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**POLIS-ING ENGLISH FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSES:**

THINKING WITH HANNAH ARENDT ABOUT

EDUCATION AND POLITICS

**Anthony Ernest Elloway**

Doctor of Education

The University of Edinburgh

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The sense of danger must not disappear:

The way is certainly both short and steep,

However gradual it looks from here;

Look if you like, but you will have to leap.

Extract from *Leap before you look* by W. H. Auden

# PRELIMINARIES

## ABSTRACT | LAY SUMMARY

*The aim of this thesis is to offer a re-reading of some aspects of my professional context, the teaching of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) at the University of Edinburgh, in light of my reading of the work of the twentieth-century political theorist Hannah Arendt. In considering the relevance of her work to EAP, I draw attention both to the uniqueness of her thinking on education and politics as well as to the uniqueness of her understanding of their relation to one another. While Arendt's ideas have not heretofore been discussed in reference to this field, I find in her work the resources to consider anew how and why EAP might have a role to play in the political education of English-learning international students.*

*The thesis proceeds on the basis of exploration (of the work of Arendt) and application (to the field of EAP). In the first chapter, I set out the three contexts for the writing of the thesis: my personal life and interests; the professional context of EAP; and my intellectual interest in Arendt. This is followed by an exploration over two chapters of some of the key ideas of Arendt, with Chapter 2 focusing on Arendt and education and Chapter 3 on Arendt and politics. In Chapter 4, I return to the subject of EAP and seek to apply to it some of these ideas.*

*My reconsideration of the pedagogic purposes of EAP results in an understanding of EAP that differs in significant ways from that articulated by the two main contemporary approaches to the subject (pragmatic EAP and critical EAP). I present EAP as a radical conservative endeavour that has a distinctively important role to play in the political education of its international participants. Implications for practice centre on the EAP classroom conceptualised as a kind of miniature polis for international students, that is, as an educative space for budding citizens to develop their political skills and abilities for possible future political participation beyond the classroom.*

## DECLARATION

*This thesis has been composed by me and is entirely my own work. It has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## ON STYLE

*Quotations from the works of Hannah Arendt retain without qualification her American spellings as well as the masculine nouns and pronouns she consistently used to refer to human beings.*

## SIGLA

For clarity and succinctness, abbreviations are used in the text when referencing works by Hannah Arendt. The major works and their abbreviations are listed below:

MAJOR WORKS BY HANNAH ARENDT REFERENCED IN TEXT	ABBREVIATION
<b>Between past and future: eight exercises in political thought</b> The crisis in education [CE]; The concept of history: ancient and modern [CH]; The crisis in culture: its social and its political significance [CC]; Tradition and the modern age [TMA]; Truth and politics [TP]; What is authority? [WIA]; What is freedom? [WF]	BPF
<b>Crises in the republic</b> On violence [OV]; Thoughts on politics and revolution: a commentary [TPR]	CR
<b>Eichmann in Jerusalem: a report on the banality of evil</b>	EJ
<b>Essays in understanding 1930-1954: formation, exile, and totalitarianism</b> Dedication to Karl Jaspers [DKJ]; The eggs speak up [ESU]; Understanding and politics (the difficulties of understanding) [UP]; 'What remains? The language remains': a conversation with Günter Gaus [WRLR]	EU
<b>The human condition</b>	HC
<b>Jewish writings</b>	JW
<b>Lectures on Kant's political philosophy</b>	LKPP
<b>The life of the mind</b>	LM
<b>Love and Saint Augustine</b>	LSA
<b>Men in dark times</b> Karl Jaspers: a laudatio [KJL]; On humanity in dark times: thoughts about Lessing [OHDT]; Preface [P]; Walter Benjamin: 1982-1940 [WB]	MDT
<b>On revolution</b>	OR
<b>The origins of totalitarianism</b>	OT
<b>The promise of politics</b> Socrates [S]	PP
<b>Responsibility and judgment</b> Thinking and moral consideration [TMC]	RJ
<b>Thinking without a banister: essays in understanding 1953-1975</b> Action and the 'pursuit of happiness' [APH]; Freedom and politics: a lecture [FP]; Hannah Arendt on Hannah Arendt [HAHA]; Labor, work, action [LWA]; On the human condition [OHC]; Public rights and private interests: a response to Charles Frankel [PRPI]	TWB

Accordingly, an in-text reference to the book *Between past and future: eight exercises in political thought* is cited as ([BPF] 2006); and an in-text reference to an essay in a book (for instance, *The crisis in education*) is cited as ([CE/BPF] 2006). Full details of these and other works are in the **BIBLIOGRAPHY**.

# INTRODUCTION

## INTRODUCTION

In this thesis, I have one eye on Hannah Arendt and the other on my professional field of English for Academic Purposes (EAP). What I do in this thesis is consider some of the ‘rich and strange’<sup>1</sup> ([WB/MDT] 1973, p.203) educational and political ideas of Arendt and specifically from my perspective as an EAP teaching fellow employed at English Language Education (ELE) at the University of Edinburgh. The aim of this thesis is simple: to explore in some detail aspects of Arendt’s work that may usefully contribute to a field that has not until now engaged with her thinking. In this reconsideration of my professional activity in light of reading Arendt, I am seeking to apprehend more fully the meaning of EAP (what *EAP practitioners* are doing) as well as my place within it (what *I* am doing). This thesis is my argument that aspects of EAP can be illuminated by a reading of her work.

To begin at the beginning: EAP is the specialist branch of English-language teaching concerned with preparing students to undertake university study, conduct research, or teach in English-medium contexts (JOHN FLOWERDEW AND MATTHEW PEACOCK, 2001); and Hannah Arendt (1906-1975), was one of the most influential political thinkers of the twentieth century. Though known principally at the time of her death for the controversial *Eichmann in Jerusalem*<sup>2</sup> and particularly for the ‘catchword of its title - “a report on the banality of evil”’ (SHOSHANA FELMAN,

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<sup>1</sup> Arendt uses the phrase (originally from Shakespeare’s *The tempest*) in reference to the collector and ‘pearl diver’ Walter Benjamin (1892-1940). The full passage cited by Arendt reads: ‘Full fathom five thy father lies / Of his bones are coral made. / Those are pearls that were his eyes. / Nothing of him that doth fade / But doth suffer a sea-change / Into something rich and strange’ ([WB/MDT] 1973, p.190). See also below (PAGE 15).

<sup>2</sup> Arendt’s reports on the trial first appeared in *The New Yorker* in five successive issues from 16 February to 16 March 1963. Later that year, the articles were compiled into a book and published as *Eichmann in Jerusalem: a report on the banality of evil* ([EJ] 2006). See Michael Erza (2007) for a useful and balanced summary of the reaction to Arendt’s accounts.

2001, p.203)<sup>3</sup>, her writings have since garnered significant international attention - so much in fact that Simon Swift writing in 2009 could describe Arendt as being ‘everywhere’ in academia (2009, p.135). More recently still, the current spike of interest in her work on totalitarianism in particular<sup>4</sup> has made her one of the most talked about political figures of recent times (RICHARD J. BERNSTEIN, 2018). Tellingly, at least two major new introductions to her work are scheduled for publication later this year: *Hannah Arendt* by Samantha Rose Hill (2021) and *Hannah Arendt* by Dana Villa (2021).

At first sight, this pairing of EAP and Arendt may appear slightly arbitrary. On the one hand, we have a twentieth-century political theorist bent on understanding the political dark times<sup>5</sup> in which she lived; and on the other hand, we have a much more recent educational activity operating to support international students at English-speaking universities. What is more, Arendt was never an educational theorist<sup>6</sup> and wrote only two essays on education: *The crisis in education* ([CE/BPF] 2006); and *Reflections on Little Rock* ([RJ] 2003). Furthermore, of course, she was as unfamiliar with EAP as the field of EAP has been with her.

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<sup>3</sup> Arendt described Eichmann’s evil as banal in that he performed evil deeds without having evil intentions. Hence, banality here refers to his thoughtlessness, that is, his inability to think critically or from any other point of view. See also Arendt’s *The human condition*: ‘thoughtlessness - the heedless recklessness or hopeless confusion or complacent repetition of “truths” which have become trivial or empty - seems to me among the outstanding characteristics of our time’ ([HC] 1998, p.5).

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Roger Berkowitz: ‘Sales of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* have spiked since President Trump’s election, at one point rising 16 times above its usually robust sales. The Hannah Arendt Center that I founded and run has benefited from an unprecedented surge of over 100 new memberships, and our virtual reading group on *The Origins of Totalitarianism* has more than doubled in size. Writers and pundits have made frequent references to Arendt’s 500-page masterpiece in the pages of *The New York Times*, *The Atlantic*, and *The New York Review of Books*’ (2017, [no pagination]). See also, for example, Zoe Williams’ 2017 article: *Totalitarianism in the age of Trump: lessons from Hannah Arendt* (2017, [no pagination]).

<sup>5</sup> *Dark times* is a phrase Arendt uses in many places in her work and most explicitly in her book *Men in dark times* ([MDT] 1973). The phrase is used both to describe the terrors of totalitarianism and more generally to describe the degradation of the political-public realm: ‘If it is the function of the public realm to throw light on the affairs of men by providing a space of appearances in which they can show in deed and word, for better or worse, who they are and what they can do, then darkness has come when this light is extinguished’ ([P/MDT] 1973, p.8).

<sup>6</sup> Even in her major educational essay, *The crisis in education*, she excludes herself from the company of educational ‘experts and the pedagogues’ ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.192).

My point of departure is that while Hannah Arendt is a political thinker *sui generis*, her work on both education and on politics is of value to educationalists. Indeed, while appreciation from those in education was slower in coming, there is now a rapidly growing body of literature that explores this 'educational' Arendt: see, for example, Mordechai Gordon's (2001c) edited collection *Hannah Arendt and education: renewing our common world*; Eric Gorham's (2000) *The Theater of politics: Hannah Arendt, political science, and higher education*; Helen Gunter's (2014) *Educational leadership and Hannah Arendt*; Morten Korsgaard's (2019) *Bearing with strangers: Arendt, education and the politics of inclusion*; Jon Nixon's (2020b) *Hannah Arendt: the promise of education*; and Wayne Veck and Helen Gunter's edited volume *Hannah Arendt on educational thinking and practice in dark times: education for a world in crisis* (2020b). However, in spite of this rising interest, no literature has yet appeared explicitly discussing Hannah Arendt and EAP. In this thesis, I argue the work of Arendt has particular, even striking, relevance to the activity of EAP.

I wish to make clear at the outset that I am not here attempting to offer a solution to a problem in or about EAP. Despite the complexity of the political, economic, linguistic, social, and even ethical issues that exist around the practice of teaching English<sup>7</sup>, and the commensurate issues involved in teaching EAP in a contemporary UK university setting<sup>8</sup>, I am not suggesting EAP has a fundamental problem needing to be solved. My view is that many (not all, certainly) of the challenges facing EAP are those facing the modern university more generally. Both are having

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<sup>7</sup> Since the publication of Robert Phillipson's seminal *Linguistic imperialism* (1992), these issues continue to be debated in the literature on English language teaching.

<sup>8</sup> See Ken Hyland's recent survey of critical issues in EAP in *Sympathy for the devil? A defence of EAP* (2018).

to adapt to the changing conditions brought about by, for example, globalisation<sup>9</sup>, internationalisation<sup>10</sup>, massification<sup>11</sup>, corporatisation<sup>12</sup>, and new managerialism<sup>13</sup>. Moreover, these issues and their ramifications for EAP continue to be discussed at great length within the EAP community<sup>14</sup>, and I am not here desiring to add to this growing literature.

However, given these global, national, and institutional changes, and the parallel theoretical and practical developments within the field of EAP itself; and given too my changing professional involvement in EAP (see **CHAPTER 1**), I consider this an appropriate time to reflect on what EAP is and what EAP does. But I wish to do this from a particular perspective, one that reflects both my work (my practical experience as a classroom teacher of EAP) and my study (my academic interest in the work of Hannah Arendt).

Before proceeding to offer an overview of the thesis, a few words on my approach to this academic venture are in order. In his introduction to a collection of essays assembled while Arendt was still alive, Melvyn Hill draws attention to the ‘paradigmatic quality’ (1979, x) of Arendt’s work. Hill suggests that what Arendt offers readers is not a prescription of what to think but rather an example of how to engage in thinking, given the state of the world.

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<sup>9</sup> *Globalisation*: ‘the economic, political and societal forces pushing 21<sup>st</sup> century higher education toward greater international involvement’ (PHILIP G. ALTBACH AND JANE KNIGHT, 2007, p.290).

<sup>10</sup> *Internationalisation*: ‘includes the policies and practices undertaken by academic systems and institutions - and even individuals - to cope with the global academic environment’ (PHILIP G. ALTBACH AND JANE KNIGHT, 2007, p.290).

<sup>11</sup> *Massification*: ‘the process by which academic systems enroll large numbers - and higher proportions of the relevant age group - of students in a range of differentiated academic institutions’ (PHILIP G. ALTBACH, 2007, p.3).

<sup>12</sup> *Corporatisation*: ‘This is a new world with universities run by a professional administrative class earning CEO-level salaries and with a focus on rankings, a view of students as customers, and a growing reliance on top down administration and bean counting’ (KEN HYLAND, 2018, p.388).

<sup>13</sup> *New managerialism*: ‘best understood as an ideological configuration of ideas and practices recently brought to bear on public service organisation, management and delivery, often at the behest of governments or government agencies’ (ROSEMARY DEEM AND KEVIN J. BREHONY, 2005, p.219).

<sup>14</sup> For an excellent and recent discussion of these challenges from the perspective of the EAP practitioner, see the recent account by Alex Ding and Ian Bruce in *The English for academic purposes practitioner: operating on the edge of academia* (2017).

Recognising the sense of this, I do not treat Hannah Arendt as any kind of ‘problem solver’ (HELEN M. GUNTER, 2014, p.9). Instead, my intention is, in Arendt’s words, ‘to think what we are doing’ ([HC] 1998, p.5); and in *stopping-and-thinking* about EAP, to adapt another of Arendt’s phrases ([LM] 1981, p.78), I have found the work of Arendt particularly illuminating; in fact, I would go further and say that reading her work has effectively facilitated my re-reading of EAP as an activity operating at ‘the end point of education and the beginning of politics’<sup>15</sup>. The arguments that develop this thesis and the practical implications I draw from them are, of course, and for better or worse, the consequence of my own thinking.

At the core of Arendt’s work, both educational and political (for her understanding of education is informed by her understanding of politics), is a commitment to free human action. In Arendt’s thinking on education, this manifests itself in a concern for the protection of the natality of the young, and in her work on politics, in a recurring emphasis on the importance of public spaces, such as the ancient Greek *polis* ‘which provided men with a space of appearances where they could act, with a kind of theatre where freedom could appear’ ([WF/BPF] 2006, p.154). In short, Arendt offers a reading of worldly spaces that is highly suggestive for the educational space of EAP. Hence the title of this thesis.

I should also add here that my thesis is exegetical, interpretative, and non-empirical, and that my approach to reading Arendt is motivated by what she terms (in relation to the historical method of Walter Benjamin) *pearl diving*. As I adopt the spirit if not the letter of this approach, her passage on Benjamin’s thinking is worth citing at length:

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<sup>15</sup> The phrase comes from Peter Euben’s essay: *Politicizing the university and other clichés* (2001, p. 186). While he uses this phrase to describe higher learning institutions generally, I make use of it in this thesis to describe the position of EAP more specifically.



And this thinking, fed by the present, works with the 'thought fragments' it can wrest from the past and gather about itself. Like a pearl diver who descends to the bottom of the sea, not to excavate the bottom and bring it to light but to pry loose the rich and the strange, the pearls and the coral in the depths, and to carry them to the surface, this thinking delves into the depths of the past - but not in order to resuscitate it the way it was and to contribute to the renewal of extinct ages. What guides this thinking is the conviction that although the living is subject to the ruin of the time, the 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* ([WB/MDT] 1973, p.203).

Arendt's comments on Walter Benjamin are often justly used - see, for example, by Richard Bernstein (2000) - to describe Arendt's own explorations of the past; indeed, much of Arendt's political work attempts to shine a light on ancient and neglected 'rich and strange' ideas and distinctions. It must be understood, however, that her diving for pearls in the past is not, contrary to the arguments of some critics, perhaps most notably, Jürgen Habermas (1977), indicative of any nostalgia<sup>16</sup>. As Morten Korsgaard writes: 'Arendt used the historical material in order to open human existence to experiences that have been forgotten' (2020, p.4). Arendt is not interested in restoring the past but in finding in it hope for the present, and indeed for the future.

In writing this thesis, I likewise dive into the past, the textual past of Hannah Arendt, and bring to the surface those pearls that speak to me about university education and about EAP specifically. One of the most significant of these that Arendt recovers, and that I recover in turn

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<sup>16</sup> While Habermas does not in fact use the term *nostalgia*, it is implied throughout his essay *Hannah Arendt's communications concept of power* (1977). For instance, he argues, misconstruing Arendt's concept in the process in my view, that weaknesses in her concept of power derive 'from the fact that Arendt remains bound to the historical and conceptual constellation of classical Greek philosophy (p.7); again 'Arendt stylizes the image she has of the Greek polis to the essence of politics as such ... she becomes the victim of a concept of politics that is inapplicable to modern conditions' (p.14); and finally: 'An antiquated concept of theoretical knowledge that is based on ultimate insights and certainties keeps Arendt from comprehending the process of reaching agreement about practical questions as rational discourse' (p.22).

from her, is that of the polis which, as an organised space for human speech and action, 'represents the very possibility of politics itself' (DAVID L. MARSHALL, 2010b, p.125).

This paper then originates in my professional educational context. As an EAP practitioner, I wish, of course, to perform my job well, and so I consider it valuable to understand and reflect on the intellectual and professional context in which I work; but in light of my doctoral study, I have been prompted to look at EAP again and re-discover its value - to myself and potentially to others who also participate in it.

This first chapter [CHAPTER 1] provides the background for the thesis via a discussion of its provenance and contexts. I organise this chapter into three sections which, and with considerable poetic licence, I have termed *labour*, *work*, and *action* - the three human activities that comprise Hannah Arendt's *vita activa* (Arendt's categorisation of the active life of humans). I begin [section i: labour] with a brief narrative of this work's genesis in my personal, intellectual, and professional life. I then go on in the second section [section ii: work] to discuss my professional field of EAP in greater detail, highlighting in particular its educational and political purposes. In the third section [section iii: action], I provide a rationale for making Arendt the educational and political focus of this thesis and offer a short contextual account of her life and work.

In CHAPTER 2, I focus mainly on Arendt's educational output: *Reflections on Little Rock* ([RJ] 2003) and *The crisis in education* ([CE/BPF] 2006). Rather than maintain, *contra* many, that these conservative educational works are at odds with her radical political work, I argue [section i] that they are of a piece and that they are conservative for the sake of her radical politics. Having made the argument for this coherence, I discuss both essays in turn [section ii

and **section iii**], highlighting their major educational themes. I end this chapter by turning from education as schooling (the topic of her educational essays) to Arendt's very different conception of adult and university education [**section iv**].

Having explored Arendt's educational thinking, I move in **CHAPTER 3** to her political thinking as articulated in her political works, including: *The human condition* ([HC] 1998). In the first section [**section i**], I discuss Arendt's very particular view of what politics is and is not in relation to the intellectual hub of this thesis, the polis, the literal and metaphorical space for Arendt's politics. That the polis is constituted by both spectators and actors prompts the organisation of the following two sections. I turn first [**section ii**] to the spectator, focusing on Arendt's work on thinking, critical thinking, and judging; and then, via an account of the *vita activa*, I discuss the activities of the actor, those of speaking and acting.

In the final chapter [**CHAPTER 4**], I return to the aim of the thesis and bring together the various threads already discussed - those of EAP; Arendt and education; and Arendt and politics - in order to discuss some of the possible theoretical and practical implications of my re-reading of EAP alongside Arendt. Picking up on the earlier discussions, I revisit the question of the educational and political purposes of EAP and offer an account of EAP as *radical conservative*<sup>17</sup>, that is, as an activity valuing both preservation and renewal, and proceed to conceptualise the EAP classroom as a kind of educative miniature polis for its budding citizens.

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<sup>17</sup> This phrase is from the title of Irving Louise Horowitz's book, *Hannah Arendt: radical conservative* (2012). Variations of the phrase have also been used to characterise Arendt's conception of education. See, for example: Anouk Zuurmond (2016), and Lovisa Bergdahl and Elisabet Langmann (2018), and **CHAPTER 4** below.

# CHAPTER 1

## CHAPTER 1: THREE CONTEXTS

*This first chapter offers an account of the generative contexts of the thesis and is organised, with playful poetic licence, into three Arendtian-themed sections: labour, work, and action. While Arendt uses these terms to describe the three activities that together constitute the vita activa, here they are used more loosely to describe the three contexts of this thesis: labour - the personal context of my life; work - the professional context of EAP; and action - the intellectual context afforded by Hannah Arendt.*

*I begin [**section i: labour**] with a brief narrative describing the genesis of this thesis in my personal, intellectual, and professional life. I then go on in the second section [**section ii: work**] to discuss my professional field in greater detail, highlighting in particular its educational and political purposes. In the third section [**section iii: action**], I provide a justification for making Arendt the educational and political centre of this thesis and offer a short contextual account of her life and work.*

## SECTION I: LABOUR [THE PERSONAL CONTEXT OR MY PERSONAL EXPERIENCE AND MOTIVATION]

Of the three activities that together constitute the active life in Arendt's categorisation of human activities in *The human condition* ([HC] 1998), *labour* is that which refers to life itself, to the physical world and our basic biological processes and animal necessities, and it is to this - or more accurately, to my life - that I turn here.

The two major academic interests and activities of my life have been literature and education. Reading first English literature as an undergraduate at St David's University College (University of Wales) and then Romantic literature (circa 1775 - 1850) as a postgraduate at the University of York, I subsequently studied for a *Postgraduate Certificate in Education* (PGCE) diploma at the University of Reading. Then, after teaching English literature and drama at a London secondary school for two years, I moved from classroom teaching to supporting children for whom English was an additional language (EAL) with the development of their academic English. In 2000, I embarked on the *Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults* (CELTA) course and became a qualified English language teacher, teaching first in London and then in various countries around the world, completing the *Diploma in English Language Teaching to Adults* (DELTA) along the way. Returning to the UK in 2008, I began working for the University of Edinburgh as an EAP teacher at ELE and commenced part-time study for a postgraduate degree in English language teaching at the University of Reading. Soon after completing this degree, I won promotion to Senior Teaching Fellow (Head of EAP) at English Language Education. However, after a sustained encounter with a black dog<sup>18</sup> that affected my work and

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<sup>18</sup> The term *black dog* was used by Winston Churchill to refer to his bouts of depression. For a critical discussion of the extent to which Churchill did indeed suffer from depression, see the recent article: 'Did Sir Winston Churchill suffer from the 'black dog'?' (ANTHONY M. DANIELS AND ALLISTER J. VALE, 2018).

study for several months, I elected to demit from this office and returned in 2019 to the post of Teaching Fellow (EAP Tutor). In one form or another then, teaching English for Academic Purposes to prospective and current University of Edinburgh students has been my occupation for more than a decade.

