger and Derrida as representatives of radical hermeneutics.

Namely, contrary to Lyotard's critique of Heidegger's metaphysical forgetting of 'jews,' of that ungraspable for all logos, Heidegger's concept of *Gelassenheit* is rooted in the profound understanding of human finitude, the inability to comprehend without violating. In that sense, it is related to the Kantian understanding of finitude – that man can know only indirectly as the one who does not create what is given to his intuition. But it runs to even more tragic depth, that this

mediated cognition always necessarily violates the Being of beings, molding the world to the shape of the subject's consciousness.

Only a touch upon these observations can be incorporated into this discussion but a touch that overrides in importance much of what has been said hitherto insofar it allows a privileged sighting of Heidegger's enterprise, the sighting similar in effect to the passage of the ray of light through dense mass of dark waters. *Gelassenheit* or the final rejection of the ruling subjectivity that objectifies existence of all beings, the world, things and creatures alike (in other words, all that is other than the subject itself) seems to nourish the potential for the political and the ethical of freedom as letting-be, of being free by allowing freedom through releasement. This new space of freedom emerges from "a mysterious region where there is nothing for which to be answerable." [Heidegger, 1959/1966:71]

Gelassenheit thus becomes a move without move, out of the entrapment of human existence which exists not only by turning outward, exposing, 'being-outside-itself' [Nancy, 1991/2004:24] but at the same time drawing that outside inwards, working it like clay to appropriate it for the finite being. Except that the outside is not clay but has a being independent of human intervention and hence occluded or silenced through that intervention. *Gelassenheit* or letting-be is thus a philosophical effort of retreating from the metaphysical objectification the world and the beings, reducing the dominion of consciousness over the world and admitting the limitedness of the consciousness, while developing the idea of existence as openness, in the open and through openness. It involves listening to the Being of beings and not their manufacturing.

In that sense, Heidegger clears the path for post-modern or other-than-modern practical philosophy, abandoning the effort to subjugate and control, to understand by fabricating - tools or concepts. Caputo in his reconstructive interpretation of hermeneutics recognizes in this Heidegger's 'keeping in indefiniteness' the possibility of philosophy beyond decision or, in Derrida's words, beyond active and passive. [1982:9] Heidegger moving beyond his own early work thus moves beyond the nihilistic denial, of which Bourdieu accuses him in the attempt to demask political tendencies of Heidegger's ontology, [1991:33] towards the absolute affirmation of the Being as the mode of being, not as a resolute decision.

This reading of Heidegger would thus suggest that Arendt's project is a belated and even contradictory exercise in the revival of modernism. One could then read from Arendt's work modernist tendencies of new beginning [Pulkkinen, 2003:216] generated by the perilous illusion of possibility of beginning anew. The peril arises from the assumed "slogan of the general economy that governs hell by imposing the rule of forgetting and turning the spirit exclusively, foreclosingly, toward the future." There is a possibility of the "always new because always forgotten." [Lyotard, 1990:47-48]

Is then Heidegger offering a fundamental ontology attuned to the only possibility of *praxis* in the world after Auschwitz: uncovering the Being not through any act of subject, but through Being uncovering itself? [Gumbrecht, 1997:451]

One could engage in a more melancholic reading of Arendt, and justifications of such reading would abound. There is unmistakably a more tragic Arendt, such as portrayed by Dana Villa, Arendt who writes the tragic after-thoughts of the history of failed or forgotten 'spaces of freedom' against the reign of inertia, unfreedom, terror and fear in our common spaces. Through this more melancholic reading the central notion of Arendt's work, action appears as not much more than balancing in a void - impossible activity in rejection of its own impossibility.

There is however another angle of reading Arendt's project. In his attempt to humble thinking and the thinker and allow the event of freedom, Heidegger seems to be blinded to the implication of arrogance of the philosopher who is the listener of the Being. Arendt argues that however asked, the question of Being is grounded in the notion of the 'invisible hand' behind the chaotic trails of human doing and the presence of the hand explains and moves what otherwise would be an unintelligible whirl of unconnected events: " 'Being's history' secretly inspires and guides what happens on the surface..." [LM/II:186] The meaning is therefore revealed to the thinker and it is acted out only insofar thinking is an activity: "there is a somebody who *acts out* the hidden meaning of Being and thus provides the disastrous course of events with a counter-current of wholesomeness... bestows meaning on what factually, but in itself meaninglessly and contingently *is*." [LM/II:187] To be authentic and acknowledge the ontological indebtedness therefore means to listen to the Being. Beings are guided by the Being, not only if they turn towards it but even if turning away from it. To the Being, there is no change, it is either concealed or revealed, negated or affirmed, but never is it different.

In that sense, Arendt's critical analysis of the place of beings in the world of which the meaning is the Being therefore exposes Heidegger's overall project of fundamental ontology as a return to Platonic philosophy, reversal into the metaphysics of Being that philosopher nears only in contemplation, by transcending the world and 'taking on the colour of the dead.' As Arendt interprets Heidegger's final philosophical movement - once again in the history of philosophy: "[t]o act is to err, to go astray." [LM/II:194]

This criticism as presented by Arendt is based on Arendt's problematization of the traditional task of philosophy and philosophers but here it receives more specific and tangible contours. Arendt's work as a whole suggests that Heidegger's fundamental ontology seeks to conceal and thus negate the defining paradox of human condition, which resists capture in Heidegger's notion of openness. The 'keeping in

indefiniteness' may be a flight from the overpowerful subject-agent and the dominating representation by Dasein that occludes the Being, but Arendt's project testifies to her deep understanding of human existence as being about deciding, discriminating, distinguishing, cutting, and being responsible for it all – and thereof the political emerges. Gravity and ambiguity of decision is greater than the gravity of open abyss, on which Caputo's interpretation is centred. Political philosophy and the political itself must maintain themselves always in the play between the abyss and decision, as does human existence. The real, irremediable distortion of our existence lies thus in decision and action, not in the undecidability of waiting in openness.

Man in Arendt's understanding can never escape his own intervention as man's arrival into this world is already inevitably disruption and interruption. The disruption ends and the disruptiveness of existence is overcome only in death which can be read not as the abandonment of the world but its absolute acceptance and renouncement of intervention. But to the existence of human being, there can be no consolation in openness as openness is tragically foreclosed for human existence. As Arendt, understands existence, there can never been the infinity of openness, only the infinity of always beginning, closing off (other possible beginnings) and opening up (of one possible course) at the same time.

In other words, Arendt captures the defining ambiguity of human being – by virtue of man's appearance in the world, the insertion that is immediately also an intervention and interference with the ways of the world, man *does* and leaves the world changed, man cannot *just be* in the world and wait for the Being to come forth. Man is a disruption and interruption to the world and there can be no remedy to this condition, there can only be a response to it – in continuation of responsive and responsible doing, and this is the subtlety that Arendt's thought captures – the pointlessness of delusion that man – the intrusion and intruder as one is – can be transformed into a silent listener.

Thus change to the world is the content of Arendtian moment of action, and this change is neither in awareness nor in mere reinterpretation of the existing but in the appearance of something entirely new. Man may be thrown into the world but as such, the appearance of man never leaves the world unchanged, through this throw-in, something is always done to the world. This doing-to-the-world is something that man has the capacity to exert again and again, not in the sense of mere taking care of things in the world but by directly intervening into the world to change it. The thrownness into the world is thus at the same time thrownness into freedom to act and change.

The meaning and significance of Arendt's contribution to a different philosophy therefore is this retrieval of *praxis* not as mere doing, relating, opening but all that with the preposition *to*, the preposition that completes the mosaic of the meaning of acting as being. While her connection to existentialism as philosophy of relating and acting as

opposed to being cannot be overlooked, Arendt also moves beyond existentialism – and one would be tempted here to explore further her debt to Marx which has never been properly understood and acknowledged – precisely through this preposition *to*, which locks giving and receiving ends in the incessant birth of the new. Ontology thus, if it is to retain meaning for the world, receives the direction of its enquiries not from substantives but from this relational word, the preposition that marks existence not only as being or as being-in or being-with but as being-to which ties together all those through the surplus of the new that springs from that tie.

It could be argued however that this opening to the new project of philosophy through political philosophy, even if it succeeds in resuscitation of philosophy, exhausts the strength of political philosophy. Political philosophy thus undergoes a metamorphosis, analogous to that Kafkian - of a man into an insect with a human confined in it. The metamorphosis turns it into a grotesque, dysfunctional, neither/nor *quasi-modo* philosophical endeavour, with a hard shell under which ontology remains hidden though. Such political philosophy then overcomes nothing and moreover, it is drained of its living essence that is precisely about drawing a plan for the political edifice.

All of Arendt's *opus* however stands as a caveat against a political philosophy that would do the political on behalf of political actors. The construction of political edifice is the task of political doing, not of political philosophy, or else there will remain no space, which is the space of freedom, for erecting it. The task of political philosophy then must be in constantly retrieving the fabric of this political doing anew, by understanding it, questioning, exploring, challenging, in the encounter with the experience of its here and now as well as other heres and other nows. Political philosophy cannot do the work for or of politics. It can only seek to incessantly remind the political of its fundamental rootedness in being as human that is being-to-the-world and to understand what this rootedness means for the political.