I had been required upon taking up the headship at ELE to engage in higher study, and to this effect I entered the University's part-time *Doctorate in Education* (EdD) programme in 2015. It was on a module on professional practice that I first encountered the work of Arendt. The context for discussion was the status of professions, and in particular the argument made by the course tutor, Carolin Kreber, that professional practice is increasingly taking on the form of *labour*, at the expense of *work*, and both of these at the expense of meaningful *action*<sup>19</sup> - a trio of concepts discussed by Arendt in *The human condition* ([HC] 1998). I found this threefold classification of worldly activities that together comprise the *vita activa* not only aesthetically and intellectually appealing - to think that human activities could be so radically and yet so simply and neatly categorised<sup>20</sup> - but also very suggestive for understanding professional activities such as my own.

The assignment I submitted for this module of the EdD discussed the professional status of EAP in light of Arendt's *vita activa*. Seen through this lens, the job of an EAP practitioner did indeed appear to be one of mostly labour and work, and with very little scope for action. While in the assignment I drew attention to the relative absence of action in my professional life as an academic head, I did not reference the emotional consequences: I was deeply unhappy with

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<sup>19</sup> These and other terms used by Arendt are explained later in **section iii: action**.

<sup>20</sup> I was also, like Dana Villa, 'struck by the 'supreme confidence with which Arendt makes her distinctions' (DANA R. VILLA, 1996, p.18).

the absence of opportunities to speak and act with others in comparative freedom at work. My professional speech, such as it was, appeared almost predetermined and constrained by professional and institutional norms that mitigated against more personalised and spontaneous forms of speaking. Essentially, I wanted to discover or rediscover happiness, and not just by myself but with others. Arendt maintains that speaking and acting together in freedom and in public can give people a tangible experience of happiness unlike any that they can enjoy in private<sup>21</sup>. And while I was aware my work did not occupy a political space as such (it was work after all and not a polis), I sensed that something akin to action was missing. As a manager, I felt I was even missing out on the more authentic conversations I had formerly enjoyed as a teacher with my peers and with my students.

Reading Arendt, I thought further connections could be made between her thinking and EAP. Indeed, my reading of some of her educational and political concepts and my application of these to EAP led to a novel and meaningful reconsideration of its very purposes. It is to this topic of EAP and to its purposes, I now turn.

## SECTION II: WORK [THE PROFESSIONAL CONTEXT OR THE FRAUGHT DOMAIN OF EAP]

*Work* is the second of the three activities of Arendt's *vita activa* and refers to the unnaturalness of human existence, that is, to the human condition of worldliness, of our living in our created world - the artificial and distinctly human world of fabricated physical, social, intellectual, and

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<sup>21</sup> This notion of public happiness as opposed to private happiness and Arendt's conception of it as the 'lost treasure' of revolutions occurs frequently in her works but most explicitly in the following: the *Preface* in *Between past and future: eight exercises in political thought* ([P/BPF] 2006); the concluding chapter of *On revolution* ([OR] 2006); and in various essays recently collected in *Thinking without a banister* such as *Action and the 'pursuit of happiness'* ([APH/TWB] 2018) and *Public rights and private interests: a reply to Charles Frankel* ([PRP/TWB] 2018).



cultural things. The Arendtian activity of work is characterised by means and ends and so is essentially instrumental in character.

Having looked in the first of these three contextual sections at my life, I now elaborate on my particular work, the subject of which operates as the 'ring-wall'<sup>22</sup> around my thinking. I should point out at the outset that there is a plethora of literature on EAP and so any short account such as this is necessarily going to be selective; and this is particularly the case here where I am looking at EAP and its purposes while simultaneously looking away from it and towards Arendt.

#### DEFINITION AND CONTEXT

EAP is a specialist branch of English language teaching (ELT) concerned with 'helping learners to study, conduct research or teach in that language' (JOHN FLOWERDEW AND MATTHEW PEACOCK, 2001, p.8). EAP has its particular roots in the earlier discipline of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) which developed in the late 1960s in response to the demand posed by the growing numbers of people from non-English speaking backgrounds working or studying in English-speaking countries (ROSEMARY WETTE, 2018). As its name suggests, ESP has a degree of specificity and instrumentality that distinguishes it from more general English teaching. Originally, ESP was mainly concerned with the teaching of scientific and technological language and at a time of rapid economic growth in the Middle East and North Africa (R. R. JORDON, 2002). EAP, for its part, developed out of a concern for the development of academic study skills.

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<sup>22</sup> Arendt points out in *The human condition* that 'the word polis originally connoted something like a "ring-wall"' ([HC] 1998, p.64). Here I am using the term to suggest the bounded context that EAP gives this thesis.

As English has increased its currency and prestige around the world (IAN BRUCE, 2011; LIA BLAJ-WARD, 2014; CHRISTIAN W. CHUN, 2015; KEN HYLAND AND PHILIP SHAW, 2016), English language teaching in all its forms has become a major international service industry (CHRISTIAN W. CHUN, 2015; KEN HYLAND AND PHILIP SHAW, 2016). Not only has there been an enormous rise in the number of people learning English for employment, but English has also become the international language of academia (KEN HYLAND, 2006; THERESA LILLIS AND MARY JANE CURRY, 2010; ANNA MAURANEN, NIINA HYNINEN AND ELINA RANTA, 2016). UK universities are increasingly having to respond to the challenges of globalisation and the growing pressures towards internationalisation (BRUCE MACFARLANE, 2004). Together with domestic policies which aim to widen entry to higher education, these challenges and pressures have led to the UK student body becoming increasingly diverse in terms of the linguistic, cultural, and educational backgrounds of its members (BRUCE MACFARLANE, 2004; KEN HYLAND, 2006). While this diversity is often heralded as a positive step towards producing culturally-aware and globally-mobile graduates, it has also brought challenges to the university: an increasing number of students may experience difficulties in using English in academic settings, and there is also potentially a growing number of students for whom the notion of academic language is itself unfamiliar (KEN HYLAND, 2006).

Unsurprisingly then, from very modest origins<sup>23</sup>, EAP is now a familiar term and big business. Over the last 40 years or so, the field of EAP has developed rapidly, such that it is now a significant and lucrative force in English language teaching and research. It wields tremendous influence over the educational experience of millions of students. Today, in one form or

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<sup>23</sup> See Bob Jordon's personal account of its origins as an informal coming together of five university practitioners (R. R. JORDON, 2002).

another - preparing prospective students for academic study or supporting matriculated students with their academic studies - EAP functions on a global scale: it operates in English-medium countries at universities which have large numbers of students who do not have English as their first language; it is also conducted in former British colonies where English is a second language used for academic instruction and communication; and furthermore, it is also present in an increasing number of countries which do not have particular links with the UK or the USA but which desire access to research published in English (JOHN FLOWERDEW AND MATTHEW PEACOCK, 2001; KEN HYLAND AND PHILIP SHAW, 2016; ANNA MAURANEN, NIINA HYNINEN AND ELINA RANTA, 2016). As EAP has developed, both internally as an intellectual and academic discipline and in response to these enormous external forces, its purposes have also developed.

#### A QUESTION OF PURPOSE

Throughout its short history, EAP has been concerned with exploring academic communication. Given its roots in ESP, the original purposes of EAP were largely instrumental: to help international students with the pressing and immediate problem of understanding and then creating for themselves discipline-specific texts for university study. In practice, this meant tailoring the teaching content to the language, practices, and study needs of the learners who were either intending to study at a higher education institution or who were already doing so. It worked to achieve this largely through an efficient focus on academic texts in English and on common UK academic practices. One of the principal tasks of the EAP practitioner was to identify what the learner needed to know through some form of needs analysis. EAP writers commonly distinguish between two types of needs analysis: a present situation analysis and a target situation analysis (IAN BRUCE, 2011). The former focuses on the

learners and their desires and so is concerned primarily with the present; while the latter looks ahead to what the learners will need in the future, and specifically to the language and skills they will need to function successfully in their particular academic disciplines<sup>24</sup>.

Over the last few decades, however, the field has come to recognise that students entering academia are not simply learning a new language but are being expected to take on new roles and engage with new knowledge and new disciplinary practices (KEN HYLAND, 2006). As such, EAP is increasingly motivated to understand, and help learners understand, not just the texts but the contexts and practices of academic communication. And in so taking a *wider-angle*<sup>25</sup> (H. G. WIDDOWSON, 1983) view of its purposes, its knowledge base has broadened significantly. Alex Ding and Ian Bruce identify at least five major streams of knowledge that have helped shape modern EAP: Systemic Functional Linguistics; Genre Theory; Corpus Linguistics; Academic Literacies; and Critical EAP (2017, pp.65-84). The latter stream of critical EAP is in my view particularly significant, and not only because it is the most recent of these intellectual engagements, but because critical EAP has revealed most clearly the tension that lies at the heart of EAP, in its very purpose. Before looking at critical EAP in a little more detail, it is worth pausing for a moment to consider the notion of purpose in EAP.

The renowned British linguist Henry Widdowson (1935-) defines purpose in language teaching as ‘the eventual practical use to which the language will be put in achieving occupational and academic aims’ (1983, p.6). He identifies a continuum of language course purposes, running

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<sup>24</sup> My personal experience as an EAP practitioner has been that the nearer the student is to entering the target situation (usually their degree programme), the further removed from the learner the analysis becomes. On our one-year EAP courses at the University of Edinburgh, for example, we focus our activities on understanding the learner and his or her needs and desires as well as competency in English before working on developing academic skills; on our shorter summer pre-session courses, however, which take students, as it were, to the very door of their chosen academic programmes, the requirements of the target situation take absolute precedence over individual learner needs, meaning that in practice most of our classroom activities resemble those we expect the learners to engage in at the University of Edinburgh.

<sup>25</sup> See immediately below for an explanation of Widdowson’s terms, *wide-angle* and *narrow-angle*, in relation to educational purposes.

from at one end those courses which have *training* as their purpose and at the other those which have *education* as their purpose:

As generally understood, it [ESP] is essentially, therefore, a *training* concept: having established as precisely as possible what learners need the language for, one then designs a course which converges on that need ... In GPE [General Purpose English] it is of course not possible to define purpose in this way. Instead it has to be conceived of in educational terms, as a formulation of objectives which will achieve a potential for later use. Here it is not a matter of developing a restricted competence to cope with a specified set of tasks, but of developing a general capacity for language use (H. G. WIDDOWSON, 1983, p.6).

So, at the training end of Widdowson's specificity of purpose scale lies conventional ESP which is marked as having particular ends; and at the other lies general purpose English teaching which is more educational in nature, given that it is less obviously marked by such ends. In Widdowson's now seminal set of terms, those courses at the training end of the spectrum have a *narrow angle* view of purpose, while those at the educational end have a *wide angle* view of purpose (1983, p.81). These, of course, are the two extremes of the scale, and most courses are likely to exist somewhere between the two; but the distinction itself is useful and has been fruitfully used to describe EAP. In Widdowson's early account, EAP is considered wide angle and so sits 'At the educational end of the scale' because the academic courses it provides 'require the development of communicative capacity' (1983, p.11). However, this is not necessarily the case today - given the modern drive for short-term solutions - if indeed it ever was.

Very recently, for example, Ken Hyland and Philip Shaw have noted 'there is tension between EAP's somewhat instrumental stance and wider educational aims which can rarely be adopted in EAP for practical reasons' (2016, p.7). These terms are clearly reminiscent of Widdowson's,

with *instrumental stance* signifying *narrow angle* purpose, and *wider educational aims* signifying *wide angle* purposes. Even more recently, Ding and Bruce (2017) have highlighted a ‘disconnect’ between how EAP regards itself and how the universities which typically house and operate EAP may view it. They point to the insider view of EAP, ‘that of a specialist, theory- and research-informed branch of English language and literacy education’, being quite different from the outsider or institutional view of it ‘as a commodified, revenue-generating support activity’ (2017, p.53). It does not seem unreasonable to align this *insider view* of EAP with Widdowson’s *wide angle* conception of purposes and with Hyland’s *wider educational aims*, nor to see similarities between the *outsider view* of EAP and Widdowson’s *narrow angle* conception of purposes and Hyland’s *instrumental stance*.

Widdowson himself took a pragmatic approach in justifying one or other of the approaches, recognising quite rightly that there are occasions when language needs ‘can be more effectively serviced by greater specificity’ and others which ‘call for a more educational, less specific approach’ (1983, p.90). However, in spite of asserting that ‘It would be a mistake to insist on the inherent superiority of one approach’ (1983, p.90), Widdowson argues that ESP is fundamentally instrumental in nature because:

ESP is (or ought logically to be) linked with areas of activity (academic, vocational, professional) which have already been defined and which represent the learners’ aspirations. The learning of ESP is in consequence an essentially *dependent* activity, a parasitic process, and it follows that the pedagogy of ESP must be dependent too. It has no purposes of its own; it exists only to service those that have been specified elsewhere (H. G. WIDDOWSON, 1983, pp.108-109).

While Widdowson limits his discussion to matters of education, it is not hard to detect here the beginnings of a more political perspective. Not only are these narrow angle courses

described as being *dependent* and *parasitic* on other disciplines, but they are marked by a particular educational and social orthodoxy: 'training seeks to impose a conformity to certain established patterns of knowledge and behaviour ... training tends to convergence and a reliance on established technique' (1983, p.19). Wide-angle courses, on the other hand, are characterised in terms of freedom and expression: 'Education, however, seeks to provide for creativity ... education tends towards divergence and a readiness to break from the confinement of prescribed practices' (1983, p.19). This point is then made even more explicitly:

If the divergent tendency is followed through to its logical conclusion, educational becomes a process of self-realization untrammelled by purpose defined by institutional requirement ... Whereas extreme convergence would pay exclusive attention to the established needs of society and establish aims without regard to objectives ('pure' training), extreme divergence would be exclusively concerned with the needs of the individual and focus on objectives without regard to aims ('pure' education) (H. G. WIDDOWSON, 1983, p.19).

In so distinguishing between these two purposes in terms of training ≈ bad and education ≈ good, Widdowson effectively anticipates the debate that really began several years later in EAP and that gave the field an alternative to mainstream pragmatic EAP, that of critical EAP.

#### TURNING CRITICAL

The wider educational aims mentioned by Hyland and Shaw are largely articulated in EAP literature in terms of what has become known as critical EAP. Before the advent of critical EAP in the late 1980s, the field of EAP saw itself as politically neutral (SARAH BENESCH, 1993); it focused on fulfilling linguistic needs as they were articulated by academic disciplines, and it was largely unconcerned with any social or political considerations of its practice. In Sarah Benesch's words: 'Power issues have been ignored in the name of pragmatism, that is, fulfilling

target expectations without questioning the inequalities they might perpetuate or engender' (2001, p.3).

This dominant conception of EAP - mainstream pragmatic EAP - has been criticised by writers such as Sarah Benesch (1993; 1996; 1999; 2001; 2009) and Alastair Pennycook (1994; 1997). Criticisms include its accommodationist ideology (SARAH BENESCH, 1993, p.711) and its vulgar pragmatism (ALASTAIR PENNYCOOK, 1997). Pragmatic EAP is accommodationist in that it assumes:

that it is unrealistic to expect the university to adapt itself to the cultures, world views, and languages of nonnative-speaking students and that it is realistic to accommodate students to the content and pedagogy of mainstream academic classes (SARAH BENESCH, 1993, p.711).

If pragmatic EAP assumes reality is a set of givens 'located in current academic institutions, departments, lectures, discourse, genres, texts, and tasks' (SARAH BENESCH, 1993, p.711), then in teaching the knowledge, skills, and behaviours that enable students to adapt to and participate in this environment, EAP practitioners are functionally reduced to supporting or accommodating their students to the status quo.

Benesch also attacks what she terms the 'myth of neutrality' that pervades mainstream EAP, that is, the spurious 'notion that some kinds of teaching are ideological while others are not' (1993, p.706). Drawing on critical educational theory, Benesch argues that 'no pedagogy is neutral' (PAULO FREIRE AND IRA SHOR, 1987, p.13) since:

all have a form and a content that relate to power in society, that construct one kind of society or another, and they all have social relations in the classroom that confirm or challenge domination (PAULO FREIRE AND IRA SHOR, 1987, p.13).



Alastair Pennycook also makes a distinction, following the poststructuralist Cleo Cherryholmes, between *vulgar* and *critical* pragmatism, accusing EAP of being on the vulgar side. While vulgar pragmatism values efficiency over criticism and practice over theory 'for the sake of making things work "better"', critical pragmatism is characterised by a recognition 'that our standards, beliefs, values, guiding texts, and discourse-practices themselves require evaluation and appraisal' (1997, p.256). Pennycook concludes:

My argument, then, is that a position that we might characterise as 'vulgar pragmatism', a position that runs the danger of reinforcing norms, beliefs and ideologies that maintain inequitable social and cultural relations - a position that I unashamedly believe is ethically unacceptable - is made particularly available by certain 'discourses of neutrality' which construct EAP as a neutral activity, and therefore allow for a position that a pragmatist stance is an ethically viable one and that EAP is an activity for which a critical pragmatism would not have much relevance (ALASTAIR PENNYCOOK, 1997, pp.256-257).

Critical EAP challenged this 'political naivety' (CHRISTOPHER J. MACALLISTER, 2016, p.291) and the accommodationist position EAP was in, 'one that was value neutral, pragmatic and accommodating of existing power relations in the classroom, academia and society overall' (CHRISTOPHER J. MACALLISTER, 2016, p.283). Operating with an accommodationist ideology which is at root 'an endorsement of traditional academic teaching and of current power relations in academia and in society' (SARAH BENESCH, 1993, p.711) is, Pennycook and Benesch argue, a political choice: a choice to reinforce and even reify existing discourses and practices. EAP is political, like it or not.

Of course, this increasing criticality was not taking place in a vacuum. Christopher Macallister identifies the first decade of the new millennium as the period when critical EAP 'took a much more political turn' (2016, p.287). In reaction to George Bush's war on terror and the

subsequent invasion of Iraq in 2003, as well as to the sweep of global capitalism and its inequalities, critical EAP developed its 'strong teleological sense of mission' (2016, p.287). Indeed, Benesch later describes globalisation 'as rationale for critical EAP' (2009, p.81), writing that 'The social changes resulting from globalization are fertile ground for critical EAP to explore the relationship between academic English(es) and the larger sociopolitical context' (SARAH BENESCH, 2009, p.82). Details of this exploration-*cum*-programme for educational and political change are set out at length by Benesch in her seminal monograph *Critical English for academic purposes: theory, politics, and practice* (2001).

#### BEING CRITICAL WITH SARAH BENESCH

Benesch's critical EAP is the first major account of a critical approach to EAP. It draws on critical pedagogy, particularly the work of Paolo Freire, and seeks to foreground the politics of EAP. It does this by drawing attention to the power relations, previously unacknowledged or largely ignored within EAP, that exist between the learner and the academic institution and society at large. Benesch later reflects on the thinking behind her critical approach in *The encyclopedia of applied linguistics*:

I attributed EAP's unquestioning acceptance of academic materials to the subordinate status of ESL instructors and students in the academy. Their role, according to mainstream EAP practice at the time, was to make content-course materials comprehensible to EAP students. Missing from this equation was EAP's potential for challenging the status quo of unfavorable conditions, so that faculty across the curriculum might develop more appropriate assignments, ones geared to their actual students rather than imagined, better-prepared ones (SARAH BENESCH, 2012, [no pagination]).

Two key components of Benesch's critical EAP are rights and hope. To supplement the traditional EAP practice of conducting a needs analysis, Benesch offers what she terms a *rights*

*analysis* that turns the largely institution-directed analysis of needs on its head. She argues that any analysis of what should be taught must include a critical exploration of ‘who sets the goals, why they were formulated, whose interests are served by them, and whether they should be challenged’ (2001, p.43). While mainstream pragmatic EAP determines needs, critical EAP promotes rights:

*Needs* is a psychological term suggesting that students require or want what the institution mandates. It conflates the private world of desire and the public world of requirements, rules, and regulations. Needs, in this formulation, are not negotiated because they are assumed to be beneficial to students ... *Rights* in critical EAP, on the other hand, highlight academic life as contested, with various players exercising power for different ends. Rights, unlike needs, are political and negotiable (SARAH BENESCH, 2001, pp.61-62).

To be clear: Benesch is not making a case for additional political or legal rights being given to students:

Critical EAP does not assume that students are necessarily entitled to a set of rights worked out on their behalf that they may call on as enfranchised members of a pre-existing community with shared goals. Rather, the aim of rights analysis is to discover what is possible, desirable, and beneficial at a certain moment with a particular group of students (SARAH BENESCH, 2001, p.109).

In other words, what Benesch proposes as an add-on to the traditional concept of needs in EAP is not a rival set of (legal) demands or entitlements but rather a kind of Foucauldian ‘conceptual framework for questions about power and resistance’ (2001, p.62). A rights analysis thus becomes a ‘theoretical tool’ (2001, p.108) to help teachers and students think about democratic participation and possibilities - and about power relations. Acknowledging that the term *rights* has political and legal ‘connotations of pre-existing prerogatives’ (2001, p.109),

Benesch nevertheless uses the word and with some deliberation for its political association with '*organized resistance*' (2001, p.109 [italics mine]).

The other key tenet of Benesch's critical EAP is hope. Influenced by Freire's critical pedagogy of hope (PAULO FREIRE, 1996; PAULO FREIRE, 2014), Benesch envisages the EAP classroom as a place for consciousness-raising and emancipation; for while critical theorists argue that 'the dominant hegemonic ideology of liberal capitalism is supported through the education system' (CHRISTOPHER J. MACALLISTER, 2016, p.285), they also maintain that education can constitute a site for resistance and liberation. Benesch acknowledges her debt to Freire at the beginning of her 2001 work with specific reference to his *Pedagogy of hope: reliving 'Pedagogy of the oppressed'* (PAULO FREIRE, 2014):

Paulo Freire's influence permeates this book, particularly the notion of hope as a theoretical construct in critical pedagogy. Hope sustains a vision of what could be, offering alternatives to what already is. According to Freire (1994), teaching that simply perpetuates the status quo without the possibility of changing current conditions is training, not education ... The struggle Freire refers to is for social justice: 'for a different, less-ugly "world"' (p. 91). Yet, the EAP literature often portrays teachers as trainers who accept and enact predetermined requirements, rather than as educators imagining a more equitable and democratic world with their students. They are expected to help students fulfill target demands unquestioningly. Hope as a construct offers a vision of EAP as the means for greater dialogue in academic classes, more interesting readings, better-conceived assignments, and greater joy in learning. It encourages students to aim for these reforms in academic institutions and then to improve conditions in the workplace and community. This is the dream of critical EAP (SARAH BENESCH, 2001, xviii).

Instead of the realism offered by pragmatic EAP, Benesch offers a utopian vision of academic and social justice that can be realised not through training but through education. It is interesting to note here the explicit politicising of the same terms used by Widdowson almost two decades earlier.

How might this critical EAP work in practice? While Benesch makes it clear that the examples she gives of critical EAP (1996; 2001) are not intended as templates for critical EAP in other settings, they allow for an assessment of her own practice. I draw attention to three example types from her earlier account, which give a good indication of the range of critical possibilities. The first simply involves assisting students in managing the requirements of their content courses through guiding them in reviewing lecture notes, anticipating test questions, and presenting on textbook topics. The second type is slightly more 'challenging' (1996, p.733) - as in critical - as it attempts to help students exercise their agency in decisions affecting them. Her example here involves getting students to think of questions for subject lecturers and then having these staff visit EAP classes to interact with the students in less formal settings. The third type involves activities that 'create possibilities for social awareness and action' (1996, p.735). Her examples here include: encouraging students to research and write assignments about anorexia in order to raise the profile of women and give more space to their experiences in the male-dominated psychology course<sup>26</sup>; and encouraging students to write letters of protest to the New York state government against higher education funding cuts.

#### CRITICAL FAULTS

While Benesch has influenced a number of scholars (ROSLYN APPLEBY, 2009; CHRISTIAN W. CHUN, 2009; MARIANNE GREY, 2009; PHAN LE HA, 2009; BRIAN MORGAN, 2009)<sup>27</sup>, some of these and others have criticised what they consider to be a polemical and prescriptive strand in Benesch's critical

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<sup>26</sup> Clearly, anorexia can affect men as well as women, but Benesch's aim was to use this topic in order to bring more women into the curriculum, there being 'a notable lack of attention in the psychology syllabus to women's psychology and women psychologists, aside from Anna Freud, who was mentioned only in the context of her psychoanalysis of Erik Erikson, to whom two lectures were devoted. An area of study I thought would redress the exclusion of women was anorexia' (SARAH BENESCH, 2001, p.68).

<sup>27</sup> These writers all feature in a special issue (2009) of the *Journal for Academic Purposes* entitled *Critical English for Academic Purposes* edited by Sarah Benesch.

EAP and point out the danger of it becoming another modernist 'régime of truth' (MICHEL FOUCAULT, 1980, p.131) with its own beliefs and goals. Terry Santos (2008) argues that Benesch's anorexia project (see above) is overly prescriptive in that she appears to dictate rather than encourage student choice, and he has similar concerns about the letter writing activity as a way of learning about taking action for social change. Rather than encouraging debate, such activities seem to assume agreement.

In other words, this kind of critical pedagogy might work to elevate and even enforce the particular agenda of the critical teacher. Despite Freire's caution against monologue in place of dialogue in critical pedagogy, and his insistence that all 'critical efforts must coincide with those of the students' (PAULO FREIRE, 1996, p.56), it is not difficult to imagine Benesch's critical activities failing to take seriously those views which do not in fact coincide with the critical voice. Hence, a common response to critical EAP has been to question whether critical education along these lines is actually democratic and liberating or whether it risks becoming an exercise in indoctrination. As Eric Freedman writes in reference to critical pedagogy more generally:

Critical educators typically enter the classroom with preformulated political objectives. Their goal is not to bring out students' independent thoughts, as it were, like a genie out of a lamp, but to alter students' ways of thinking to conform with a preconceived notion of what constitutes critical thought (ERIC B. FREEDMAN, 2007, p.444).<sup>28</sup>

Freedman also observes that because teachers usually operate from within institutional positions of power, their voices have a special kind of authority in the classroom and this too

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<sup>28</sup> This is not, of course, how Freire conceives of critical pedagogy. Freire insists that it is the oppressed (in this case the students) who must liberate themselves. Freedman's argument is that the dialogue Freire and other critical pedagogues promote is in danger of becoming a means of indoctrination in an educational setting 'where the teacher remains in an institutionalized position of power' (2007, p.442).

'opens critical pedagogy to the charge of indoctrination' (2007, p.442). In his recent article on critical perspectives in EAP, Macallister (2016) calls out Benesch specifically with this in mind, noting that she even writes at one point: 'I would not want the opposition of a few students, such as George and Sasha, to dominate the discourse' (SARAH BENESCH, 2001, p.85).

Brian Morgan (2009) also argues against Benesch's third example of critical practice (see above) on the grounds that he anticipates this approach would necessitate a big-issue classroom (that is, one that requires discussion of, for example, big critical and political topics such as oppression and power) that could lead to student and practitioner pessimism and even despair. A related criticism of the kind of critical action exemplified by the letter writing activity is that it assumes success. Arguably based on abstract, liberal and utopian notions of progress and rationality, it is assumed rather simplistically that (critical) actions will lead to envisaged results (LINDA KEESING-STYLES, 2003). In Benesch's example, the students' actions could fail to produce any discernible results, thus, perhaps, reaffirming rather than challenging the political process.

Elizabeth Ellsworth's reflections on her own attempts to implement a critical pedagogy in teaching the course *Media and anti-racist pedagogies: curriculum and instruction 607* are particularly illuminating in this respect:

I want to argue, on the basis of my interpretation of C&I [*curriculum and instruction*] 607, that key assumptions, goals, and pedagogical practices fundamental to the literature on critical pedagogy — namely, ‘empowerment,’ ‘student voice,’ ‘dialogue,’ and even the term ‘critical’ — are repressive myths that perpetuate relations of domination. By this I mean that when participants in our class attempted to put into practice prescriptions offered in the literature concerning empowerment, student voice, and dialogue, we produced results that were not only unhelpful, but actually exacerbated the very conditions we were trying to work against, including Eurocentrism, racism, sexism, classism, and ‘banking education.’ To the extent that our efforts to put discourses of critical pedagogy into practice led us to reproduce relations of domination in our classroom, these discourses were ‘working through’ us in repressive ways, and had themselves become vehicles of repression (ELIZABETH ELLSWORTH, 1989, p.298).

Ellsworth’s useful criticism of a critical pedagogy that promises solutions but fails to empower, leads her to advocate instead a classroom practice in which teachers and students together try to come to a more sophisticated understanding of power by exploring the ‘assumptions, goals, implicit power dynamics, and issues of who produces valid knowledge’ (1989, p.297). While Benesch recognises the need for EAP to question itself in order to avoid some of these dangers<sup>29</sup>, ‘the call for self-criticality is never developed by Benesch or any later authors into a coherent and well-argued critique of the CEAP position’ (CHRISTOPHER J. MACALLISTER, 2016, p.288).

Given these and other criticisms, it is perhaps not surprising that the kind of emancipatory critical EAP described above has largely failed to materialise in practical terms:

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<sup>29</sup> Benesch writes: ‘Chapter 5 takes up the allegation that critical pedagogy attempts to indoctrinate students to a particular way of thinking by revisiting my choice to teach about anorexia in a paired EAP/psychology course I had written about previously (Benesch, 1998). It problematizes that choice, demonstrating that critical pedagogy is neither indoctrination nor orthodoxy but a self-reflective undertaking that must question its assumptions and practices’ (SARAH BENESCH, 2001, xix-xx).



it is probably fair to say that, while the ideas of CEAP [Critical English for Academic Purposes] are often acknowledged and cited in the EAP literature, few choose to implement its more activist agenda. Its contribution, like that of Ac Lits [Academic Literacies], appears to be more one of consciousness-raising than of actual incitement to political action and resistance in the way that Benesch proposes (ALEX DING AND IAN BRUCE, 2017, p.81).

Despite the practical failings of critical EAP, Benesch and others have played a valuable part in raising awareness of the ideological underpinnings of EAP and in challenging a prior assumption that 'its purpose is to prepare students unquestioningly for institutional and faculty expectations' (SARAH BENESCH, 2001, p.23).

#### CRITICAL PURPOSES MARK II

While contemporary EAP may be viewed by the wider university as an institutional 'quick-fix'<sup>30</sup> for the 'problems' of English-learning international students, at the level of the EAP centre and of the EAP practitioner, it (typically) continues to operate with the wider aim of supporting and developing the international student. The question is whether this can be done without *uncritically* accommodating the student to the status quo and without *critically* working to effect his or liberation from it. There is perhaps a middle way.

The approach taken in this respect by Christopher Macallister is helpful. Like Pennycook, he rejects both the naïve position that EAP can operate apolitically, as well as Benesch's emancipatory and insufficiently self-critical approach 'that risks being as top-down and hegemonic as the accommodationist position it challenges' (2016, p.292). But rather than

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<sup>30</sup> Joan Turner, among others, has written about the 'short-cut mentality' and fast 'throughput' of many EAP courses, arguing that such practices constitute collusion in its own marginalisation in accepting a role as an economic and intellectual short-cut (JOAN TURNER, 2004).

abandoning critical EAP entirely, he calls ‘for a CEAP revival in a “second wave”’ (2016, p.284); only this time:

the starting point needs to be an engagement with the local positions of students rather than a universe critical narrative that risks imposing its own regime of truth upon the EAP classroom (CHRISTOPHER J. MACALLISTER, 2016, p.291).

This is very much in line with Pennycook’s subsequent argument for a local and problematising EAP that constitutes ‘a critical engagement with people’s wishes, desires, and histories, that is, a way of thinking that pushes one constantly to question rather than to pontificate’ (1999, p.343). Rather than bringing critical activities or big political topics into the classroom, it would seek instead to connect with these issues through a focus on the concerns raised by the people in the room. Interestingly, Benesch herself in a later article seems to agree that being critical in EAP must be:

grounded in the theoretical construct of situatedness ... [and so] finds its subjects in the daily and academic lives of students, presenting those topics respectfully to promote deep emotional connection and intellectual engagement (SARAH BENESCH, 2009, pp.94-95).

This pedagogy of situatedness suggests a giving of attention to the present situation and to the people in the room (as well to the EAP practitioner). The questioning here seems rooted in students’ actual lives, meaning that even the difficult topics discussed are rooted in lived rather than imagined experiences. In other words, this pedagogy attempts to bring out and then problematise issues experienced by the learners themselves. Likewise, Macallister’s envisaged second wave critical EAP would not avoid the political but ‘is politically aware and seeks to question, challenge and even resist established narratives’ (2016, p.291). It would endeavour

‘to bring introduce [*sic*] the political in the EAP classroom from the bottom up’ (2016, p.292). Of course, in order for this to work, we need to know what the political is, and Arendt’s views in this regard are helpful.

In this section on work, I have outlined the nature of my professional context and discussed the two main conceptions of EAP that currently dominate the field. In comparing their two broad purposes, I indicated that while they are both concerned with the development of the academic competences and skills of international students, they differ in their political positioning. Regarding itself as politically neutral but accommodating students uncritically to the conventions of the university, pragmatic EAP risks operating as an educational means to a particular, albeit unexpressed, political end. Critical EAP, on the other hand, in foregrounding the political nature of the enterprise and in expressly challenging these conventions and the status quo more generally, risks operating as an educational means ‘to a particular *critical* position’ (ALEX DING AND IAN BRUCE, 2017, p. 81 [*italics mine*]). Moreover, both pragmatic EAP and critical EAP risk restricting the voices of students: either by aligning them to or against the status quo. There is greater potential for these voices to be heard in the kind of second wave critical EAP envisaged by Macallister. My reading of Arendt leads me to articulate a view of EAP that is sympathetic to Macallister’s but which, in applying Arendt’s unique definitions of education and politics to EAP, is more appropriately termed *radical conservative*.

### SECTION III: ACTION [THE INTELLECTUAL PROFESSIONAL CONTEXT OR THE RELEVANCE OF HANNAH ARENDT]

The crowning glory of Arendt’s *vita activa* is the miracle of human *action*, the ‘venturing forth in speech and deed in the company of one’s peers, beginning something new whose end

cannot be known in advance' (JEROME KOHN, 2005, viii). Action corresponds to the human condition of *plurality*, the fact that 'we are all the same, that is, human, in such a way that nobody is ever the same as anyone else who ever lived, lives, or will live' ([HC] 1998, p.8). It is by virtue of this human plurality, this difference in sameness, that people are capable of surprising others, that is, of acting in ways that are recognised as unique and distinctive. This section completes the background chapter by introducing the author of, amongst other things, action<sup>31</sup> - and the stimulus for this thesis - Arendt. While the key elements of her thinking relevant to the thesis are discussed at some length in **CHAPTER 3**, this section offers some biographical and background material.

#### BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS<sup>32</sup>

Hannah Arendt (née Johanna Cohn Arendt) [FIGURE 1] was born in 1906 in Linden, a suburb of Hanover, to a secular Jewish family. Growing up in Königsberg<sup>33</sup> and Berlin, she moved to Marburg University to study under Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), and then after a semester at Friedberg University with Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), relocated to Heidelberg where under the supervision of Karl Jaspers (1883-1969) she wrote her dissertation *Der Liebesbegriff bei Augustin*<sup>34</sup> on the problem of love in the work of the early Christian theologian and philosopher, Augustine of Hippo (354-430 AD).

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<sup>31</sup> Arendt is commonly described as primarily a theorist of political action: see, for example, Michael Gottsegen's *The political thought of Hannah Arendt* (1994).

<sup>32</sup> This brief account is indebted to Elisabeth Young-Bruehl's biography *Hannah Arendt: for love of the world* (2004).

<sup>33</sup> Königsberg was also the birthplace of Immanuel Kant, though it was then in East Prussia. It is now known as Kaliningrad and is in Russia.

<sup>34</sup> *Love and Saint Augustine* ([LSA] 1996).



FIGURE 1: HANNAH ARENDT AT WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY (MICHAEL S. ROTH, 2013)

In 1929, she married the Jewish philosopher Günther Anders<sup>35</sup> (1902-1992) and settled in Berlin where she worked for several Zionist and Jewish organisations. Under the encouragement of Kurt Blumenfeld (1884-1963), a leading Zionist figure in Germany, Arendt worked covertly in the Prussian State Library, collecting material there to evidence the growing anti-Semitism in Germany, an activity for which she was briefly jailed in 1933. She left Germany illegally that year, becoming a 'stateless person' ([HAKJC] 1992, p.29), and after spells in Czechoslovakia and Switzerland relocated to Paris and worked for organisations such as Youth

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<sup>35</sup> Günther Siegmund Stern assumed the *nom de plume* Günther Anders (*Anders* meaning *other* or *different*) while working as a journalist and continued using it for the rest of his career (ELISABETH YOUNG-BRUEHL, 2004, p.83).

Aliyah, which helped young Jewish refugees emigrate to Palestine. Soon after her first husband left for the USA they divorced, and in 1940 she married Heinrich Blücher (1899-1970), a former Communist Party member. When in 1940 Germany invaded France, Arendt was imprisoned in the Gurs internment and prisoner of war camp in occupied France. Escaping from there to New York with Blücher, she went on to teach at several American universities, including Princeton, Berkeley, and Chicago, but was most closely associated with the New School for Social Research, where she taught political philosophy until her death in 1975.

Arendt came to prominence as a political writer with the publication in 1951 of *The origins of totalitarianism* ([OT] 2004), a book which explores the elements, the most significant of which being anti-Semitism, imperialism, and the collapse of the nation state, that crystallised into the totalitarianism of the Nazi and Stalinist regimes. Then in 1958, Arendt published *The human condition* ([HC] 1998), her account of how human activities have been understood throughout Western history and which makes a case for the value of politics and political action. In 1961, she reported on the trial of Adolf Eichmann (1906-1962), which led to the publication of *Eichmann in Jerusalem: a report on the banality of evil* ([EJ] 2006) in 1963. The same year saw *On revolution* ([OR] 2006), a comparative analysis of the American and French Revolutions. In the sixties and early seventies, several important collections of essays were completed: *Between past and future: eight exercises on political thought* in 1961 ([BPF] 2006); *Men in dark times* in 1968 ([MDT] 1973); and *Crises in the republic* in 1972 ([CR] 1972). At the time of her death in 1975, she had completed the first two volumes, *Thinking and Willing*, of her philosophical work, *The life of the mind*, which was published posthumously in 1978 ([LM] 1981). The final volume of this work, *Judging*, remained unwritten save for the title and two epigraphs, but background material and lecture notes were subsequently made

available in 1982, under the title *Lectures on Kant's political philosophy* ([LKPP] 1992). Despite the seeming diversity of subjects addressed by Arendt in her work, most of her writings address either the nature of thinking (how to understand the world) or the nature of action (how to engage with the world) or sometimes both (DAVID ARNDT, 2019). And these twin concerns are ultimately political, since for Arendt politics consists in 'human beings acting - discoursing, persuading, deciding on specific deeds, doing them - in the public realm' (ELISABETH YOUNG-BRUEHL, 2006, p.83). Simply put, politics for Arendt is 'man's capacity to act and to act together and in concert' ([HC] 1998, p.123).

## UNDERSTANDING ARENDT

### Ancient Greece

As Peter Euben points out, Arendt remains one of the few political theorists for whom ancient Greece is the major point of departure (2000). However, unlike classical political theorists (or philosophers) such as Plato, Arendt does not provide a blueprint for an ideal society. Neither does she describe politics in the customary terms of achieving goals, of ruling over others, of governing, or of distributing resources. For Arendt, politics is 'a global dominion in which people appear primarily as active agents who lend human affairs a permanence they otherwise do not have' ([PP] 2005, p.97). Such a space of appearances existed in ancient Greece as the polis.

Educated in her youth as a philosopher and by her own admission 'interested neither in history nor in politics' ([JW] 2007, p.466), Arendt nevertheless went on to become a political theorist who chose 'to look at politics, so to speak, with eyes unclouded by philosophy' ([EU] 1994, pp.1-2). For while Arendt thought that the Greeks had 'first discovered the essence and realm

of the political' (DAVID ARNDT, 2019, p.52), she also rejected the western tradition of political philosophy that had since Plato approached politics from the perspective of philosophers:

Political philosophy necessarily implies the attitude of the philosopher towards politics; its tradition began with the philosopher's turning away from politics and then returning in order to impose his standards on human affairs ([TMA/BPF] 2006, p.17).

Arendt makes a distinction between the western political tradition that understands politics as rulership and western political history that began much earlier, in 'the Homeric world with its understanding of the greatness of human deeds and enterprises' and as exemplified by its hero, Achilles, that 'doer of great deeds and speaker of great words' ([PP] 2005, pp.44-45). The Greek polis, created in order 'to multiply the chances for everybody to distinguish himself, to show in deed and word who he was in his unique distinctiveness' ([HC] 1998, p.197), thus 'grew out of and remained rooted in the Greek pre-polis experience' ([HC] 1998, p.196).

In Arendt's reading, politics before Plato referred to 'the political way of life of the citizen of the polis' ([LWA/TWB] 2018, p.292), that is, to the 'sharing of words and deeds' with one's peers in the public space created for this purpose ([HC] 1998, p.197). Released from the 'necessitations of labour as well as the necessitations of means-end thinking that constitutes the instrumentality of work' (PAUL VOICE, 2014, p.47), men in the polis were able to speak and act freely with each other. As such, politics was considered the genuine and only sphere of human freedom.

However, for Arendt, 'our tradition of political philosophy was founded in explicit opposition to the polis and its activities' (MAURIZO PASSERIN D'ENTRÈVES, 1994, p.42); that is to say, it was



founded in opposition to politics understood as the public expression of human speech and action:

Plato, the father of political philosophy in the West, attempted in various ways to oppose the polis and what it understood by freedom by positing a political theory in which political standards were derived not from politics but from philosophy, by developing a detailed constitution whose laws corresponded to ideas accessible only to the philosopher ([PP] 2005, pp.130-131).

In Arendt's account of the matter<sup>36</sup>, philosophy since Plato has neglected human action and the fact of plurality, 'the *conditio per quam*' of politics ([HC] 1998, p.7); it has, in other words, ignored the fact that the world is full of plural and unique humans, all of whom as newcomers to the world possess 'the capacity of beginning something anew, that is, of acting' ([HC] 1998, p.9). Our tradition, as opposed to our history, of political philosophy instead 'concerns man in his singularity': it generalises *man* instead of looking at plural and distinct *men*, and so is simply 'unpolitical by nature' ([WF/BPF] 2006, p.241).

Hence, Arendt makes a distinction in a 1965 Cornell lecture *From Machiavelli to Marx* ([FMM] 1965) between 'the "philosophers" and the writers': the philosophers 'write from the outside and they want to impose non-political standards on politics. This is the tradition from Plato'; whereas writers such as Niccolò Machiavelli (1469-1527), Montesquieu (1689-1755), and Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1859) resist traditional philosophy and 'write out of political experiences and for the sake of politics' and who take it as axiomatic 'that the political life is

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<sup>36</sup> Lisa Jane Disch, following Bhikhu Parekh (1981) and Margaret Canovan (1992), suggests Arendt takes a rather 'monolithic' view of the philosophical tradition: 'It has already been effectively argued and by many scholars that the Western political tradition is not reducible to a single plot but contains multiple stories that can be both oppressive and liberating' (1994, p.29). What is more important, at least for my purposes, is the use Arendt makes of the story she tells to define politics. Also, despite Arendt's rather sweeping criticism of philosophy, she does qualify this in places: she acknowledges that such 'absolute philosophical standards' ([PP] 2005, p.37) were at some point useful in that they constituted an 'attempt to understand what was happening in the human realm'; she adds, however, that 'this usefulness for understanding ... was exhausted with the approach of the modern age' ([PP] 2005, p.38).

the best life. It cannot have an “end”, a goal that would be higher than itself’ ([FMM] 1965, [no pagination]). The tradition that valued philosophical contemplation over human action and which saw ‘political activity as something necessary for the life of contemplation’ thus reduced free and spontaneous action to a means-ends realisation of intentions: ‘Only if seen in the image of work, could political action be trusted to produce lasting results’ ([LWA/TWB] 2018, p.293).

Arendt argues that politics as practice cannot be approached through pure contemplation or abstract theory as though *what’s good for the goose is good for the gander*. Politics cannot be predicated in this manner as politics happens in practice, in action; and action is entirely unpredictable, it being the expression of human plurality and natality. Thus she writes: ‘matters of practical politics [are] subject to the agreement of many; they can never lie in theoretical considerations or the opinion of one person’ ([HC] 1998, p.5). Traditional political theory that seeks to realise its vision for a new society simply does not cut the mustard. Put simply, Arendt:

believed it is up to the actors themselves to judge how to act, and to persuade each other on the best course to follow. The political theorist was in no position to tell the actor what to do (MELVYN A. HILL, 1979, x-xi).

## Phenomenology

Notwithstanding the difficulty of placing Arendt in a particular tradition, Arendt’s ‘method’ or approach to politics has been shown to owe something to Heidegger’s existential phenomenology. David Arndt, for example, suggests the following:

She [Arendt] learned phenomenology from Heidegger, whose way of thought was grounded in his view of human existence. This 'existential' phenomenology aimed at a 'critical dismantling' ('*Kritische Abbau*') of concepts inherited from a philosophical tradition (DAVID ARNDT, 2019, p.34).

Indeed, in a letter written to her erstwhile friend Gershom Scholem, who had accused her disparagingly of being another intellectual from the German left, Arendt writes: 'If I can be said to "have come from anywhere," it is from the tradition of German philosophy' ([JW] 2007, p.466), that is the traditions of phenomenology<sup>37</sup>; though what manner of phenomenology she left unsaid, only telling a student: 'I am a sort of phenomenologist, but, ach, not in Hegel's [Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel] way - or Husserl's [Edmund Husserl]' (ELISABETH YOUNG-BRUEHL, 2004, p.405).