It may seem that this understanding of man as a being-to-the-world relates Arendt to the French existentialists and, as Canovan observes, brings her closer to them than to either of her teachers, Heidegger or Jaspers. [1995:263] Namely, confronted with absurdity of human existence, the French Existentialists seek the way out through the leap into action: answers to questions posed by the world and life to man cannot be found in philosophic speculations but only through the 'leap' into action whereof salvation will come. [EIU:437-438]

However, Arendt's work intuits that philosophy is not doomed and whatever used to be the matter of philosophy need be dislocated into politics but that philosophy can be meaningful again, in its questions as in its answers, if it grounds its pursuits anew in the conception of man as a being of action and freedom in the world.

By conceiving of man as a being-to-the-world, Arendt thus sets philosophy as a project on an entirely new track towards overcoming of metaphysical tradition. In doing so, Arendt has drawn on Heidegger's project insofar she has engaged in the dialogue with philosophical tradition, seeking to take up its silenced potentials. As Heidegger, Arendt therefore also asks the 'question never asked,' the question of meaning of existence in human condition. In Heidegger's understanding of the resolute Dasein through taking up of the given and thrown existence, Arendt finds the ground to think freedom from givenness within the very givenness itself. This notion of existence as both given and resisting givenness is Arendt's greatest debt to Heidegger's thought, and it is fundamental for both political and philosophical planes of her project. But in reading the meaning of man from this freedom, Arendt abandons the metaphysical ontology as the framework wherein to ask this question. Namely, if man is to be understood through freedom to act, then the question of the meaning of man's being cannot be asked within ontology but within the framework of the philosophy that seeks to understand human action in plurality of existents in the world - following Arendt's intuitions, this can be only political ontology.

What Remains?

When asked "*What remains?*" in an interview, Arendt replied: "The language remains." [PHA, 12] The context of this question, as of its answer, was very much different to the context in which it is asked here and now. Hannah Arendt was asked by G. Gauss what remains both after the collapse of Europe as it was before the Final Solution and from Europe as it was in its days of glory. To ask what remains after that collapse, when an abyss opened as Arendt describes it, is not like asking what one was able to save from one's burning house. It is rather the question of what one allowed to remain, to survive the collapse and outlive it – unlike many people whom that and then Europe dragged with it to the bottom of the abyss. Ultimately, what could have been allowed to continue relating one to that which engendered such absolute, total, irremediable catastrophe?

The circumstances in which the question above is asked here are not even remotely that dramatic. They are the circumstances of a work coming to an end, as envisaged. At the same time, they are also the circumstances of the work ending with its project remaining open or opening up through the very ending of the work, the work thus that is only now waking up to its own image in the mirror – an image of a rather bushy, untrimmed project that spills over its own borders. But in the answer that Arendt gave - language remains, there is hidden an intuition that what is allowed to live on must not be a relic or a remainder or even only reminder, as a souvenir, but something living of itself, something that, though it lived once and though that once gave birth to its own destruction, can go on living. The principle behind Arendt's answer must have guided her in writing on those thought-fragments that years on can be recovered from the depths of history, not because they were resistant to the passage of time but because they gave themselves to change, the 'sea-change', which brought out of them the living essence. [MDT, 206] Ultimately, that is the principle that has guided Arendt throughout her thinking and writing: the principle of *arche* or beginning never does end but lives on in whatever unfolds from it, preserved just because it changes.

In that sense, to ask *what remains?* at this point of a work drawing to a close should therefore not be guided by the urge to wrap up, to tie the loose ends and shape a nicely rounded whole but by the principle of *arche* – what remains, what unfolds from here, what lives on, what should be allowed to live on? And better still, what *ought* to live on?

The preceding chapters have been written in the intention to uncover what from Arendt's work ought to remain for philosophy as a whole. Nevertheless Hannah Arendt has always been and probably will continue to be an odd reference in philosophy proper. This manuscript may have offered some openings towards a different understanding of her work and its position in philosophy but it has not dispelled numerous doubts and suspicions: Arendt will remain a political thinker or, as she has been referred to here at times, a thinker of the political. Thus, while this work has been dedicated to unearthing the philosophical layer of Arendt's thought, I owe to Arendt as the source of this manuscript, to revisit, at least in these final lines, what has been the force behind her life-time project in thinking, its strongest current - the concern with the world, with what we are doing to it and what we can do to it.