While Arendt did not create systematic philosophies of the Hegelian sort, the influence on her of phenomenology and of Martin Heidegger and Karl Jaspers in particular, is apparent in her emphasis generally on the lived experience as a starting point for thinking, and specifically in her tripartite categorisation of human activity in *The human condition*<sup>38</sup>. In a rare moment of self-commentary captured in her essay *Action and 'the pursuit of happiness'*, Arendt discusses the importance of incidents and experiences over abstract ideas:

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<sup>37</sup> 'Husserl, considered the founder of the phenomenological movement ... He focused on consciousness, and thought of phenomenology as a kind of descriptive enterprise that would specify the structures that characterize consciousness and the world as we experience it. The first-person point of view means that the phenomenologist, the investigator of consciousness, studies his or her own experience from the point of view of living through that experience' (SHAUN GALLAGHER, 2012, p.7).

<sup>38</sup> Discussed at length in *In Heidegger's shadow: Hannah Arendt's phenomenological humanism* (LEWIS P. HINCHMAN AND SANDRA K. HINCHMAN, 1984); and also more recently in Sophie Loidolt's *Phenomenology of plurality: Hannah Arendt on political intersubjectivity*. Loidolt examines Arendt's connections to phenomenology and suggests that Arendt's concept of plurality 'introduces the political into philosophical and phenomenological thought' (2018, p.2).

I have always believed that, no matter how abstract our theories may sound or how consistent our arguments may appear, there are incidents and stories behind them which, at least for ourselves, contain as in a nutshell the full meaning of whatever we have to say. Thought itself ... arises out of the actuality of incidents, and incidents of living experience must remain the guideposts by which it takes its bearings if it is not to lose itself in the heights to which thinking soars, or in the depths to which it must descend ([APH/TWB] 2018, pp.201-202).

Similarly, in the 1972 conference on her own work, Arendt insists that thinking does not come from nowhere but from our own experiences:

What is the subject of our thought? Experience! Nothing else! And if we lose the ground of experience then we get into all kinds of theories. When the political theorist begins to build his systems he is also usually dealing with abstractions ([HAHA/TWB] 2018, p.449).

Indeed, Jerome Kohn, Arendt's last teaching and research assistant, argues that Arendt's essays *What is authority?* and *What is freedom?*, far from offering 'another political philosophy, of which there has been a long sequence since Plato', instead 'contain the seeds ... of what may be the first philosophy of political experience ever conceived' (2006, xx) . Arendt gives attention not to man *qua* man, but to human beings in their plurality, and particularly to how 'freedom experienced by men and women joined in speech and action ... brings the realm of politics and political life into existence' (2006, xx). As Sophie Loidolt puts it:

Arendt intends to open up a new field for thought that has always been denied the *thaumazein* ['the wonder at that which is' ([PP] 2005, p.32)], namely the *realm of human affairs*. As Arendt's narrative has it, the philosophers' contempt for this 'idle realm' goes back to Plato's mistrust in the polis that killed his teacher Socrates ... Human affairs were consequently excluded from being a field of philosophical inspiration and awe. Arendt's philosophical project is to oppose this attitude by showing that the realm of human affairs is - in its very fragility - one of the most important spheres of philosophical *thaumazein*, which has yet remained *unthought* (SOPHIE LOIDOLT, 2018, p.46).

## Totalitarianism

As many writers such as Claude Lefort (1988); Margaret Canovan (1992); Maurizio Passerin d'Entreves (1994); Trevor Tchir (2017); and Richard Bernstein (2018) have pointed out, Arendt's attempts to reclaim the original meaning, significance, and dignity of politics as human action and freedom are perhaps most helpfully understood in the context of the horrors of Nazism and Stalinism. Arendt saw totalitarianism as a system of 'Total domination [that] does not allow for free initiative in any field of life, for any activity that is not entirely predictable' ([OT] 2004, p.449). In eradicating the freedom of people to act, and the spaces for action, Arendt argues that totalitarianism erased the boundary between the political and non-political. Hence, while everything seemed political under totalitarianism, in that this system aimed at comprehensive political domination, nothing was political for the same reason - politics, for Arendt, being a matter of people appearing before one another as unique and distinct individuals and freely speaking and acting together and making decisions together.

And this kind of politics requires a space. Since action is fragile, Arendtian politics 'needs *housing*' (JEREMY WALDRON, 2000, p.203), that is, either a literal or a metaphorical polis:

Because of its inherent tendency to disclose the agent together with the act, action needs for its full appearance the shining brightness we once called glory, and which is possible only in the public realm ([HC] 1998, p.180).

Totalitarianism instead destroys political space, squeezing people together so that they lose their ability to appear before one another as unique and distinct individuals. It forces on people a condition of worldlessness, isolating them from the political realm and making it impossible for words and deeds to be expressed and witnessed. Claude Lefort (1924-2010), the French

philosopher and activist, is particularly insightful on how Arendt's politics were not only a response to totalitarianism's depoliticised form of politics but a mirror image of it:

Arendt's reading of totalitarianism in both its Nazi and Stalinist version governs the subsequent elaboration of her theory of politics. She conceptualizes politics by inverting the image of totalitarianism, and this leads her to look, not for a model of politics - the use of the word 'model' would be a betrayal of her intentions - but for a reference to politics in certain privileged moments when its features are most clearly discernable [*sic*]: the moment of the Greek City in Antiquity and, in modern times, the moments of the American and French Revolutions. The moment of the workers' councils in Russia in 1917, and that of the Hungarian workers' councils of 1956, might also be added to the list (CLAUDE LEFORT, 1988, p.50).

### Recovering the political

Arendt has been justly described as 'an unorthodox political theorist' (STEVE BUCKLER, 2011, p.1). While Arendt was engaged in making distinctions of her own<sup>39</sup>, commentators have struggled to categorise the work she produced. Just as her contemporaries found her difficult to pin down (PHILLIP HANSEN, 1993), she continues to this day to eschew easy categorisation (CAROLIN KREBER, 2016). Not only did she write on subjects as diverse as totalitarianism, the Holocaust, revolutions, civil disobedience, the nature of freedom, and the faculties of thought and judgement<sup>40</sup>, but her politics 'cannot be characterized in terms of the traditional categories of conservatism, liberalism, and socialism' (MAURIZO PASSERIN D'ENTRÈVES, 1994, p.1). Arendt herself appeared more than content to remain outside of such labels:

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<sup>39</sup> In comparing Arendt's *The human condition* with Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) *Leviathan or the matter, forme and power of a common-wealth ecclesiasticall and civil* written and published in 1651, Gerard Heather and Matthew Stolz argue that 'both are great exercises in the arts of political naming' (GERARD P. HEATHER AND MATTHEW STOLZ, 1979, p.18). Though of course it must also be remembered that, as Dana Villa puts it, Arendt left behind no 'systematic political philosophy in the mode of Thomas Hobbes or John Rawls' (2000, p.1). Indeed, the very idea of producing such a philosophy would have been anathema to Arendt.

<sup>40</sup> *Hannah Arendt - complete works. Critical edition* (in press) aims to publish all of Arendt's published and unpublished work which is estimated to require editing approximately 12,000 pages (HANNAH ARENDT: KRITISCHE GESAMTAUSGABE).

You know the left think that I am conservative, and the conservatives sometimes think I am left or I am a maverick or God knows what. And I must say that I couldn't care less. I don't think that the real questions of this century will get any kind of illumination by this kind of thing ([HAHA/TWB] 2018, pp.333-334).

Arendt's unique approach to politics has led to her being characterised by Lefort as 'one of the few writers to have attempted to give the notion of the political its true meaning' (1988, p.6). Lefort argues that political theorists should 'look for signs of the political in areas where its existence usually goes unnoticed or is denied' (1988, p.1). Thus, rather than taking politics as a given (*It's the economy, stupid* seems an apt characterisation of contemporary neo-liberal politics), it is important, as the Belgian political theorist, Chantal Mouffe (1943-), has also argued, to look beyond politics, and particularly beyond modern liberal representative democratic models, in order to discover the political - or what Ingerid Straume calls 'politics proper' (2016, p.31) - which for Mouffe is more evident in direct and agonistic republican polities (2005; 2006). Even today, Arendt's thinking on politics is considered distinctive. In *The anthem companion to Hannah Arendt*, the editors happily acknowledge that 'Running throughout Arendt's work is a conception of politics that is profoundly at odds with that advanced by most mainstream social science' (PETER BAEHR AND PHILIP WALSH, 2017, p.15).

As mentioned earlier, *pearl diving*<sup>41</sup> is Arendt's practice of tracing concepts back in history and uncovering from them those original experiences which led to their formation. In her *Preface to Between past and future*, she describes her task as a political thinker in these terms:

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<sup>41</sup> See my INTRODUCTION.

to discover the real origins of traditional concepts in order to distill from them anew their original spirit which has so sadly evaporated from the very key words of political language - such as freedom and justice, authority and reason, responsibility and virtue, power and glory - leaving behind empty shells with which to settle almost all accounts, regardless of their underlying phenomenal reality ([P/BPF] 2006, p.14).

Hence, as Arendt notes in *Men in dark times*, 'in the final analysis all problems are linguistic problems' because in language 'the past is contained ineradicably, thwarting all attempts to get rid of it once and for all' ([WB/MDT] 1973, p.201)<sup>42</sup>. Arendt's quest for the political, which took the unusual form of pearl diving into the past and finding various 'forms and shapes that remain immune to the elements' ([WB/MDT] 1973, p.203), involved the recovery of the original experience of politics from ancient Greece in the form of the polis. Thus, Arendt's pearl diving into the origins of our political vocabulary is only partly concerned with the sanctity of language<sup>43</sup>. As Peter Euben puts it:

She did believe that Ancient Greece contained 'thought fragments' that could be pried loose from the depths of the past. In these terms (taken from Walter Benjamin), she is a pearl diver whose aim is not to resuscitate the past or renew extinct ages, but to introduce crystallizations of rare beauty and profundity into the lives we share with each other (PETER J. EUBEN, 2000, p.163).

For Arendt, the language as used points toward the original experiences; hence, in recovering the original meaning of words such as *politics*, she brings to light the original experiences they encapsulated:

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<sup>42</sup> There are parallels here with Ralph Waldo Emerson's (1803-1882) conception of language as *fossil poetry*: 'For, though the origin of most of our words is forgotten, each word was at first a stroke of genius, and obtained currency, because for the moment it symbolized the world to the first speaker and to the hearer. The etymologist finds the deadest word to have been once a brilliant picture. Language is fossil poetry. As the limestone of the continent consists of infinite masses of the shells of animalcules, so language is made up of images, or tropes, which now, in their secondary use, have long ceased to remind us of their poetic origin' (2002, p.125).

<sup>43</sup> Arendt's *poetic* approach to language has something of W. H. Auden's conservatism (as in *conservation* or *preservation*) about it: 'As a poet', Auden wrote, 'there is only one political duty, and that is to defend one's language from corruption' (ROLLO MAY, 1998, p.65).



Let us therefore go back once more to antiquity, i.e., to its political and pre-philosophical traditions, certainly not for the sake of erudition and not even because of the continuity of our tradition, but merely because a freedom experienced in the process of acting and nothing else ... has never again been articulated with the same classical clarity ([WF/BPF] 2006, pp.163-164).

A problem with modern politics is that it has lost contact with what it was and with its own linguistic heritage. In tracing the etymology of the term *politics* to the Greek *polis*, Arendt hopes to cast new (or rather ancient) light on our modern and diminished understanding of the term. Her message is clear and provocative, namely, 'that what most men most of the time take to be politics is not politics at all' (SHELDON S. WOLIN, 1977, p.94).

While Lefort and Mouffe use the term *political* to describe what they see as genuine politics, and Straume uses the term *politics proper*, Arendt's pearl diving leads her to continue to use the term *politics* but she restores to it its original designation - politics being that which took place in the space called the polis. Simply put, when Arendt uses the word *political*, as she comments herself, she uses it 'in the sense of the Greek polis' ([WF/BPF] 2006, p.153). Arendt's conception of politics is thus not simply at odds with our contemporary experience of politics but constitutes a provocative reminder of what politics used to be, a grand Homeric *bios politikos* of speech and action in a space set aside for the purpose. Arendt argues that the polis was understood as 'that interpersonal formation that allows one's actions and speeches to be remembered' (JOHN LEVI MARTIN, 2017, p.63). Though long since forgotten in our age of representative and party politics, where speech ('the obvious phoniness of its dialogue') and action ('where the voter can only consent or refuse to ratify a choice which ... is made without him') are restricted to a professional elite ([OR] 2006, p.267), Arendt suggests this political spirit can still be experienced - most feasibly in revolutionary uprisings, these being 'the time-

space where action with all its implications were discovered, or, rather rediscovered for the modern age' ([APH/TWB] 2018, p.218).

While the manifestations of Arendt's pearl diving vary according to the political and historical contexts she engages with - from the original politics of ancient Greece, to the intermittent and spontaneous outbreaks of the same political spirit in various uprisings and revolutions during the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, to the total disappearance of genuine politics under totalitarianism in Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia - Arendt's concern and demand for politics is pervasive and unequivocal. There is, in other words, an underlying and consistent political 'temper' (PHILLIP HANSEN, 1993, p.1) visible across her work which, rather like the repeated *leitmotifs*<sup>44</sup> in Richard Wagner's operas, remains recognisable even as it adapts and develops.

Phillip Hansen's characterisation of this temper is informative:

a certain sense of proportion in both political thinking and political acting ... a kind of openness to political experience ... which acknowledges that we act within contexts such that nothing is either inevitably fated or radically undetermined ... that even in the grimmest of times ... there are always possibilities for something better in the realm of human affairs (PHILLIP HANSEN, 1993, p.4).

If we look at how this decidedly positive temper manifests itself most explicitly in Arendt's work, I suggest it is in her various descriptions of what Lefort terms 'privileged moments ... the moments of the American and French Revolutions' (1988, p.50), those historical moments, in other words, when politics was at its most political. The importance Arendt affords these privileged political moments is evident throughout her writing, which in one way or another

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<sup>44</sup> Richard Wagner (1813-1888) is of course the composer most associated with this concept of representative and recurring themes or 'leading motives' (*Leitmotifs*).

praises the concept of the polis. This is perhaps at its most explicit in *The human condition*, which lauds the ancient Greek institution as the earliest and perhaps purest of these privileged moments, but is also evidence in later works such as *On revolution* ([OR] 2006), which describes various modern outbreaks of what she calls 'the revolutionary spirit' ([OR] 2006, p.36) - these being similar in kind to, but not copies of, the original moment of the polis.

#### THINKING AND ACTING AHEAD

'Politics happens when people freely come together as equals to speak about, or act on, matters of common concern' (NED O'GORMAN, 2020, p.12). At first sight, this might seem a world away from the work of teaching EAP. However, what is hopefully becoming clear is that Arendt's very particular understanding of politics differs from that articulated by the two approaches to EAP discussed in the previous section of this chapter.

In this thesis I will draw on Arendt's unique understanding of politics and particularly her concept of action as words and deeds, and the related concepts of natality, plurality, and the polis. If we remember that perhaps the most fundamental aspect of EAP is speech, then Arendt's concept of action that involves people talking and persuading each other, distinguishing and disclosing themselves through freely acting and speaking together in a designated space, begins to seem more than relevant. Additionally, given that EAP deals with international newcomers to the university, I also draw on Arendt's thinking on education about the need to protect young people and their natality from the publicity of the public realm. My argument focuses on thinking about the space of EAP as an educational space for the practice of thinking and speaking. While these key concepts of action and the polis are by

definition political matters, Arendt's educational work offers a view from across the bridge as it were at what the sanctity of politics means for the activity of education. In short, Arendt offers a political and educational reading of spaces that is highly suggestive for EAP.

The purpose of the next two chapters, on Arendt and education and then on Arendt and politics, is to explore these ideas further. Of course, there are many writers both inside and outside the field of applied linguistics - that being arguably the clearest theoretical 'home' for EAP - to whom one could turn to help interrogate the purposes of EAP, but in these following chapters I begin to unpack why I believe the work of Arendt to be so relevant to education and to EAP in particular.

# CHAPTER 2

## CHAPTER 2: HANNAH ARENDT AND EDUCATION

*In this chapter I discuss Arendt's contributions to education, focusing mainly but not exclusively on her two essays on the subject - *The crisis in education* ([CE/BPF] 2006) and *Reflections on Little Rock* ([RLR/PHA] 2000) - in preparation for an account in **CHAPTER 4** of how Arendt's thinking on education and higher education, together with her thinking on politics (the latter explored in **CHAPTER 3**), hold tremendous relevance for the field of EAP.*

*I have organised this chapter into four main sections which, in the spirit of the topic, I have named: introduction into education; primary; secondary; and tertiary. After this short introductory section [section i: introduction into education] which offers some context and sets out my approach to reading Arendt's educational essays as educational and political disquisitions, I provide in **section ii: primary** an account of Arendt's educational thinking as she describes it in the principal educational text (*The crisis in education*) and highlight its major relevant themes. Then in **section iii: secondary**, I look at the importance of the educational-political distinction for Arendt and the dangers of conflating the two activities, referencing in particular her essay *Reflections on Little Rock*. Finally, in **section iv: tertiary**, I discuss Arendt's very different, and relatively underexplored, conception of adult and university education.*

## SECTION I: INTRODUCTION INTO EDUCATION

Arendt published very little on education and yet her work is now increasingly being discussed in educational circles. However, until very recently, her political work more than her educational work found itself the focus of such literature, and this in spite of Arendt's infamous insistence in *The crisis in education* that 'We must decisively divorce the realm of education from others, most of all from the realm of the public, political life' ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.192). Given that Arendt is widely recognised as one of the most influential political thinkers of her generation, it is perhaps only natural that her numerous political writings have overshadowed her educational output; but this is not the only reason why Arendt's ideas on education have been somewhat neglected. Rather, it would seem to lie in the essays themselves: considered deeply controversial at the time of publication, they continue to trouble some readers to this day. And it is Arendt's fundamental claim underpinning both essays, that we must separate the political from the educational, which has proved most controversial. Unsurprisingly then, Arendt as a writer on education has not been taken very seriously: writers have often branded her educational thinking as disappointingly anti-progressive and undemocratic compared to her political thinking<sup>45</sup> and / or have side-lined her educational work almost entirely and focused on applying her political ideas to the realm of education instead<sup>46</sup>. However, in the last two decades, Arendt's educational writings have been the subject of studies which have recognised, as Mordechai Gordon, whose edited volume of essays on the subject helped bring

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<sup>45</sup> See, for example, David Snelgrove's (2014) *Political upheaval and turmoil's shaping educational philosophy: Hannah Arendt on education*.

<sup>46</sup> See, for example, Haim Gordon's (1989) *Learning to think: Arendt on education for democracy*; and more recently, David Coulter's (2002) *What counts as action in educational action research?*.

Arendt into the educational limelight<sup>47</sup>, puts it, ‘the need to take Arendt’s ideas on education seriously and to engage them critically’ (2001b, p.1). As Gordon highlights, while Arendt can be termed conservative, she is perhaps uniquely so; unlike mainstream conservative educationalists such as Edward Wynne, she also ‘believes in providing students with opportunities for change and innovation’ (2001a, p.37). This being the case, it can be said that Arendt’s conception of education offers an alternative to both conservative and critical educational traditions. As Gordon argues:

Hannah Arendt offers a unique voice that can enhance the critical tradition’s call for transforming education so that it can foster the values of democratic citizenship and social justice. Arendt provides us with a way of conceptualizing the educators’ relationship to the past and tradition that is different from that of both mainstream conservatives and critical theorists (MORDECHAI GORDON, 2001b, p.2).

Some of the more recent works that engage with Arendt’s educational and political ideas in relation to the field of education are shown below [TABLE 1]:

**TABLE 1: SELECTED WORKS ON ARENDT AND EDUCATION**

ERIC GORHAM (2000) THE THEATER OF POLITICS: HANNAH ARENDT, POLITICAL SCIENCE, AND HIGHER EDUCATION
MORDECHAI GORDON (ED.) (2001C) HANNAH ARENDT AND EDUCATION: RENEWING OUR COMMON WORLD
GERT BIESTA (2006) BEYOND LEARNING: DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION OF A HUMAN FUTURE
CHRIS HIGGINS (ED.) (2010) TEACHERS COLLEGE RECORD
CHRIS HIGGINS (2011) THE GOOD LIFE OF TEACHING: AN ETHICS OF PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE
JON NIXON (2012) INTERPRETIVE PEDAGOGIES FOR HIGHER EDUCATION: ARENDT, BERGER, SAID, NUSSBAUM AND THEIR LEGACIES

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<sup>47</sup> Wayne Veck and Helen Gunter describe this as ‘the first landmark edited collection’ of essays specifically on Arendt and education (2020a, p.2).



HELEN GUNTER (2014) EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND HANNAH ARENDT
WAYNE VECK AND SHARON JESSOP (EDS.) (2016) JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION AND HISTORY
MORTEN KORSGAARD (2019) BEARING WITH STRANGERS: ARENDT, EDUCATION AND THE POLITICS OF INCLUSION
WAYNE VECK AND HELEN GUNTER (EDS.) (2020B) HANNAH ARENDT ON EDUCATIONAL THINKING AND PRACTICE IN DARK TIMES: EDUCATION FOR A WORLD IN CRISIS
JON NIXON (2020B) HANNAH ARENDT: THE PROMISE OF EDUCATION

These writers take a more holistic view of Arendt's work and so generally avoid making the mistake that Jon Nixon has very recently drawn attention to - that of reading Arendt's two essays on education out of context:

Both essays have tended to brand her as educationally and socially conservative. Each was written in response to specific and highly controversial issues, and later discussion of these two works all too often fails to locate them within the broader context of her thinking and of the social and political situation within which she was writing. (Arendt did, however, remain adamant throughout her life that children should be given a sheltered period for maturation and should not therefore be mobilized for political purposes.) What I shall argue throughout the following chapters is that - if we take into account the complex constellation of concepts with which Arendt was working - the implications of her thinking for education are much broader and deeper than evidenced in her two essays devoted exclusively to the education and schooling of children. We need to grasp her thinking as a whole, before we can usefully apply it to our own thinking about education (JON NIXON, 2020b, vii).

Nixon's point here is surely sensible and sums up my own approach to reading Arendt. In this manner, rather than maintaining that her educational thinking is limited or conservative and therefore at odds with her political thinking, which is generally seen as radical, Nixon suggests Arendt's educational thinking can only be properly understood in the context of her political thinking. I think Nixon is right to acknowledge that the ideas expressed in these educational essays benefit from being read in the context of her other works, though I suggest this is not only for the reason Nixon puts forward (that these other writings put flesh onto some of the educational bones), but also because they help to highlight that Arendt's overriding concern,

even in these essays, is always with the political. My reading of Arendt is that these educational essays and their concerns are not excursions from her political thinking then but rather discussions of her perennial theme: that politics as action-in-space is distinct and should not be reduced to or confused with any other human activity.

Helen Gunter takes a similar view, recommending that Arendt's educational work ideally be read alongside her non-educational writings because 'her analysis of educational issues speaks to grand challenges about the polity and democratic renewal' (2014, p.126) - challenges which Arendt continually addresses in her political writings. While I disagree with Chris Higgins when he writes in his introduction to the special issue of *Teachers College Record* that *The crisis in education* 'often conflicts in interesting and productive ways with what Arendt says on similar matters in other places' (2010, p.377), I do agree that Arendt's educational essays cannot be separated from her other works, particularly *The human condition*. Indeed, as he points out, *The crisis in education*, written while *The human condition* was in press, benefits from being read 'as an extension of Arendt's opus, not as a kind of post hoc contribution that a philosopher might make if invited to say a little something to area [i.e. subject] teachers' (2010, p.377).

To conclude this introductory section, I wish to make the following points. Firstly, Arendt restricts her discussion of education in these two educational essays to a discussion of schooling, that is, to the education of children in schools. This is not an arbitrary choice on Arendt's part but one informed by her view that this is what education is: the formal introduction of the young into an existing public world by adults responsible for both the young they bring into the world and for the world itself. While today we typically use the term

education to refer to all manner of activities pertaining to teaching and learning, it is crucial if we wish to understand Arendt's educational arguments (such as her insistence that we cannot *educate* adults) to keep this in mind: education for Arendt refers exclusively to educating children and so is a matter of schooling<sup>48</sup>. This is important for an understanding of the essays themselves but also because Arendt's views on adult and university 'education' (which I explore later in this chapter in **section iv: tertiary**) are quite different from her views on education *qua* schooling.

Secondly, I wish to reiterate here that Arendt is a political thinker writing about education. In neither of the two educational works does Arendt profess to be 'a professional educator' ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.171)<sup>49</sup>; nor does she discuss the technical particulars of school or curriculum reforms, happily conceding that such matters 'must really be left to the experts and the pedagogues' ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.192). Instead, Arendt writes these essays from the perspective of a political thinker who claims that 'the recurring crisis in education ... has become a political problem of the first magnitude' ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.170) - and hence these twin interventions into educational matters, which essentially make a case for the separation of the educational from the political and of the political from the educational.

Thirdly, that Arendt insists on this separation of these two activities does not mean that education serves no political function. As Natasha Levinson rightly emphasises:

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<sup>48</sup> Morten Korsgaard is similarly clear on this point and so uses the two terms 'synonymously' (2019, p.79).

<sup>49</sup> In the first published version of her *Crisis essay*, Arendt is even more explicit regarding her credentials. It begins: 'I am not a professional educator and so I shall be speaking to you on a subject about which, in the specialist's sense, I know nothing' ([CE/PR] 1958, p.493).

Arendt's insistence that education not be conflated with politics does not mean that she downplays the role education plays in preparing the young for participation in political life. 'The Crisis in Education,' makes it clear that education is an inherently political undertaking, although Arendt understands this to mean something quite specific (NATASHA LEVINSON, 2002, p.202).

What this political function is will be explored further in the following section [**section ii: primary**], but in short it centres on our responsibility for the world and for the children we bring into it:

Education is the point at which we decide whether we love the world enough to assume responsibility for it, and by the same token save it from that ruin which, except for renewal, except for the coming of the new and the young, would be inevitable ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.193).

To conclude: despite the fact that Arendt's thinking on educational matters is mostly limited to the matter of schooling, which is on the face of it less relevant to the adult practice of EAP, there are grand ideas in these two essays which are potentially relevant for my purpose in so far as EAP can be seen to operate at, using Euben's (2001, p.186) phrase again, 'the end point of education and the beginning of politics', and in a space suitable for either 'teaching about action' (NATASHA LEVINSON, 2002, p.204)<sup>50</sup> or for some form of 'educational action' (WOUTER POLS AND JOOP BERDING, 2018)<sup>51</sup>. My aim then in this chapter is to focus largely on those aspects of

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<sup>50</sup> Natasha Levinson in a nuanced discussion of how one might 'apply her [Arendt's] theory of action to the educational domain' (p.202) argues that 'an Arendtian take on the task before us is that it is not a matter of teaching action but the more modest undertaking of teaching about action' (2002, p.204).

<sup>51</sup> Wouter Pols and Joop Berding make a useful distinction between 'political and educational action' in their recent contribution to the International handbook of philosophy of education. For these authors, educational action constitutes a kind of solution to the problem posed by Arendt's educational-political divide, with political action taking place in the real world and educational action taking place in a supervised world where children learn 'to use the objects chosen by adults as worthwhile' (2018, p.43). They then elaborate on Arendt's suggestion that the school is an intermediary space: 'The school in an "in-between space", the table of the world installed in it, the pupils around this table under supervision of their teacher, beginning to work with the objects of the world, beginning to act surrounded by these objects. This is the school Arendt suggests.' (2018, p.46). While Pols and Joop discuss educational action in relation to schooling, I will suggest in **CHAPTER 4** that the concept is particularly apt in relation to EAP and also highlight its theatrical implications.

Arendt's thinking on education which have potential relevance to EAP; their actual relevance will be made explicit in **CHAPTER 4**.

## SECTION II: PRIMARY

In this section, I discuss Arendt's major work on education, *The crisis in education*. While for reasons of organisational clarity, I treat Arendt's two educational essays separately, discussing the *Crisis* essay here and the *Reflections* essay in the following section, it is important to bear in mind that they were written as companion pieces, with *The crisis in education* ([CE/BPF] 2006) operating as the fleshed out theoretical partner to *Reflections on Little Rock* ([RLR/PHA] 2000), her highly controversial response to the developing tension around the forced desegregation of schools across the Southern states of America in the 1950s. As Arendt acknowledged in her *Preliminary remarks* to her *Reflections* essay, this earlier essay failed to 'take into account the role education plays, and has always played, in the political framework of this country' ([RLR/PHA] 2000, p.232), a failure rectified, she hopes, by her *Crisis* essay<sup>52</sup>.

*The crisis in education* is Arendt's most important educational work. Originally a lecture given in May 1958, it was published later in the same year in the *Partisan Review* before being revised and expanded and included in *Between past and future: eight exercises in political thought* in 1961. Each of these essayistic exercises addresses a particular crisis or turning point brought about by the general crisis in tradition and authority affecting the modern world. To the extent that a crisis 'tears away façades and obliterates prejudices', the particular crisis in education

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<sup>52</sup> One possible reason for *Reflections on Little Rock* not being, in Arendt's words, 'understood in the terms I wrote it' ([RLR/PHA] 2000, p.243), was that its theoretical basis was not fully fleshed out there but only in *The crisis in education* which, while published a year earlier in 1958, was not widely known at the time of the publication of the *Little Rock* essay.

lays 'bare the essence of the matter, and the essence of education is natality, the fact that human beings are *born* into the world' ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.171). Thus, *The crisis in education* takes up where *Reflections* leaves off, offering a more theoretical discussion about education and about the 'role education plays, and has always played, in the political framework of this [USA] country' ([RLR/PHA] 2000, p.232). Turning to the essay itself, I begin with a synopsis of Arendt's argument before highlighting the major issues most relevant to my thesis.

While *The crisis in education* specifically targets what Arendt identifies as the crisis in contemporary (1950s) American education, she brings to her exploration a determination to 'learn from this crisis ... by reflecting on the role that education plays in every civilization' ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.181). According to Arendt, the crisis affecting the modern world and 'its intrusion into the pre-political sphere' ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.188) reveals itself differently across different countries. In the United States, she argues it is particularly visible in the 'recurring crisis in education ... reported on almost daily in the newspapers', namely, the across-the-board decline in educational standards and attainment ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.170). Arendt points the finger here at progressive education and at America's uncritical acceptance of such 'an astounding hodgepodge of sense and nonsense' ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.175)<sup>53</sup>. That this crisis in authority and tradition 'has spread to such prepolitical areas as child-rearing and education, where authority in the widest sense has always been accepted' indicates the 'depth and seriousness' ([WIA/BPF] 2006, p.92) of the problem:

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<sup>53</sup> It is clear in reading *The crisis in education* that while Arendt's characterisation of progressive education is somewhat exaggerated, her attack is actually quite specific. As Natasha Levinson puts it: 'She is worried about that aspect of progressive education that is so eager to create the conditions of equality that it downplays the need for adult guidance' (2002, p.203).

The problem of education in the modern world lies in the fact that by its very nature it cannot forgo either authority or tradition, and yet must proceed in a world that is neither structured by authority nor held together by tradition ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.191).

Focusing initially on the American context, Arendt argues that from its constitutional beginnings, the United States has enjoyed an 'extraordinary enthusiasm for what is new, which is shown in almost every aspect of American daily life' ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.173)<sup>54</sup> - including education. This avidity for newness, together with a belief in the 'indefinite perfectibility' ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.173) of people and of the country itself, 'encourages the illusion that a new world is being built through the education of the children' ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.174). Arendt disagrees, arguing that education is instead always a matter of introducing children into an old world, a pre-existing world. However, this 'pathos of the new' ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.174) helps pave the way for the rapid uptake of new educational theories:

It has first of all made it possible for that complex of modern educational theories which originated in Middle Europe and consists of an astounding hodgepodge of sense and nonsense to accomplish, under the banner of progressive education, a most radical revolution in the whole system of education ([CE/BPF] 2006, pp.174-175).

Arendt suggests that the very particular origin and development of the United States as a new world has made it susceptible to the kind of educational ideal ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.173) such as that propounded by the philosopher and writer, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778). Following in the Platonic tradition of assigning a significant role to education in the creation of a utopian society, Rousseau makes education 'an instrument of politics' ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.173),

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<sup>54</sup> Arendt suggests America - historically at least - has always represented itself as new: the motto proposed in 1782 and featured on the reverse of the *Great Seal of the United States* and printed on the one-dollar bill since 1935 is, as Arendt reminds us: *Novus Ordo Seclorum*, Latin for *New order of the ages* or in Arendt's translation *A New Order of the World* ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.172).

an educative means, in other words, of producing the kind of moral citizens suitable for the model of society he presents in *The social contract*<sup>55</sup>. In Arendt's account, the underlying Rousseauist instrumentalism that is endemic to progressive education operates with 'the belief that one must begin with the children if one wishes to produce new conditions' ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.173) and educates children 'to be citizens of a utopian morrow' ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.174). Arendt argues that this emphasis on using the child to improve society, on seeing education as a means to an end - this politicising of education - effectively removes from the young 'their own future role in the body politic' ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.174).

Education, for Arendt, should be concerned with teaching children what the world is like and how it has come to be as it is, not with shaping the newness children bring into the world or dictating 'how it [the world] will look' ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.189). As Arendt explains:

It is in the very nature of the human condition that each new generation grows into an old world, so that to prepare a new generation for a new world can only mean that one wishes to strike from the newcomers' hands their own chance at the new ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.174).

While Arendt discusses several factors that are unique to the American experience and which have contributed to its educational crisis, she suggests that underlying these are three common and basic assumptions that have taken hold in modern societies such as the United States. In short, these are that American education assumes there is a separate and autonomous world of children 'which must insofar as possible be left to them to govern'; it values teaching as a skill over teaching content 'in such a way as to be wholly emancipated

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<sup>55</sup> In fact, Rousseau concludes his treatise on the *education* of Emile (*Émile, ou de l'éducation*, 1762) with a summary of his *political* work (*Du contrat social*, also 1762), thereby suggesting the importance of the political ideal for the educational activity.



from the actual material to be taught'; and it believes in doing not learning, assuming that 'you can know and understand only what you have done yourself' ([CE/BPF] 2006, pp.177-179).

At the heart of the essay is Arendt's claim that American society and its education system are failing to protect children from the world and failing too in their responsibility for safely introducing young people into the world. Arendt's argument here rests on the fundamental notion of natality, 'the fact that human beings are *born* into the world' ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.171). Against the Rousseauist instrumentalism of progressive education that risks using the child to improve society, Arendt pits the revolutionary newness and uniqueness of children - their natality. Natality is the capacity to begin something new. It is, as Arendt puts it in *The human condition*, the condition for human action and a miracle:

The miracle that saves the world, the realm of human affairs, from its normal, 'natural' ruin is ultimately the fact of natality, in which 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. Only the full experience of this capacity can bestow upon human affairs faith and hope, those two essential characteristics of human existence ([HC] 1998, p.247).

The child is always a newcomer and in two distinct but related senses:

he is new in a world that is strange to him and he is in the process of becoming, he is a new human being and he is a becoming human being ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.182).

In other words, the child along with other living things is a growing organism and needs such protection as is necessary for successful development and growth; but at the same time, the child is new to the world and the world is new to the child. Moreover, the world the child enters is anything but new: it 'was there before him ... [and] will continue after his death' ([CE/BPF]

2006, p.182). This double aspect has two important consequences, for parents and for educators.

Firstly, the fact that the child is a becoming human being means parents have a responsibility for the development of the child: 'the child requires special protection and care so that nothing destructive may happen to him from the world' ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.182). The protection of the child is (ideally) guaranteed by the institution of the family and by the privacy that the home provides. This 'shield against the world' provides children with the necessary 'place of security where they can grow ... [away from] the merciless glare of the public realm' ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.183) - and hence Arendt's insistence on keeping the private and public separate. In this *Crisis* essay, Arendt outlines the relevance of having and maintaining these historic distinctions between the private and the public realm to the matter of education:

The more completely modern society discards the distinction between what is private and what is public, between what can thrive only in concealment and what needs to be shown to all in the full light of the public world, the more, that is, it introduces between the private and the public a social sphere in which the private is made public and vice versa, the harder it makes things for its children, who by nature require the security of concealment in order to mature undisturbed ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.185).

The second consequence is that a child has not only been 'summoned ... into life through conception and birth' but also into 'a world' ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.182). The institution of the school is responsible for the introduction of the child to the world. Arendt makes the important point that the school belongs neither to the private realm nor the public realm but:

is rather the institution we interpose between the private domain of home and the world in order to make the transition from the family to the world ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.185).

The school is 'not yet actually the world' but it 'represents the world' ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.185). This being the case, the role of the educator is to help children enter the world 'as it is' ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.186), and gradually. With this in mind, teachers must stand 'as representatives of a world for which they must assume responsibility' ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.186). Introducing children into the world as it is does not preclude critique; but that they are adults entails a certain responsibility, and in terms of education this takes the form of authority:

The teacher's qualification consists in knowing the world and being able to instruct others about it, but his authority rests on his assumption of responsibility for that world ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.186).

This leads Arendt to the conclusion that education must be, for the preservation of the natality of the child and for the continuance of the world, a conservative, as in conserving, activity:

whose task is always to cherish and protect something - the child against the world, the world against the child, the new against the old, the old against the new ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.188).

The practical consequences of this demarcation along the lines of children and adults, and of education and politics, are twofold. Firstly, it means that 'the function of the school is to teach children what the world is like and not to instruct them in the art of living' ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.192): education is a matter of teaching students about the past and about their inheritance. Secondly, it means children should be distinguished from adults and treated and educated in a manner that is (only) appropriate for children. While this second claim in particular has

attracted a great deal of criticism, see, for example, Gert Biesta (2010)<sup>56</sup>, Arendt readily acknowledges that the line between childhood and adulthood is personally and culturally relative:

Where the line between childhood and adulthood falls in each instance cannot be determined by a general rule; it changes often, in respect to age, from country to country, from one civilization to another, and also from individual to individual ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.192).

Arendt's interest in these essays is arguably not with drawing the line but with the broader principle that children and their childhood and their education - and these must all come to an end at some point - be protected from political concerns.

Arendt concludes the essay by making another distinction, that between education and learning. As mentioned earlier, Arendt is clearly referring to the activity of schooling in this essay and hence her definition of education is that it 'must have a predictable end' ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.192), as opposed to learning which, while part and parcel of the experience of education, is something that can be engaged in at any age and for any length of time. The task remains, Arendt concludes, to renew the world we have in common:

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<sup>56</sup> Gert Biesta argues that Arendt's writings on education are (un)informed by a 'developmentalistic perspective' (2010, p.556) which restricts Arendt to locating the transition from childhood to adulthood 'within a temporal framework [and so] a question of (psychological) development and transition' (2010, p.565). This is unsatisfactory for Biesta as it both deprives children of the possibility of *acting politically* and assumes that all adults *qua* adults are capable of it. However, Korsgaard is surely correct in observing that the *Crisis* essay 'supplies little evidence to support this claim as capturing the true intention of Arendt's argument. Rather, Arendt appears concerned chiefly with the protection of childhood and education from the infringement of instrumental political concerns and what she called the light of the public' (2019, p.49). I return to this matter in **section iii: secondary**.

Education is the moment when we decide whether we love the world enough to take responsibility for it and at the same time save it from the devastation which, apart from renewal, would have been inevitable if not for the arrival of new and young people. And education is also the place where we decide whether we love our children enough not to expel them from our world and leave them to their fate, not to deprive them of the possibility of doing something new, unexpected, but to prepare them in advance for the task of renewing the common world ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.193).

In summary then, Arendt argues the following: education as schooling is a matter of conservation, it being a matter of introducing the young into the public world in such a way that they might be in a position to renew it; that this requires a clear separation between the realms of education and politics, with the school functioning as the transitional institution; and that this also means adults as educated citizens cannot or rather should not be re-educated.

To conclude this discussion of *The crisis in education*, I discuss a little more her main claim that education is a process of introducing children and young people into the very world they have been brought into by adults. As Roger Berkowitz (2020) has recently pointed out, Arendt's original German-language version of *The crisis in education* was published as *Die krise in der erziehung* ([KE] 1958), and given that German has two terms for the education of the young, *Bildung* [from *bilden*: to form or shape] and *Erziehung* [from *ziehen*: to pull or drag] (DWDS, 2020), we can assume Arendt's choice is significant<sup>57</sup>. Berkowitz reasonably surmises that Arendt's use of *Erziehung* indicates a view of education along the lines of 'a pulling of the student into the public world' (2020, p.18). While Arendt does not use the term

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<sup>57</sup> Gert Biesta has also recently discussed the *Bildung - Erziehung* distinction in relation to Arendt but acknowledges the matter may not be quite as straightforward as Berkowitz suggests: 'one of the difficulties with these terms is that even in the German context there is no agreed-upon definition of the two terms'. Nevertheless, there is a distinction and Biesta's gloss is not in fact at odds with Berkowitz's interpretation: '*Erziehung* ... is the art of directing the gaze of another human being. *Bildung* ... has to do with our own ability to engage with the world outside us and ... learn from this engagement, whereas *Erziehung* has to do with the ways in which educators can encourage children and young people to do so; that is, encouraging them to engage in their "own" *Bildung*. This makes *Bildung* into a lifelong process that never finishes, and *Erziehung* into a process that ends at some point, namely when the child or young person no longer needs the encouragement from the "outside"' (GERT BIESTA, 2020).

*pull* (at least in the English-language version), this sense is implied when she writes that ‘as the child is not yet acquainted with the world, he must be gradually *introduced* to it’ ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.186 [italics mine]); the world here being ‘the world of adults’ ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.180), nicely glossed by Wouter Pols and Joop Berding to mean our ‘furnished world’ of material and cultural and mental objects (2018, p.42).

This sense of education as an introduction into the world is not unique to German. As Maurice Craft (2017) notes, the English word *education* derives from two different Latin words for the verb to educate - *educare* [to train or to mould] and *educere* [to lead out] - and writers have typically emphasised one or other of these aspects at the expense of the other:

The former [*educare*], in the tradition of Hobbes and Durkheim, have stressed social conformity, the reproduction of the type, and a curriculum emphasizing instruction, obedience and the acquisition of knowledge. The latter [*educere*], who represent the child-centred tradition, following Rousseau or Froebel, have preferred self-expression, individual creativity and curiosity, and a curriculum embodying choice (MAURICE CRAFT, 2017, p.9).

I suggest Arendt’s use of the term *Erziehung* indicates a conception of education that has more in common with *educere* than with *educare* in that as Berkowitz notes it suggests a pulling or a leading out of the student. And yet, this interpretation would seem to fly in the face of Arendt’s arguments in her *Crisis* essay against the child-centred progressive Rousseauism or *educere* she finds and criticises in America. An answer to this contradiction can be found, I think, in the following suggestion that the term *educere* did not traditionally refer to a cognitive process but only to a physical one:

According to 'Century Dictionary,' *educere*, of a child, is 'usually with reference to bodily nurture or support, while *educare* refers more frequently to the mind', and, 'There is no authority for the common statement that the primary sense of education is to "draw out or unfold the powers of the mind"' (DOUGLAS HARPER, 2001-2020, [no pagination]).

In other words, the term *educere* has perhaps been misunderstood: the leading forth it describes is not of the mind but of the body. If this is correct, then there is no contradiction in Arendt's use of *Erziehung* to suggest that education is a process that involves the leading forth or introduction of the child. What Arendt seeks to do in her two essays is to outline what this pulling of the young into the public world entails for adults and for educators in particular: an assumption of responsibility for preparing and teaching the young how to operate in the adult world, effectively enabling their 'transformation' from 'private persons' (as children) to 'public citizens' (as adults) (ROGER BERKOWITZ, 2020, p.18). This conception of education has a clear relevance to the field of EAP in that the key concern of EAP can be expressed in very similar terms: a pulling of international students into the English-speaking world of academia via a teaching of academic language.

Language in fact plays a key role in this pulling or introductory movement. Recalling the account given by the writer Richard Rodriguez (*Hunger for memory: the education of Richard Rodriguez*, 1983) of how as a Spanish-speaking child in California he was taught English at school and in so doing 'became a man by becoming a public man ... an American citizen' (1983, p.7; p.22), Berkowitz highlights the role language can play in this journey:

In arguing that education is about leading young people into a public world, *The [sic] Hunger of Memory* is a political book. Students must learn English not because of its superiority, but because it is the ticket of admission to the public world of citizenship. Even more than math and science, learning the public language guides young people into a public world, which enables them to transition from private to public life, from wardship to citizenship (ROGER BERKOWITZ, 2020, p.18).

While Arendt does not describe in any real detail the general significance of language in education except to criticise the ‘progressive’ method of teaching languages, which ‘consciously attempts to keep the older child as far as possible at the infant level’ ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.180), she does comment briefly on its political significance in countries such as the USA. Speaking of America as ‘a land of immigrants’, she argues that education plays a vital role in:

the enormously difficult melting together of the most diverse ethnic groups ... [which] can only be accomplished through the schooling, education, and Americanization of the immigrant’s children ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.172)<sup>58</sup>.

That this melting together or Americanisation of children is dependent on language, on English in this case, is of course, potentially relevant to EAP, the chief activity of which is the teaching of English and academic English to international students to support them in entering into and functioning in English-language academia. I return to this point in **CHAPTER 4**.

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<sup>58</sup> The implied distinction Arendt makes in this sentence between *education* and *schooling* struck me as particularly odd and sent me back to the German-language version of the essay: ‘*Technisch läßt sich diese Tatsache natürlich leicht daraus erklären, daß Amerika immer ein Einwanderungsland gewesen ist; es ist offensichtlich, daß die ungeheuer schwierige, nie ganz und doch immer über Erwarten glückende Einschmelzung fremdster Volksteile nur über die Schulen, die Erziehung und Amerikanisierung der Kinder der Einwanderer vonstatten gehen kann*’ ([KE] 1958, p.256). A colleague’s translation of this passage is, I am assured, more accurate in taking the noun *die Schulen* to mean *school* rather than *schooling*: ‘Technically, this can be easily explained by the fact that America has always been a country of migrants; it is obvious that the extremely difficult and never complete but always successful beyond expectation melting-in of those from the most foreign backgrounds can only happen *in school, through education and the Americanisation of the children of migrants*’ (JEANNETTE RISSMANN, 2020).