In her thinking, in this concern with the world, Arendt is one of those rare political thinkers who evades "the paradoxical position of telling people unchangeable truths about what they are doing, in hopes of getting them to change what they are doing." [Pitkin, 1998:242] Thus her concern with the world is not necessarily framed as a tight theoretical construction around which concrete political projects should be built. Throughout it remains a reading of meanings, the incessant narrating that pervades all of her writings, the practice of telling stories behind ideas, reawakening the living substance of conceptual language, which marks her writings out in all of (traditional) philosophy, as those of an intruder, inspiring yet the intruder nevertheless.

If the same is attempted with this manuscript, if I were to read this exercise in philosophy through Arendtian lens, what would I be able to retrieve from it for the living in the world, not in any prescriptive sense but in the sense of meaning, and meaning not as *What does it mean?*¹⁴⁴ but: *What does it mean to us, for us as beings who are to the world, or whose presence is in doing that necessarily changes the world?*

The same that was observed here for Arendt's writings, that the philosophical and the political are constantly interlaced all throughout her project, could also be said of this work. It is a composition of two intertwining themes, the political and the philosophical, where the inquiry into the source of political action in a somewhat serendipitous manner led to political ontology as a way to assert ontology and philosophy beyond seemingly all-encompassing metaphysical horizon. Delving into the investigation of mind brought to light the workings of a mental power to call forth the new, the radically and absolutely

¹⁴⁴ This question of meaning as such is that which Derrida condemns to metaphysical framework: "every time that a question of *meaning* is posed, it must be posed within the closure of metaphysics. To put it summarily, one seeks in vain to extract the question of meaning (the meaning of time, or anything else) as such from metaphysics..." [1982:51] Dislocating meaning from metaphysics is precisely what Arendt's political ontology offers as all meanings are followed by the preposition *to*, the preposition that places meaning in the specific here and now and relates it to the question-asking agent.

different from the existing, without at the same time denying the existing. Recognizing this originary potential of the mental power of imagination suggested the possibility of different ontological knowledge, the knowledge in bringing of the new, at the philosophical plane of this project, inspiring thus the effort at explicating a fundamental bond between ontology, as inquiry into meaning, and *praxis* or acting as the source of newness in the world, in other words – the political.

If this work however were to take a different route at that point, to take a more Arendtian route, as had been envisaged in its early days, the inquiry would have been directed into the political as sourced by imagination, to the possibility of studying the political less as a science and more as narration, such as Arendt approached it. Namely, if imagination is the source of political agency, scientific explanatory theories born within rationalist framework become insufficient in the collision with the offspring of the power so uncontrollable, unlawful, unpredictable such as imagination. On the other hand, this movement out of the borders of rationalism cannot seek refuge in voluntarism either, for imagination does not render itself, its untamed self, to the normative frameworks designed to guide the will. In other words, both the rationalist explanatory accounts and normative studies of the political prove inadequate in capturing the flow of action engendered by imagination, in rendering it meaningful.

What remains therefore is the practice of writing, pervading the classical thought of Cicero, Machiavelli, later Montesquieu, resurrected by Arendt, writing up of events in the midst of stories already written, with meaning of the former as of the latter occurring, an event in itself, between the written and the read, between the events originally captured by the story and those in which the reader is caught and that called forth the story to be retold. Finally also, meaning is enacted in-between all the other stories that will associate itself, unintentionally, on the spur of the moment, with the story read and the story in making, blend with them or touch with a spark only to part ways, like waves of meaning.

Should that route have been taken here, another story might have been allowed to emerge from behind the scene where I staged the dialogue between Arendt and Heidegger to emulate and perhaps also incarnate the dialogue between the political and the philosophical. The shadow of that story has more often than not fallen over these pages but the story has not been allowed out of the cobwebs of a personal history. That story, paradoxically as it is also personal, is one told many times and has taken many a historical shape. It is the story of how the power of human existence to bring the new into the world was silenced, incapacitated, and then degenerated into the force of violent submission of unique beings to homogenization, either as amorphous collective corps or as the amorphous pile of human corpses, or mostly – one and then the other. The particular story on these particular margins would have been the one of the Bosnian experience of the 1990s, the experience of the newness aborted and of the victorious inertia which

finally exploded in fear and violence and more fear. Thereof the question came – not how it happened, the story heard over and over again in diverse tonalities, but how the stories of inertia could (have) become stories of the new, of breaking through the ossified patterns, what it is of our political capacities that we retain in the moments of the collapsing world and in the moments of the political space suffocated between 'I' and those who define the world for that 'I.' That is the question that sends one to Arendt as the voice of such political moments and yet sends one also beyond Arendt, to claim that with the dissolution of the political space not all of our political potential is lost.

In that sense, perhaps, this entire story is hardly more than a beginning or a preface to itself.

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