Arendt's concept of education then is informed by two key essences: 'natality, the fact that human beings are *born* into the world' ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.171); and:

conservatism, in the sense of conservation ... whose task is always to cherish and protect something - the child against the world, the world against the child, the new against the old, the old against the new ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.188).

Education concerns the development of the child *qua* child but also his or her introduction by adults into the world as it is and in such a way that neither the child nor the world is damaged. This double protection or conservation is vital if the world is to continue:

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 ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.189).

Arendt's approach to education has been well characterised by Anouk Zuurmond in terms of 'radical conservatism' (2016, p.62)<sup>59</sup>. The conservative aspect consists in a desire to preserve and protect what is of value from the past and in giving it validity and status through teaching it, that is, teaching the world as it is and not how we would like it to be<sup>60</sup>. The radical aspect consists in the notion of natality: the fact of natality, that we come into this world new and can then act it in and change it, means that the world can and will change:

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<sup>59</sup> Zuurmond also describes Arendt as a 'conservative radical' (ANOUK ZUURMOND, 2016, p.61).

<sup>60</sup> Of course, one can preserve the past and yet critique it: totalitarianism, for example, happened and so should be taught and not ignored in schooling, but certainly not preserved. The key point lies in facing up to and taking responsibility for the world as it is.

The miracle that saves the world, the realm of human affairs, from its normal, 'natural' ruin is ultimately the fact of natality, in which 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] 1998, p.247).

While natality may be miraculous, it is also fragile. Without the protection afforded by adults and the private realm of the home, the uniqueness of children can be overwhelmed by peers (peer pressure) and by the world and its power. Hence, Arendt argues, it is our responsibility as parents or educators to protect the child as one protects the innocent. What this means for educators is a double assumption of responsibility: for the world as it is and for the young who may go on to change it.

Arendt's approach to education is therefore both conservative and revolutionary, or rather conservative for the sake of the revolutionary. Her conservatism, such as it is, seeks to conserve not just the world that we live in and that we bring our children into, but the children themselves, their newness or natality, and - tellingly - their potential for revolutionary change. In other words, the two essences here of natality and conservatism are interlocked. As Arendt writes:

Exactly for the sake of what is new and revolutionary in every child, education must be conservative; it must preserve this newness and introduce it as a new thing into an old world ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.189).

Arendt's insistence on protecting the newness of the young clearly informs her controversial separation of politics from education as well as her view that education belongs not in the public sphere but in the relative safety of the private sphere, this being the space in which they can grow freely, away from the pressures to conform that the social world imposes on us.

### SECTION III: SECONDARY

In this section, I turn to Arendt's discussion of different realms and address the much-discussed issue of the separation of politics from education that she insists upon.

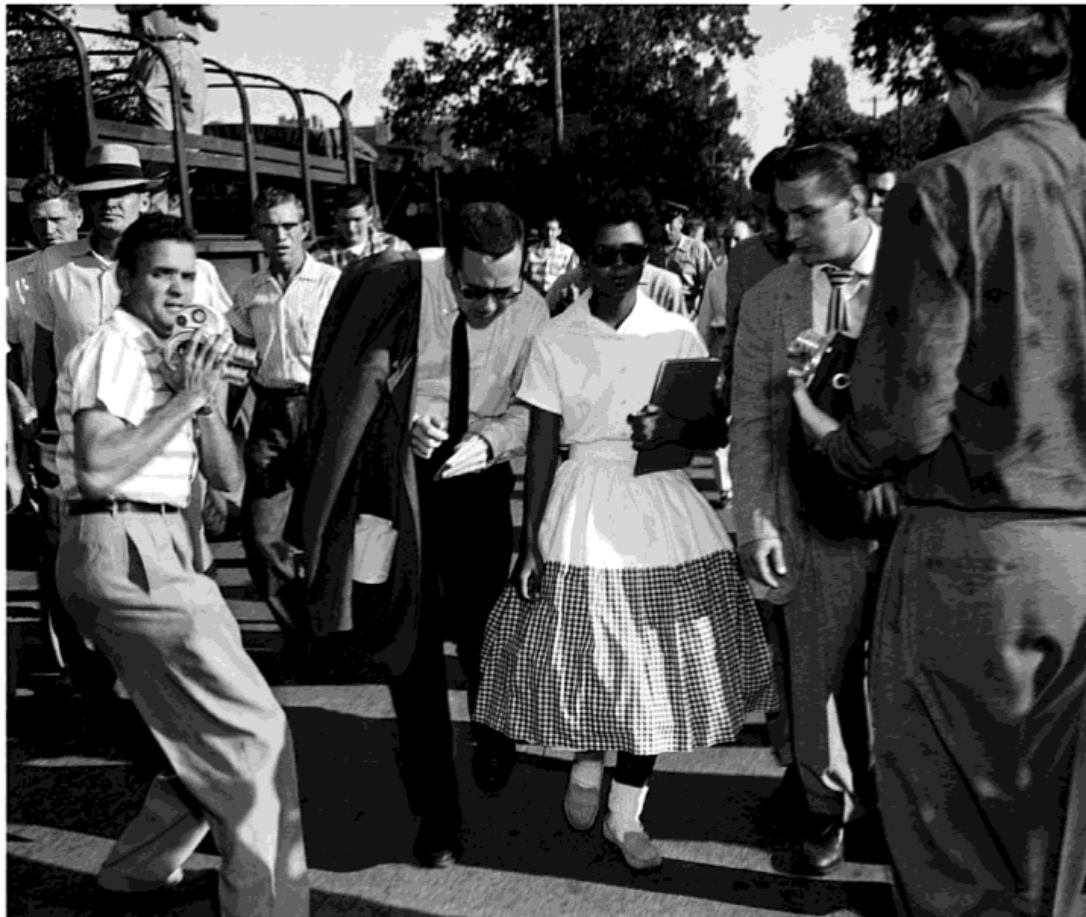


FIGURE 2: ELIZABETH ECKFORD LEAVING CENTRAL HIGH, LITTLE ROCK (HANNAH ARENDT, [RJ] 2003, P.192)

As discussed in the previous section, Arendt rejects what she sees as an old tradition and one influenced by Rousseau 'in which education became an instrument of politics, and political activity itself was conceived of as a form of education' ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.173). Instead, she

argues that education and politics are distinct activities and should not be confused or conflated. The dangers of mixing the two and of solving political problems through the education of children, are discussed in her essay *Reflections on Little Rock*. In this section, I discuss this essay with a view to exploring further the importance of maintaining a distinction between education and politics.

The context for *Reflections on Little Rock* is well known<sup>61</sup>. As a result of the US Supreme Court ruling on *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954)<sup>62</sup>, public schools across the American South began to integrate under Federal law. In September 1957, nine African American students selected by the *National Association for the Advancement of Colored People* (NAACP) were integrated into Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas. On September 4<sup>th</sup> 1957, fifteen-year-old Elizabeth Eckford, one of the nine students (the other students had been advised to delay their attendance for a few days, unbeknownst to Elizabeth), attempted to enter the school but was prevented from doing so by soldiers of the National Guard under orders from the Arkansas Governor, Oval Faubus. Elizabeth's ordeal was captured in a sequence of photographs by the American photojournalist, Will Counts (1931-2001), four of which were published on the same day on the front page of the Democrat<sup>63</sup>. While we cannot be certain which of the photographs Arendt saw, Jerome Kohn (following Rahel Lerner)<sup>64</sup> identifies it as the one reproduced here [FIGURE 2], which tallies with Arendt's account of the genesis of her essay:

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<sup>61</sup> My brief account here draws on Wil Count's fascinating textual and pictorial account (2007) referenced in the footnote below.

<sup>62</sup> This was the ruling by the US Supreme Court that the existing 'separate but equal' segregation of schools in America was unconstitutional (JUSTIA US SUPREME COURT, 2020).

<sup>63</sup> Will Count's photographs can be found in *A life is more than a moment: the desegregation of Little Rock's Central High* (2007); also see Vicky Labeau (2004) for an insightful discussion of these photographs in relation to Arendt.

<sup>64</sup> See Kohn's *A note on the text* in *Arendt's Responsibility and judgment* (JEROME KOHN, [RJ] 2003, xxxvii).

The point of departure of my reflections was a picture in the newspapers, showing a Negro girl on her way home from a newly integrated school; she was persecuted by a mob of white children, protected by a white friend of her father, and her face bore eloquent witness to the obvious fact that she was not precisely happy. The picture showed the situation in a nutshell because those who appeared in it were directly affected by the Federal Court order, the children themselves ([RLR/PHA] 2000, pp.243-244).

In response to the tension in Little Rock, Arendt asked: 'Have we now come to the point where it is the children who are being asked to change or improve the world? And do we intend to have our political battles fought out in the school yards?' ([RLR/PHA] 2000, p.236).

Arendt's condemnation in the essay of the use of children and schools to solve social problems and to attain rights met with, and continues to meet with, significant criticism<sup>65</sup>. Against the liberal tide, Arendt expressed her opposition to what she saw as an educational solution to a political problem, and worse, one that involved an abnegation of adult responsibility in asking children to participate in a political battle for equality. For these and other reasons discussed at some length by Maribel Morey (2014), only some of which I mention here, this essay by Arendt continues to be regarded by many 'as an anomaly in her work and an affront to the school integration movement' (MARIBEL MOREY, 2014, p.88); nonetheless and more to the point in regard to this chapter, Arendt's evident sympathy for these black children and anger at their parents exemplifies her consistent concern for the sanctity of children and childhood and for maintaining the distinction between education and politics.

Arendt's basic thesis in *Reflections* is that children should not be tasked with changing or improving the world or fighting adult political battles in our stead. While *Reflections* was,

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<sup>65</sup> See Maribel Morey (2014) for a useful discussion and summary.

according to Arendt's own testimony, written out of sympathy for the black school children who had to endure the racism of the Southern whites<sup>66</sup>, she nevertheless criticised both the black parents and the NAACP for embroiling children in the fight against segregation and she further accused them of avoiding the 'real issue':

The real issue is equality before the law of the country, and equality is violated by segregation laws, that is, by laws enforcing segregation, not by social customs and the manners of educating children ([RLR/PHA] 2000, p.244).

For Arendt, they had chosen the wrong fight: better 'to fight a clear-cut battle for my indisputable rights - my right to vote and be protected in it, to marry whom I please and be protected in my marriage<sup>67</sup> ... or my right to equal opportunity' than to indulge in 'an affair of social climbing' ([RLR/PHA] 2000, p.244). Arendt offered a defence of this position in her *A reply to critics*<sup>68</sup>.

In this response, Arendt reveals the three questions that she apparently asked herself on looking at the photograph. Firstly, she asked what she would do herself in this situation if she were a 'Negro mother'; then she asked what she would do if she were a 'white woman in the South'; and thirdly, she asked how 'in respect of the color question', life in the American South differs from life in the rest of America ([RLR/PHA] 2000, pp.244-245).

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<sup>66</sup> In her *Preliminary remarks* to the essay she clearly feels she needs to remind the reader of her sympathy: 'Since what I wrote may shock good people and be misused by bad ones, I should like to make it clear that as a Jew I take my sympathy for the cause of the Negroes as for all oppressed or underprivileged peoples for granted and should appreciate it if the reader did likewise' ([RLR/PHA] 2000, p.232).

<sup>67</sup> For Arendt, the anti-miscegenation laws (then in place in over half of America's then 49 states) 'constitute a much more flagrant breach of letter and spirit of the Constitution than the segregation of schools' ([RLR/PHA] 2000, p.231).

<sup>68</sup> In the same *Dissent* issue (Winter, 1959) in which Arendt's *Reflections on Little Rock* were published, the Columbia political scientist David Spitz and the Princeton sociologist Melvin Tumin responded with various criticisms; Arendt published her *Reply to critics* three months later in the Spring 1959 edition of *Dissent* (MARIBEL MOREY, 2014).

In response to the first question, Arendt answers that she would not wish to similarly expose her black child to such abuse and suggests that the Supreme Court ruling had in effect 'put my child into a more humiliating position than it had been in before' and had 'shifted the burden of responsibility from the shoulders of adults to those of children' ([RLR/PHA] 2000, p.244). What is clear for Arendt is that it is irresponsible for parents to make their children responsible for solving the problem of racism in society. More controversially, Arendt goes on to suggest that these parents, who have recourse to the appropriate means, such as law courts, to fight such injustices but who instead have put their children on the front line of a political battle, are guilty of seeking upward mobility. Arendt's reading of the situation was that this was not simply a question of equality of opportunity or of education, for if it were, then why, she asks, would the black parents not wish 'to fight for an improvement of schools for Negro children'? ([RLR/PHA] 2000, p.244). Instead, Arendt sees the attempt of one group to push their children into a space where they were not wanted and which was populated by another group specifically a social matter - and hence 'an affair of social climbing' ([RLR/PHA] 2000, p.244).

Arendt's response to the second question is that as a white mother of a child attending a school like Central High, she would wish to prevent 'my child's being dragged into the political battle in the schoolyard' and further that this being for Arendt a social issue, she would also expect to be consulted on any such 'drastic changes no matter what my opinion of them happened to be' ([RLR/PHA] 2000, p.245). Because Arendt considers education (as schooling) a matter which properly speaking is a parental concern, a parental right and responsibility, she would 'deny that the government had any right to tell me in whose company my child received its instruction' ([RLR/PHA] 2000, p.245). Such parental rights over their own children 'are challenged only by dictatorships' ([RLR/PHA] 2000, p.245).

Arendt is open to the possibility 'that the situation in the South could be materially helped by integrated education' but this would be a decision for adults to make and then attempt to bring to fruition by, for example, opening 'a new school for white and colored children' in conjunction with other 'like-minded citizens' ([RLR/PHA] 2000, p.245). This initiative, Arendt suggests, would also serve 'as a means to persuade other white parents to change their attitudes' ([RLR/PHA] 2000, p.245). As I will explore in the following chapter on Arendt's political thinking, persuasion as a matter of speech between adults constitutes political activity: as she writes in *Philosophy and politics*, her essay on the separation between philosophy and politics occasioned by the death of Socrates, 'To persuade, *peithein*, was the specifically political form of speech' ([PP/SR] 1990, p.73). Conceding that this action, opening a new and integrated school, could also be regarded as involving children in a political struggle, she adds the significant difference with this action is 'at least I would have made sure that the children in school are all there with the consent and the help of their parents' ([RLR/PHA] 2000, p.245).

The final question that Arendt answers pertains to the differences between the South and the rest of America. The fundamental difference, Arendt notes, is quite simple: 'while discrimination and segregation are the rule in the whole country, they are enforced by legislation only in the southern states' ([RLR/PHA] 2000, p.245). Referencing William Faulkner, Arendt maintains 'that enforced integration is no better than enforced segregation' ([RLR/PHA] 2000, p.235):

Segregation is discrimination enforced by law, and desegregation can do no more than abolish the laws enforcing discrimination; it cannot abolish discrimination and force equality upon society ([RLR/PHA] 2000).



005820

July 29, 1965

Dear Mr. Ellison:

While reading Robert Penn Warren's Who Speaks for the Negro I came across the very interesting interview with you and also read your remarks on my old reflections on Little Rock. You are entirely right: it is precisely this "ideal of sacrifice" which I didn't understand; and since my starting point was a consideration of the situation of Negro kids in forcibly integrated schools, this failure to understand caused me indeed to go into an entirely wrong direction. I received, of course, a great many criticisms about this article from the side of my "liberal" friends or rather non-friends which, I must confess, didn't bother me. But I knew that I was somehow wrong and thought that I hadn't grasped the element of stark violence, of elementary, bodily fear in the situation. But your remarks seem to me so entirely right, that I now see that I simply didn't understand the complexities in the situation.

With kind regards,

Sincerely yours,

FIGURE 3: LETTER FROM HANNAH ARENDT TO RALPH ELLISON (SAMANTHA ROSE HILL, 2018)

Hannah Arendt's outspoken opposition to the efforts of civil rights activists to enforce black Americans' constitutional rights to an integrated education was troubling to say the least for many contemporary readers. As Elisabeth Young-Bruehl observes (2004), *Reflections on Little Rock* was Arendt's first but not final experience with public controversy; as the novelist Ralph Ellison also noted, *Reflections* was 'a dark foreshadowing of the Eichmann blowup' (1972,

p.108). And yet while initially happy to defend her position, Arendt eventually came to acknowledge to Ralph Ellison that she had got it wrong. Ellison thought Arendt had failed to comprehend the *sacrifice* that the black parents were making:

I believe that one of the important clues to the meaning of that [Negro] experience lies in the idea, the *ideal* of sacrifice. Hannah Arendt's failure to grasp the importance of this ideal among Southern Negroes caused her to fly way off into left field in her 'Reflections on Little Rock,' in which she charged Negro parents with exploiting their children during the struggle to integrate the schools. But she has absolutely no conception of what goes on in the minds of Negro parents when they send their kids through those lines of hostile people (RALPH ELLISON cited in ROBERT PENN WARREN, 2014, pp.343-344).

In other words, Arendt had failed to understand what according to Ellison the parents who sent their children to attend schools such as Central high did understand: that 'the more painful children's experiences were, the more prepared they will be to manage life as black adults in America' (ADRIENNE PICKETT, 2009, p.192). And Arendt agreed, as can be seen in her letter to Ellison [FIGURE 3]. Arendt may well have been right to argue that Eckford and the other children were being expected to bear the unreasonable burden of resolving an issue that adults had been wrestling with for decades, but I am sympathetic to Pickett's interpretation:

Arendt's vision of protecting children from the world ... ran counter to the values and lived reality of blacks in the U.S. Blacks were not spared violence from the world in their pursuit of survival and citizenship, and black parents knew this (ADRIENNE PICKETT, 2009, p.192).

The essay is perhaps best seen as a relatively early but instructive example of Arendt's exercise of judging (a concept explored at some length in **CHAPTER 3** of this thesis), of putting herself in the place of another in order to evaluate possible courses of action:

Clearly, Arendt became sympathetic to a perspective different from her own, and her judgment was refined, as she imagined what it might have been like for black children undergoing painful initiation into adulthood and the possible goods the children might gain from this process. This dialogue began and ended with thinking, which became more refined over time by exploring different standpoints. Such dialogue became an important feature of Arendt's theory of critical thinking that she elucidated later on in her career (ADRIENNE PICKETT, 2009, p.192).

Like Pickett, I see Arendt's apology and admission of misunderstanding as an interesting example of how, having entered into a dialogue with Ralph Ellison and taking on board an alternative perspective, she is able to re-judge the situation. However, as Young-Bruehl perceptively notes, the fact that Arendt does not show in this essay her workings, the questioning process that helped form her articulated judgement, gave some readers the impression that she was 'harsh, inappropriately judgmental, and arrogant' (2004, p.309). Young-Bruehl is probably correct in noting that while Arendt's writing typically originates in 'just such thought exercises', in this case:

the experiences were so complex and emotion-charged that she might have saved much misunderstanding had she put her own self-questioning before her readers in the first place, had she let them see not only her theory but her struggle (ELISABETH YOUNG-BRUEHL, 2004, p.309).

Regardless of Arendt's apparent misjudgement, her underlying point seems sound: that children need protection from the world and that adults have a dual responsibility for the world and for the children they bring into it:

It will be hard for the white youngsters, or at least those among them who outgrow their present brutality, to live down this photograph which exposes so mercilessly their juvenile delinquency. The picture looked to me like a fantastic caricature of progressive education which, by abolishing the authority of adults, implicitly denies their responsibility for the world into which they have borne their children and refuses the duty of guiding them into it ([RLR/PHA] 2000, p.236).

As Morten Korsgaard points out, this aspect, the educational aspect, of the essay is sometimes overlooked, attention being given mostly, and mostly negatively, to her attempt to separate the social from the political. What Arendt says about education here is consonant with what she says about it in her *Crisis* essay, namely 'that education does not exist to fix what is wrong with the world but, rather, to introduce the coming generations to it' (2019, p.49):

So even if educational processes and schools do at times become the arena for political movements and struggles, this should not be the case, and these struggles belong first and foremost in the political sphere. Furthermore, Arendt insisted that we as adults have a responsibility to make sure that they do not enter the providence of our children and their education in problematic ways, or, more precisely, that they do not enter them as anything more than a subject matter to be studied (MORTEN T. KORSGAARD, 2019, p.49).

#### AN EDUCATIONAL DIVIDE

As discussed earlier, criticism of Arendt's educational thinking centres largely on her controversial claim that education and politics are distinct activities that should not be confused or conflated. I conclude this part of the chapter with a short discussion of Arendt's claim and look at the main criticisms that have been made of her position.

Arendt makes two related claims in respect to the relationship between education and politics. Firstly, that 'Education can play no part in politics, because in politics we always have to deal with those who are already educated' ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.173); and secondly, that 'Whoever wants to educate adults really wants to act as their guardian and prevent them from political

activity' ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.173). In short, education should not be politicised<sup>69</sup>, and politics should not be educationalised.

In the first few pages of *The crisis in education*, Arendt highlights the dangers in thinking of education as 'an instrument of politics' and of thinking as politics 'as a form of education' ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.173). The first danger is that if education is used for political purposes, that is, if children today are educated 'to be citizens of a utopian morrow', then these children 'are actually denied their own future role in the body politic'; children should be prepared for the present world, not for an imagined future world, unless that is, 'one wishes to strike from the newcomers' hands their own chance at the new' ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.174). Their own chance at the new derives from the fact that they are themselves new; and as discussed in the previous section, this newness of the child, this natality - which is the source of action - must needs be protected, and this necessitates the protection of the young from the public world of politics.

The second danger lies in the educationalisation of politics. Since education is a matter of preparing the young to enter the world of adults, adults *qua* educated individuals (and for Arendt, adults are by definition educated), cannot be educated<sup>70</sup>:

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<sup>69</sup> I am using the term as defined by Peter Euben: 'A politicized education regards the "objects" of instruction as passive recipients of knowledge which molds [*sic*] them according to some blueprint of the good society. Here what can be taught, who can teach it, and where it can be taught is tightly regulated, and education is close to what we mean by training, socialization, or "indoctrination" in the original unapologetic meaning of the term ... [It] treats the new as if it already existed, which is precisely Arendt's worry about conflating education with politics' (1997, p.50).

<sup>70</sup> Educated in the strictly limited sense of having been educated at school; whether this education was good or not is another matter entirely. See also **PAGE 99**.

Education can play no part in politics, because in politics we always have to deal with those who are already educated. Whoever wants to educate adults really wants to act as their guardian and prevent them from political activity. Since one cannot educate adults<sup>71</sup>, the word 'education' has an evil sound in politics; there is a pretense of education, when the real purpose is coercion without the use of force ([CE/BPF] 2006, pp.173-174).

To educate an adult in Arendt's sense then would be more a question of being re-educated in the most negative sense; as we might informally say today, it would be a matter of being *schooled*, as in publicly corrected and taught by someone who maintains they know better<sup>72</sup>. So while for Arendt it is important that education does not become a politicised endeavour that indoctrinates rather than protects the child, it is important also that politics, the realm of those already educated in Arendt's sense, does not become a matter of individuals or groups attempting to educate their peers or of emancipating them from some kind of Marxist false consciousness. The separation is also important for Arendt since as education is a matter of gradually introducing the young into the public realm, its institution the school, which lies on the point of intersection, must be sufficiently protected.

The fundamental separation Arendt draws between education and politics, which appears to rule out of the equation any kind of political education for children, has given many commentators cause for concern since it seems to strike at 'the dominant proposition that education should be a means to establish a more democratic society' (Morten T. Korsgaard, 2019, p.47). As Korsgaard summarises:

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<sup>71</sup> This is a key argument in *The crisis in education* and one I shall return to in the subsequent section of this chapter that looks at what this means for adult or higher 'education'.

<sup>72</sup> Of course, to be schooled can also mean to be educated / trained, but the modern usage of the term *schooled* to mean being rebuked or corrected reveals the kind of coercion Arendt is, I think, getting at. See the *Rice University neologisms database*: 'I schooled him at basketball' (SUZANNE KEMMER, 2008, [no pagination]).

Many scholars have thus attempted to refute or, in many cases, simply side-step the separation of the political from education to enlist Arendt's powerful concepts - both the concepts present in her educational writings and those in her political thinking - in constructing modern critical and democratic educational positions (MORTEN T. KORSGAARD, 2019, p.48).

Amongst the most prominent of these critics of Arendt's divide are Gert Biesta (2010; 2014), Aaron Schutz (2001; 2002), and Schutz and Marie Sandy (2015).

Gert Biesta argues that democratic education should do more than simply prepare young people for political life; 'it should focus on creating opportunities for political existence *inside and outside schools*' (2010, p.557 [italics mine]). While Biesta is sympathetic to Arendt's notion of adults needing to take responsibility for the world (which in itself seems to indicate his agreement that at least on some level a distinction can and should be made between adults and children), he nevertheless criticises Arendt for basing her argument for the separation of politics from education on the basis of age, an argument which in his reading implies that no children (but all adults) are capable of political action. Her view that children are not ready for political life suffers, he argues, from being underscored by a 'developmentalism', that is, a 'reliance on an unquestioned distinction between "child" and "adult"' (2010, p.567). On the basis of this distinction, it would appear that only when adulthood has been reached can political life commence. Biesta argues Arendt is mistaken: 'Just as being an adult is no guarantee for action and freedom, being a child is no guarantee for the absence of action and freedom' (2010, p.567).

Aside from not seeing any real evidence in her essay for the claim that children are incapable of political action, I think this misses the main point Arendt is making. She is not asking whether

children *qua* children are capable or not of political action but arguing that children *qua* children should be safeguarded from such action. As Korsgaard writes:

Arendt appears concerned chiefly with the protection of childhood and education from the infringement of instrumental political concerns and what she called the light of the public (MORTEN T. KORSGAARD, 2019, p.49).

Of course, differentiating children from adults is not always straightforward, and Arendt acknowledges that 'Where the line between childhood and adulthood falls in each instance cannot be determined by a general rule' ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.192). She is also happy to concede that 'this line should never be permitted to grow into a wall separating children from the adult community as though they were not living in the same world' ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.192). The point though is that we make a distinction. Speaking of her American experience, Arendt writes: 'In our civilization this end probably coincides with graduation from college' ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.192).

Aaron Schutz has argued (2001; 2002; AARON SCHUTZ AND MARIE G. SANDY, 2015) that Arendt's separation of education from the political is problematic because it does not seem to allow for any kind of political education that at some stage is surely necessary for children if they are to learn how to act as citizens:

how will children learn to engage in public action as adults if they are not initiated into these practices through active engagement when they are young? ... if students are to learn to participate in Arendtian public practices they must be given opportunities to engage in them (AARON SCHUTZ, 2001, p.327; p,330).



While Schutz is to be commended for attempting to tease out some of the practical implications of Arendt's ideas for education, his argument for bringing action into the classroom seems to imply that action itself is little more than a practice that *can* be brought into the classroom. This ignores the fact that political activity is qualitatively different from educational activity, in that the former is 'constituted by risk' (MORTEN T. KORSGAARD, 2019, p.49). Diluting action in the way Schutz suggests thus risks turning action into a 'learned practice ... all too easily be conflated with the acquisition of skills' (MORTEN T. KORSGAARD, 2019, p.76).

Agreeing with Schutz and others that children need adult support to transition from childhood to adulthood and from playing to acting, Levinson (2001) rightly cautions against transposing political activities to the classroom, arguing that such attempts at replicating political action in the educational sphere necessarily 'minimize the risks of politics' (2001, p.335). Political action is dangerous: it is spontaneous and unpredictable. Brought into the school classroom, any such action is likely to be at best 'artificial'; indeed, the very educational setting mitigates against 'the eruption of genuine political action' (NATASHA LEVINSON, 2002, p.204).

The key point though is that while some kind of educational preparation for the adult political world is necessary, the world of education and that of politics are not the same. As Levinson also writes:

It is one thing to say that schools ought to prepare students for participation in political life, but it is another to suggest that schools are - or ought to be - political spaces as Arendt understands them (NATASHA LEVINSON, 2002, p.203).

Schools are not political spaces: they are places of learning, not places of action and danger. Simply put, while education is concerned 'with getting to know the world', politics is 'concerned with changing the world and thus involves risk' (MORTEN T. KORSGAARD, 2019, p.70).

This is really another way of saying that while the school is where the child is introduced to the world, the school itself 'is by no means the world and must not pretend to be' ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.185). If the world is where adults can act in the presence of others and experience the happiness and suffering that comes with acting, the school is by contrast a very different place, a sheltered place for:

the free development of characteristic qualities and talents ... the uniqueness that distinguishes every human being from every other, the quality by virtue of which he is not only a stranger in the world but something that has never been here before ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.185).

So while education surely has a role to play in a democracy in terms of developing individuals into citizens, there is more to education than this, meaning that it should not be constructed around this idea:

Rather ... the activity of schooling is about getting to know the world enough *to want to* make one's mark upon it (natality), and about being able to bear with strangers (plurality) (MORTEN T. KORSGAARD, 2019, p.76).

I end this discussion by making explicit two points that are discussed in various other places in this thesis. Firstly, a distinction should be made between the underlying skills and abilities that make action possible and which can be developed and improved (such as speaking to persuade others), and action itself, which perhaps can only really be encouraged. In **CHAPTER 4**, I discuss in more detail the possible content of these skills and abilities. Secondly, while Korsgaard

cautions against taking a 'continuum' view of the relationship between education and politics (the idea that education sits at one end and politics the other) because it 'overlooks the experiential and phenomenological dimension of Arendt's separation and the anti-instrumental element' (2019, p.78), I find this a useful metaphor with which to describe the gradual and increasing amount of publicity (or 'light'), as well as risk, that young people are exposed to on their journey from youth to adulthood. The metaphor need not suggest a blurring of the fundamental activities of education and politics; rather, it can be used to describe the increasing amount of light and risk that educational spaces let in, as it were, over time. Indeed, as Korsgaard himself seems to acknowledge:

the idea of allowing some form of public realm to enter educational practices would not be in contrast with Arendt's separation. It is, after all, 'public, political life' ... Arendt most of all wants to separate from education (MORTEN T. KORSGAARD, 2019, p.78).

Put differently: 'There is a crack', as Leonard Cohen sings in *Anthem*, 'a crack in everything / That's how the light gets it' (LEONARD COHEN, 2017). The movement from childhood to adulthood and from primary to higher education is a movement towards the light of the public realm.

Hence, I suggest that EAP is further along this metaphorical continuum than school education, but perhaps not quite as far along as more mainstream university ventures: while exposing students to some light and risk, the light is softer and the risk diminished. This metaphor also aligns well with the descriptions we have of the Arendtian university seminar as a miniature polis (see the following section), as well as with Peter Euben's argument that the university is

‘both the end point of education and the beginning of politics’ (2001, p.186). Indeed, I discuss below and in **CHAPTER 4** how this end point-and-beginning depiction is particularly apt for EAP.

Having looked at the basics of education as articulated by Arendt and at the necessity of separating politics from education, I conclude this chapter with a look at Arendt’s views on adult and university ‘education’.

#### **SECTION IV: TERTIARY**

A brief recap: as I have highlighted throughout this chapter, Arendt’s thinking on education centres on the idea of introducing children and young people to the world. Hence her use of the term *education* in the twin essays refers exclusively to schooling. For Arendt, education ≡ schooling and the school operates as the quasi-private-social-public institution that facilitates the transition of the young from childhood to educated adulthood. Given this, when Arendt argues that ‘one cannot educate adults’ ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.173), she is making the point that as adults have already been taught about the world and introduced to the world through their attendance at school, any attempt to educate them again is an attempt at ‘coercion’ ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.174). While Arendt says deliberately little about the details of what would constitute a good or a bad experience of education, this being neither her field nor her purpose (though some guidance is implicit in her insistence on the importance of adults and educators taking responsibility for the world) and so leaves unanswered the obvious question of whether a child who receives a poor education has been sufficiently introduced to the world, it is clear that education involves the authoritative introduction and safe passage of newcomers and of their natality into the world by adults who take responsibility for the world as it is. What then of

adult education? I will look at first the idea of adult education and then turn more specifically to address university education.

In addressing the topic of education, Arendt takes the position that just as there is a significant difference between childhood and adulthood, there should be a parallel distinction made between education (for children) and politics (for adults). For Arendt, the modern blending of the activities of education and politics, making each the means for the accomplishment of the other, misconstrues both activities in two fundamental ways. In Arendt's understanding, education is the process of introducing children to the world, not teaching them how to change it; and adults cannot be educated (schooled) because they are already educated and free and equal beings. This latter proposition does not mean adults cannot study or learn; it simply means that once a person's education has come to its formal end, an end that coincides with the end of childhood, any further attempt to educate the person constitutes not an attempt at education but at re-education, at indoctrination in other words.

This point about adult education can easily be misunderstood and so it is worth turning briefly to the few comments she makes on the topic. In her essay *What is authority?* Arendt once again insists on making a distinction between education and politics, children and adults. She writes:

In the political realm we deal always with adults who are past the age of education, properly speaking, and politics or the right to participate in the management of public affairs begins precisely where education has come to an end ... In education, conversely, we always deal with people who cannot yet be admitted to politics and equality because they are being prepared for it ([WIA/BPF] 2006, pp.118-119).

So far, this is essentially a paraphrase of her remarks in the educational essays: the realm of politics is an adult realm of freedom and equality, while the realm of education is marked by authority and serves to educate the child *qua* child and enable his or her participation in the world. Interestingly, though, Arendt also mentions, in parenthesis, the subject of adult education:

(Adult education, individual or communal, may be of great relevance for the formation of personality, its full development or greater enrichment, but is politically irrelevant unless its purpose is to supply technical requirements, somehow not acquired in youth, needed for participation in public affairs.) ([WIA/BPF] 2006, pp.118-119).

The key phrase here is of course ‘technical requirements ... needed for participation in public affairs’. Arendt seems to be suggesting that most adult education is not coercive in the sense discussed above: it may be meaningful and of tremendous personal significance but it is not education in the sense that she uses the term throughout *The crisis in education*; it is not intended to coerce. While it is not always straightforward, at least in my mind, to make a perfect distinction between those adult education classes which have a political relevance and those which have not, the point Arendt is making seems clear: there is adult education, call it learning, which is politically irrelevant, and there is adult education which is coercive and dangerously politicised.

While Arendt does not address at any length the topic of university ‘education’ and how it might differ in character from education as schooling, we can glean from occasional remarks that adult and university ‘education’ should be viewed very differently from education as schooling. The only explicit reference to the tertiary sector in the *Crisis* essay occurs when she reminds the reader that for her ‘education, as distinguished from learning, must have a

predictable end' (*end* here meaning *terminus*). Acknowledging that this end point will vary across civilisations, she suggests that in the USA at the time of writing:

this end probably coincides with graduation from college rather than with graduation from high school, for the professional training in universities or technical schools, though it always has something to do with education, is nevertheless in itself a kind of specialization. It no longer aims to introduce the young person to the world as a whole, but rather to a particular, limited segment of it ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.192).

In other words, education in the USA comes to an end when the period of schooling - which includes in this case *college* education - ceases to concern itself with what we might term *general* education. While as discussed previously this division has met with criticism from authors such as Biesta (2010), the most important point is not *where* to draw the line between education and learning, childhood and adulthood but in the principle of protecting the child and schooling from outside and political interference.

There are anecdotal accounts of Arendt as a university teacher, and most notably from two of her former students, Elizabeth Young-Bruehl and Jerome Kohn. In a revealing exchange of letters (ELISABETH YOUNG-BRUEHL AND JEROME KOHN, 2001), Young-Bruehl begins by reminding us that Arendt makes a clear distinction between the education of children and that of adults (though Kohn is even reluctant to use the term *adult education* given Arendt's remarks in *The crisis in education*). Adult education is very different from child education: it is not a matter of instruction but of learning through discussion how others see the world. As Young-Bruehl puts it:

Adults educate one another to be in the world ... In the modern world, adults do not conservatively give one another a shared tradition, they have to make a common world (ELISABETH YOUNG-BRUEHL AND JEROME KOHN, 2001, p.226).

This is, of course, the opposite of the 'worldless' education Arendt found in American education at the time, an education that focused on 'growing up' at the expense of 'growing up in the world' (WOUTER POLS AND JOOP BERDING, 2018, p.39).

In reiterating the point, Jerome Kohn notes that while Arendt's knowledge was obviously 'vast', she 'never *taught* her own opinions' (2001, p.249). Instead she was concerned with instilling 'in us the ability to form our own opinions impartially' and that as a university teacher:

what really mattered to her was too political, too rooted in her own experience, too 'existential' to be transmitted pedagogically - all of which illustrates her point that politics is not a matter of *instruction* (ELISABETH YOUNG-BRUEHL AND JEROME KOHN, 2001, p.249).

At the same time, however, Arendt used her knowledge:

to protect us, her students, from illusions, and in this singular way, she exemplified the authority of the teacher, which she found vanishing from modern theories and contemporary practices of education (ELISABETH YOUNG-BRUEHL AND JEROME KOHN, 2001, p.249).

Arendt expands on this idea when asked at a conference how she would instruct those present about political action:



No. I wouldn't instruct you, and I would think that this would be presumptuous of me. I think that you should be instructed when you sit together with your peers around a table and exchange opinions. And then out of this comes instruction: not for you personally, but how the group will act. And I think that every other road of the theoretician who tells his students what to think and how to act is ... my God! These are adults! We are not in a nursery! ([HAHA/TWB] 2018, p.450).

Of course, Arendt is not referring to the university context here but the point remains: that adults do not explicitly educate each other but can certainly learn about the world through discussion with their peers. I think that Young-Bruehl is correct when she comments in the first of the letters that Arendt's teaching was related to her interest in the Kantian concept of *enlarged mentality* (a concept discussed in **CHAPTER 3**). Discussion between adults can bring into play the differing perspectives they have and so can facilitate a critical and perspectival understanding of the world. Being critical, for Arendt, does not call for disinterest, detachment or withdrawal. Instead, it requires an imaginative understanding of how other people look upon the world.

Another way in which this imaginative visiting of perspectives can take place is through stories; stories offer an encounter with and even a conversation with different perspectives. It is not surprising then that Arendt used storytelling in her teaching. Kohn and Young-Bruehl point in particular to Arendt's telling of the 'story' of totalitarianism. As Kohn writes:

What I want to stress is that Arendt tried to make clear to her students ... that totalitarianism occurred right in the heart of Western civilization, that it was not imported into it from the outside, 'not from the moon,' as she used to say, or from anywhere else (ELISABETH YOUNG-BRUEHL AND JEROME KOHN, 2001, p.241).

As far as Young-Bruehl and Kohn are concerned, the manner of teaching they experienced as students studying under and with Arendt was an adult one. Kohn offers the following summary of Arendt as teacher:

[Arendt] introduced us into the world by teaching us, largely by her own example, to retrieve its past. The point of that was, I think, to develop in us an ability to respond without prejudice to the great plurality of men and women who share the world, thereby helping to sustain the common world that totalitarianism sought to destroy. Such responsibility, although not a matter of knowledge, requires thought. Arendt did not stuff our heads with knowledge but taught us to 'think'; and in her sense of the word, that was practical insofar as the habit of thinking is, as she said, 'amongst the conditions that make men abstain from evil-doing' (ELISABETH YOUNG-BRUEHL AND JEROME KOHN, 2001, p.251).

Young-Bruehl then recalls Arendt's use of stories of exemplary or 'representative' lives - stories about for example her husband, Heinrich Blucher, which she would discuss with the class as 'parables' (2001, p.227). Using such figures allowed Arendt to focus on political events as he, her husband, experienced them: 'and each new crisis revealed to him an essential human condition in a new context' (2001, p.227). Young-Bruehl sees this as 'a preparation for political understanding' as it promotes 'enlarged mentality' (2001, pp.226-227).

Kohn's summary of a university teacher pulls together several useful strands:

For this theorist of action, teaching itself was an unrehearsed performance, especially in the give-and-take, what she called the 'free-for-all', of the seminar, where she asked her students real rather than rhetorical questions and responded, usually in entirely unexpected ways, to theirs... In her seminar, every participant was a 'citizen' called upon to give his or her opinion, to insert him or herself into that miniature polis in order to make it, as she said, 'a little better' (ELISABETH YOUNG-BRUEHL AND JEROME KOHN, 2001, pp.254-255).

What is so useful here is the description of the seminar room (classroom) as a *miniature polis*.

I take from this further support for the view that university education is at 'the end point of

education and the beginning of politics' (PETER EUBEN, 2001, p.186); as such, the university classroom can be a space for some kind of preparation for future action and judgement. This, I hardly need add, is even more the case with EAP, the educative place *par excellence* for international adult newcomers to learn about, amongst other things, the world of western academia.

However, it is important to remember that while the university is exposed to more public light than the school is, it is not in fact yet part of that public realm. We can find this clarification in Arendt's collection of essays on contemporary political issues in America, *Crises of the republic* ([CR] 1972). In the final essay, *Thoughts on politics and revolution: a commentary* ([TPR/CR] 1972), based on an interview Arendt gave to the German writer Adalbert Reif in 1970, Arendt turns her attention to the student protest movement that, beginning with Harvard students joining the civil rights movement in the South, spread to other universities and led to the development of the Free Speech Movement and then the Anti-War Movement. The results of this disobedience, Arendt writes, were 'extraordinary. From these beginnings and especially from these successes springs everything that has since spread around the world' ([TPR/CR] 1972, p.202). Arendt's attitude towards this student activism is revealing. Her support for their participation in non-violent protest is contingent on the action taking place *away* from the students' educational environments:

This is a political activity *outside the university* which is made possible by the university in recognition of the fact that students are citizens as well ([TPR/CR] 1972, p.203).

Arendt argues that the students risk destroying the base of their protests, that is, the universities, if they politicise them ('perverting their function' ([TPR/CR] 1972)). What Arendt

means here is that universities are 'curious institutions whose main social and political function lies precisely in their impartiality and independence from social pressure and political power' ([OV/CR] 1972, p.189). As Young-Bruehl notes: 'Many times Arendt had argued that universities - like courts - must be institutions apart, "outside the power struggle"' (2004, p.417). Hence, Arendt's warning:

But the universities will remain a basis for the students only so long as they provide the only place in society where power does not have the last word ([OV/CR] 1972, p.190).

For Arendt, universities occupy a unique place in society and afford students a remarkable political freedom:

The universities make it possible for young people over a number of years *to stand outside all social groups and obligations*, to be truly free. If the students destroy the universities, then nothing of the sort will any longer exist; consequently there will be no rebellion against society either ([TPR/CR] 1972, p.208).

The university then operates at the end of education and the beginning of politics: it is not fully of the realm of education as the school is, but neither does it belong to the world to which I now turn, that of adult politics.

# CHAPTER 3

## CHAPTER 3: HANNAH ARENDT AND POLITICS

*Having considered Arendt's thinking on educational matters, this chapter turns to what Arendt is most renowned for - her political thought - and focuses in particular on those pivotal concepts of the polis, action, and judgement in preparation for an account in the following chapter of how these, in addition to her educational ideas, can be of value to the field of EAP. For while EAP is ostensibly an educational activity, it can also contribute towards readying students for possible future political action.*

*While I agree for the most part with the claim made by Michael Denny in an early assessment of Arendt that 'the whole corpus of Hannah Arendt's political thought can be articulated around two foci: the concept of action and the significance of judgment in the world of opinion' (1976, p.247)<sup>73</sup>, I suggest these two activities make little sense unless they are afforded a place in which they can appear and be carried out, that is, performed by actors and witnessed by spectators. Indeed, I would go further and add that notwithstanding the fact that Arendt engages in her work with diverse political contexts, from the most ancient to the most contemporary, the importance she assigns to public spaces for politics to take place in - or more accurately, that can create politics - should be clear<sup>74</sup>. For Arendt, the polis - the original Greek political space - and every subsequent manifestation of it - is politics.*

*I have divided this chapter into three sections, each of which explores an aspect of her thinking which is not only central to her own understanding of politics but which will be shown in the subsequent chapter*

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<sup>73</sup> In fact, Denny goes on to state in his Notes to the essay that after having read Ron H. Feldman's (1978) *The Jew as pariah: the case of Hannah Arendt* ([JP/JW] 2007), he would like to argue instead for the unifying importance of Arendt's Jewishness and specifically her 'early reflections on her own concrete position as a Jew in the modern world' (1976, p.271). My point though stands: action and judgement require a public space.

<sup>74</sup> The significance of space for Arendt has been exhaustively documented by Bernard Debarbieux (2017) and is nicely captured in the following passage: 'The most important term certainly is *space* itself, with its various specifications (*public space, space of appearance, space of freedom, space of action, cosmic space*, etc.), especially in *The human condition* published in 1958. *Territory* (either state or national) plays an important role in *The origins of totalitarianism* which made her famous as soon as 1951, but again in *On revolution* and *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, both published in 1963. The terms *world, place, habitat, position* and *location* are similarly used in many books and papers, while spatial objects and categories are often mentioned either for recalling the terrestrial nature of the human condition (*Earth*), or for specifying the context and modalities of political life (*polis, cities, borders, camps*, etc.), or even for taking advantage of powerful metaphors (*desert, oasis*) for comparing the political nature of social environments' (2017, p.252).

*to hold particular applicability to EAP. The first section picks up on the point already made that politics is conceptualised by Arendt in spatial terms, with the ancient Greek polis being the political space par excellence. Then in the second and third sections I discuss the determining activities of the polis, those of political judgement and political action respectively.*

## SECTION I: THE POLIS AND OTHER SPACES OF APPEARANCES

By way of an introduction to this section, I turn to a little-discussed lecture Arendt gave in 1966 on the subject of *cybernation* ([OHC/TWB] 2018) in which she addresses what was in effect the beginning of the digital divide we are so familiar with today. Arendt suggests that the advent of computers is not simply bringing about a change in working practices *à la* the industrial revolution but rather promises a fundamental transformation in ‘the natural life cycle of laboring, resting, laboring’ enjoyed by people for centuries, ‘the survival cycle that offered contentment’ ([OHC/TWB] 2018, p.324). This change, Arendt anticipates, will affect the masses - ‘the men who were content and found a certain dignity in their tasks’ - most cruelly ([OHC/TWB] 2018, p.324). Indeed, in their being ‘all of a sudden ... deprived of this life cycle’, and confronted with an excess of free time, more free time than has ever been the case in history and certainly more than they will know what to do with, the masses will ‘be deprived of their dignity’ ([OHC/TWB] 2018, p.324).

Believing with ‘the Greeks’ that there is more to life than labour alone, Arendt goes on to discuss this high unprecedented ‘problem of vacant time’ ([OHC/TWB] 2018, p.324). In ancient Greek culture, the time one had away from labour and war - leisure time or what the Greeks termed *scholē*<sup>75</sup> - was understood as time *for* something else, for civic and political engagement. Leisure time was not an abstention from all activities (not idleness) but an abstention from certain necessary activities in order to participate in others that were considered more meaningful and fulfilling. While not wishing the modern world the experience

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<sup>75</sup> Arendt explains that the Greek word for leisure is *scholē* (the origin of the word school) and ‘means an abstention from something else ... To have leisure meant that one abstained from certain activities to be free for others. Thus leisure is ... the very antithesis of idleness’ ([OHC/TWB] 2018, p.325).



of ancient violence, Arendt acknowledges that the threat of war, rather like the prospect of being hanged in Samuel Johnson's quip, concentrated people's minds wonderfully<sup>76</sup>. Now, however, or in the near future, being liberated from engagement in martial or political activities and faced with a surfeit of free time, Arendt predicts the masses, in contradistinction to the ancient Greeks, are likely to spend this free time not in *scholē* but in genuine idleness, in doing nothing in other words.

The *coup de grâce* of the lecture occurs at the end when Arendt wonders if a solution to this modern problem might be found in ancient Greece and specifically in the 'Greek model'. The passage is worth citing in full as it nicely encapsulates Arendt's conception of politics:

If we want to take the Greeks as a model, then we must consider - before we talk about the flowering of culture - the political institutions of the Greeks. Let us look at the Greek polis and consider whether we want to adopt the institution of the polis, whether we would be able to adopt it, whether we could transpose this original model of political organization that was not even adopted by all the Greeks in the same way. For every polis was an isolated organism, completely separated from the other. Can we - twentieth-century Americans - devise liberal institutions for our political lives which will fulfill the function the polis fulfilled for the free citizens of Greece? Can we learn to spend our lives in political activity and fill our vacant time with public service? ([OHC/TWB] 2018, p.327).

If we recognise that for Arendt, the original Greek polis 'was precisely that "form of government" [a reference to Montesquieu's tripartite categorisation of governments<sup>77</sup>] which provided men with a space of appearances where they could act' ([WF/BPF] 2006, p.152), then her challenge is this: can we today (re)create public spaces along the lines of the

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<sup>76</sup> 'Depend upon it, Sir, when a man knows he is to be hanged in a fortnight, it concentrates his mind wonderfully.' According to James Boswell's (1791) *The life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D.*, Samuel Johnson is said to have used this phrase to argue that the sermon he himself had written for the condemned English clergyman, William Dodds, was in fact Dodd's own work (JAMES BOSWELL, 2013).

<sup>77</sup> In *The spirit of the laws*, Montesquieu [1689-1755], holds that there 'three species of government; republican, monarchical, and despotic' (CHARLES LOUIS DE SECONDAT BARON DE MONTESQUIEU, 1777).

ancient polis, and learn to act as political citizens again, and so fill our vacant time with political activity? And while Arendt herself maintained that her reason for writing was not to influence others but to understand for herself ([WRLR/EU] 1994), it is hard not to feel at times, as Michael Gottsegen has argued, that Arendt, or at least her body of work, has a kind of goal, viz.:

To redeem politics, humanity, and the world by means of politics; or rather, to redeem politics, humanity, and the world by means of a rhetorical vision of a redeemed politics that might serve to inspire *her readers* to go forth and redeem politics by means of political action (MICHAEL G. GOTTSEGEN, 1994, p.10).

The question remains, however, precisely what it was about the Greek polis that so attracted Arendt, for as David Marshall has noted, few thinkers are as linked with ‘the topos of the polis as Hannah Arendt’ (2010b, p.125). In what follows, I explore this question via a discussion of Arendt’s presentation of the polis as a literal and metaphorical space for politics.

## POLISES

I term this part *polises* not only because, as Arendt acknowledges, the Greek model of political organisation ‘was not adopted by all the Greeks in the same way’ ([OHC/TWB] 2018, p.327), but also because Arendt describes both a literal and a metaphorical polis: there is the polis as the ‘city-state in its physical location’ and the polis ‘which can find its proper location almost any time and anywhere ... the space of appearance in the widest sense of the word’ ([HC] 1998, p.198). While ‘properly speaking’ ([HC] 1998, p.198), the second polis as a body of people *is* the polis, it is helpful to remind ourselves of its origins in the first, and not least because it is

really this first polis that commentators have taken exception to when criticising Arendt's polis-influenced politics.

As she makes quite clear in the passage cited above, Arendt does not wish to bring back the polis. Instead, she is interested in the insights of those early people who experienced politics at first hand. As David Arndt (2019) has recently argued, Arendt's approach to understanding politics and getting at its essence is informed by phenomenological assumptions. Starting with what is generally considered to be a primary example of a political community, Arendt identifies its 'distinctive traits (the traits that distinguish it from other kinds of community)' (2019, p.53). Having determined these, Arendt then expresses these in a 'general concept that captures the distinctive nature of political communities everywhere' (2019, p.53). The prime example of a political community that Arendt begins with is the Greek polis, and in order for her to arrive at a concept of the political, she needs to explore the language and history of the polis (2019) - as she does in various places in her work.

What becomes clear on reading Arendt's works as a whole is that she is not venerating the classical polis or wishing for its return; instead, she uses it for thinking about, as David Marshall puts it, 'spaces of appearances that were predominantly classical, but also at times distinctively modern' (2010b, p.139). In other words, Arendt does not stop with the Greek polis. She extracts from it a particular concept of space and proceeds to find versions, or as Marshall puts it *analogues* (2010b), of this space of appearances throughout history<sup>78</sup>. Before looking at

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<sup>78</sup> See, for example, George Kateb, who while suspicious of Arendt's interest in the *polis*, acknowledges a fundamental continuity in her work and in her concept of the political: 'Direct citizen participation is the element common to her ancient and modern commitments' (1983, p.7).

these other spaces, it is helpful to begin where Arendt began - with the Greek word and institution, the *polis* [FIGURE 4].



FIGURE 4: THE ACROPOLIS OF ATHENS, A NOTED POLIS OF CLASSICAL GREECE (WIKIPEDIA, 2021B)

### Polis #1: Greek polis

In her essay *What is freedom?* Arendt explains that politics can only really be understood with reference to the Greek polis:

To use the word 'political' in the sense of the Greek polis is neither arbitrary nor far-fetched. Not only etymologically and not only for the learned does the very word, which in all European languages still derives from the historically unique organization of the Greek city-state, echo the experiences of the community which first discovered the essence and the realm of the political ([WF/BPF] 2006, p.153).

As the term *politics* derives from the Greek *polis*, if we can understand what the polis meant, we are better placed to appreciate the early, or better the first, experiences of what we today term politics. Hence, far from being arbitrary or far-fetched, Arendt's political language is in keeping with historical experiences:

It is indeed difficult and even misleading to talk about politics and its innermost principles without drawing to some extent upon the experiences of Greek and Roman antiquity, and this for no other reason than that men have never, either before or after, thought so highly of political activity and bestowed so much dignity upon its realm ([WF/BPF] 2006, p.153).

Hence, Arendt's interest in language (including etymologies, and semantic distinctions), derives from her observation that in it 'the past is contained ineradicably, thwarting all attempts to get rid of it once and for all' ([WB/MDT] 1973, p.201)<sup>79</sup>. In other words, Arendt's recovery of the polis is an example of Arendt's pearl diving. Dana Villa puts this well:

[Arendt's intention] is to delve behind or beneath the intervening of our philosophic tradition - a tradition in many respects hostile to politics - in order to bring forth, in 'crystallized form', the phenomenological bases of politics as practiced by diverse equals in a public space (DANA VILLA, 2007, p.985).

In the case of *politics*, no matter how far removed we are today from recognising what was originally meant by the term, the word contains within it hints of these past experiences:

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<sup>79</sup> There are parallels here with Ralph Waldo Emerson's conception of language as *fossil poetry*: 'For, though the origin of most of our words is forgotten, each word was at first a stroke of genius, and obtained currency, because for the moment it symbolized the world to the first speaker and to the hearer. The etymologist finds the deadest word to have been once a brilliant picture. Language is fossil poetry. As the limestone of the continent consists of infinite masses of the shells of animalcules, so language is made up of images, or tropes, which now, in their secondary use, have long ceased to remind us of their poetic origin' (RALPH WALDO EMERSON, 2002).

The Greek *polis* will continue to exist at the bottom of our political existence - that is, at the bottom of the sea - for as long as we use the word 'politics' ([WB/MDT] 1973, p.201).

Just so do we find the following entries in the *Online etymology dictionary*:

**politic (adj.)** early 15c., 'pertaining to public affairs,' from Middle French *politique* 'political' (14c.) and directly from Latin *politicus* 'of citizens or the state, civil, civic,' from Greek *politikos* 'of citizens, pertaining to the state and its administration; pertaining to public life,' from *polites* 'citizen,' from *polis* 'city' **polis (n.)** 'ancient Greek city-state,' 1894, from Greek *polis, ptolis* 'citadel, fort, city, one's city; the state, community, citizens' (DOUGLAS HARPER, 2001-2020, [no pagination]).

Tracing the word *politics* back to its origins thus suggests it originally referred to an enclosed space - a *ring-wall* in Arendt's translation ([HC] 1998, p.64)<sup>80</sup> - within which citizens enjoyed their public life. Moreover, in positively determining what a public space was, the ring-wall also determined what was not a public space. In effect, the ring-wall as a spatial divide made politics possible:

Without it a public realm could no more exist than a piece of property without a fence to hedge it in; the one harbored and inclosed political life as the other sheltered and protected the biological life process of the family ([HC] 1998, p.64).

Therefore the ring-wall, in separating the private realm of family life from the public realm of civic life, created the space in which politics could take place; and within this space, and only within this space, everything that took place, including the 'sharing of words and deeds' ([HC]

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<sup>80</sup> In Arendt's words: 'The word *polis* originally connoted something like a "ring-wall," and it seems the Latin *urbs* also expressed the notion of a "circle" and was derived from the same root as *orbis*. We find the same connection in our word "town," which originally, like the German *Zaun*, meant a surrounding fence' ([HC] 1998, p.64).

1998, p.197), was by definition political: hence 'to be political [and] to live in a *polis*' were one and the same ([HC] 1998, p.26).

In Arendt's account as laid out in *The human condition*, the Greek polis:

grew out of and remained rooted in the Greek pre-polis experience and estimate of what makes it worthwhile for men to live together (*syzen*), namely, the 'sharing of words and deeds' ([HC] 1998, pp.196-197).

This sharing required a space for these words and deeds to appear and, importantly, to appear to others. Originating from small isolated settlements around 1000 BC, the polis slowly developed over four centuries into the major political and judicial unit of ancient Greece, with each city state the ruler of itself. As Arendt notes, these were not identical to each other (though they all seem to have had city walls and public spaces), but according to David Arndt, there came to be two common institutions that helped define the classical polis: the first was citizenship and the legal and political equality afforded to every member of the political community (notwithstanding the fact that only men and free men at that could be counted as citizens); and the second was debate and the principle that community matters would be decided by citizens through public deliberation (2019, pp.55-56). These cornerstones of the polis become the cornerstones too of Arendt's politics: politics is the coming together of free and equal people in a space for the discussion (that is, agreement and disagreement) of matters considered to be of common concern.

The polis was different from any other community. If the polis was the place in which 'everything was decided through words and persuasion' ([HC] 1998, p.26), then those activities

characterised more by force or violence were considered non-political or as Arendt terms them prepolitical:

the life in the polis was designed to distinguish the Greek from the barbarian and the free man from the slave. The distinction was that Greeks, living together in a polis, conducted their affairs by means of speech, through persuasion (*πείθειν*), and not by means of violence, through mute coercion ([TMA/BPF] 2006, p.22).

This being the case, the rule the head of the household exercised over his home and family was thus seen to have more in common with the despotism that characterised 'barbarian' life than it did with the free manner in which politics was conducted in the polis. These prepolitical groups did not of course lack:

the faculty of speech, but of a way of life in which speech and only speech made sense and where the central concern of all citizens was to talk with each other ([HC] 1998, p.27).

Thus the polis constituted a barricade against the non-political, 'an organization of power' which negatively offered protection to its citizens from violence and death ([OV/CR] 1972, p.149) and which positively guaranteed freedom of speech<sup>81</sup>.

In an unpublished lecture, Arendt explains simply the purpose of the polis:

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<sup>81</sup> In Euripides' tragedy, *The Phoenician women*, Jocasta asks her son, Polynices, what the worst aspect of living in exile was. His response: 'The worst of it, mother, is the fact that there is no free speech'. To which she replies: 'That's a slave's life, you're describing, not to be able to speak freely' (EURIPIDES, 2012, lines 391-392).



We turn to Pericles to know what the purpose of the polis is: It is to make immortalizing always possible: You need not wait for a great enterprise to distinguish yourself. Ultimately, you don't [sic] have to act at all: Greatness can be achieved through speech. The speaker of great words ([PPWP] 1969, [no pagination]).

This original Greek polis, according to Arendt, had two important functions, both related to political action. I think of these in terms of the quantity and quality of action. The first function was to provide men with numerous opportunities to speak (and act) in public and so stand out from the crowd:

The *polis* was supposed to multiply the occasions to win 'immortal fame', that is, to multiply the chances for everybody to distinguish himself, to show in deed and word who he was in his unique distinctness ([HC] 1998, p.197).

The polis operated to make more frequent what otherwise was possible only infrequently, say in wars, thereby increasing action quantitatively. The second and related function of the polis was to help immortalise these words (and deeds), thereby increasing action qualitatively. Unlike the products of human work, the more or less tangible fabrications of the world, the products of human action, our words and deeds, are perishable in that unless seen or heard by others they disappear without trace. The polis promised a kind of communal remembrance, ensuring that these extraordinary words and deeds deserving of fame would not be forgotten. As a place of 'organized remembrance' the polis, in principle at least, 'assures the mortal actor that his passing existence and fleeting greatness will never lack the reality that comes from being seen, being heard' ([HC] 1998, p.198). As Pericles [FIGURE 5] utters in his famous funeral oration:

those who forced every sea and land to become the scene of their daring will not remain without witness and will need neither Homer nor anyone else who knows how to turn words to praise them; without assistance from others, those who acted will be able to establish together the everlasting remembrance of their good and bad deeds, to inspire admiration in the present and in future ages ([HC] 1998, p.197).<sup>82</sup>



FIGURE 5: PHILIPP VON FOLTZ - PERIKLES HÄLT DIE LEICHENREDE / PERICLES'S FUNERAL ORATION (WIKIPEDIA, 2021A)

Thus the polis functions as a kind of double palliative for the fragility of human action, providing not only a space for the multiple performances of speech as action but ensuring also that these

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<sup>82</sup>This is Arendt's paraphrase of the speech contained in Thucydides ii. 41. Rex Warner's translation of the same passage reads as follows: 'We do not need the praises of a Homer, or of anyone else whose words may delight us for the moment, but whose estimation of facts will fall short of what is really true. For our adventurous spirit has forced an entry into every sea and into every land; and everywhere we have left behind us everlasting memorials of good done to our friends or suffering inflicted on our enemies' (THUCYDIDES, 1972, p.148).

qualitatively significant words are given publicity in the form of an audience of peers to witness and remember them.

While it is obviously only too easy to criticise the Greeks for their democracy - a democracy that violently excluded most of the population from political participation - it is probable that they would be similarly aghast at modern democracies which have effectively capped the level of civic participation to that of vote casting in the very unpublic space of one afforded by the ballot booth. Institutionalised spaces along the lines of the original polis for politics today are clearly in short supply. Arendt thought the closest modern equivalent to the polis to be the modern jury system which, operating as a fundamentally public decision-making process, is 'the only way in which a citizen today can function as a citizen' ([PRPI/TWB] 2018, p.507). The jury system, 'the last remnant of active citizen participation in the republic', remains a place where '*different viewpoints*' are exchanged on '*matter[s] of common public interest*' ([OHA/HA] 1979, p.317).

## **Polis #2: wherever you go, you will be a polis**

As stated earlier, while the polis certainly existed as an actual democratic institution, Arendt argues it is, and actually always was, much more than a set of buildings in space:

The *polis*, properly speaking, is not the city-state in its physical location; it is the organization of the people as it arises out of acting and speaking together, and its true space lies between people living together for this purpose, no matter where they happen to be. 'Wherever you go, you will be a *polis*': these famous words became not merely the watchword of Greek colonization, they expressed the conviction that action and speech create a space between the participants which can find its proper location almost any time and anywhere. It is the space of appearance in the widest sense of the word, namely, the space where I appear to others as others appear to me, where men exist not merely like other living or inanimate things but make their appearance explicitly ([HC] 1998, p.198).

The polis is not only a physical place, not only a legal entity, but refers metaphorically to any space created by plural and different people coming together for the purpose of speaking and acting on matters of common concern. This very coming together produces and provides a space of appearances: when speaking and acting with others in the manner of action, we know that when we act and when we speak, people will see us and listen to us. The presence of others seeing and hearing us shows us that we are, that we appear - and that we, even if only for a moment, matter. As a space of appearances, it is formed by human togetherness. Hence, Arendt writes, the polis as 'the political realm rises directly out of acting together' ([HC] 1998, p.198); it is a bounded space for the activity of people. As a space of appearances, the polis then can exist virtually anywhere and not only in traditionally political areas; it can exist whenever a group of people come together to discuss issues of common concern, that is, when people come together to act (as only action brings about the space of appearances). However, Arendt is also aware of the *intense fragility* (e. e. cummings) of these spaces. As she writes in her essay *What is freedom?*: 'Such a space of appearances is not to be taken for granted wherever men live together in a community', but when it does exist, it is 'where they could act ... [and] where freedom could appear' ([WF/BPF] 2006, p.152).

For Arendt, then, this space of appearances comes into being when and where humans speak and act freely with others (what Arendt calls action), and in so acting, they reveal or disclose themselves, their uniqueness, to those present. What she identifies and highlights across her writing, both in her longer works (*The origins of totalitarianism; The human condition; On revolution*) and in essays such as those referenced above, is twofold: a concern at the disappearance of these public spaces of appearances, and so of politics itself;

and a recognition that spaces of appearances though rare - 'islands in a sea or as oases in a desert' ([OR] 2006, p.267) - can continue to be created.

### THE POLIS AND ITS DISCONTENTS

Criticisms have been levelled against Arendt's interest in the polis and of her use of it to arrive at a concept of the political<sup>83</sup>. Given that Arendt appears to value direct participatory politics, the prominence she gives to the polis, this wholly male realm that could only function on the backs of women and slaves, has worried some commentators. Hanna Pitkin, for example, attacks the exclusivity and machismo of Arendt's polis, a place in which 'citizens begin to resemble posturing little boys clamoring for attention ("Look at me! I'm the greatest!" "No, look at me!")' (1981, p.338). As Mary Dietz points out, Pitkin's attack on the Arendtian polis has been particularly influential in feminist discussions of Hannah Arendt<sup>84</sup>, probably due to 'the provocative quality of the image [of the polis] itself' at a time when feminist scholarship was experiencing a growing interest in the roles and representations of women in ancient Greece (1995, p.44). Jean Elshtain, for example, drew attention to what she termed Arendt's 'polis envy'<sup>85</sup>; and this (admittedly witty) phrase can also be found in Richard Wolin's *Heidegger's children: Hannah Arendt, Karl Löwith, Hans Jonas, and Herbert Marcuse* who writes that:

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<sup>83</sup> Excellent discussions of criticisms regarding Arendt's use of polis and about her conception of the political can be found in David Marshall (2010b) and David Arndt (2019) respectively.

<sup>84</sup> For a careful critique of such views, see Bonnie Honig's edited volume: *Feminist interpretations of Hannah Arendt* (1995).

<sup>85</sup> A comment apparently made by Jean Elshtain at a discussion panel on Arendt and cited in the *Interpretative essay* by Joanna Vecchiarelli Scott and Judith Chelius Stark that features in the 1996 Chicago edition of Arendt's *Love and Saint Augustine* ([LSA] 1996, p.174).

Like her mentor from Messkirch [Heidegger], she suffered profoundly from 'polis envy' - a tendency to view modern political life as a precipitous fall from the glories of a highly mythologized Periclean heyday (RICHARD WOLIN, 2001, p.69).

This is a provocative but mistaken view. Apart from the fact that it is hard to find any tangible evidence of either polis idealism or polis nostalgia in Arendt's treatment of the past, Periclean or otherwise, this argument seems to conflate two different entities. As Arendt makes clear in her own description of the polis, it was the early Greek attitude to action that emphasised deeds over words, a view of action which Arendt terms 'highly individualistic' ([HC] 1998, p.194). This emphasis on action as deed gradually changed in that with the advent of the polis, 'action and speech separated and became more and more independent activities' ([HC] 1998, p.26). Speech then became central to action and the main activity of the polis, and so if Arendt suffers from any kind of polis envy it is not because of Pericles' actions but of the opportunity he had to deliver great speeches in public.<sup>86</sup>

I would not characterise Arendt's interest in the polis as either idealistic or nostalgic. As Peter Euben writes, Arendt is more storyteller than nostalgist:

Arendt is a dramatist of modernity who no more aims to return to ancient Athens than Sophocles aimed to return to the Athens of Theseus ... Indeed, one could read her work as one could read Homer and Thucydides: as telling a story about such experiences to sustain us in the absence of their presence (PETER J. EUBEN, 2000, pp.161-162).

By absence here, Euben is referring to the absence of politics - of genuine politics, of the polis - under totalitarianism. Furthermore, as Euben goes on to say, even in her most Hellenistic

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<sup>86</sup> I note that Shmuel Lederman (2019) has also recently made the same point as I am making here: that Arendt does indeed describe this shift from action to speech that occurred over time from the Heroic age to the time of the polis. It is thus misleading to view the polis as a place for heroic deeds as such. It is a place for speech. As Lederman adds, this is a point often overlooked by commentators (2019, p.43).

work, *The human condition*, Arendt takes an explicitly present tense perspective on the condition of being human, writing 'from the vantage point of our newest experience and our most recent fears' in order 'to think what we are doing' ([HC] 1998, p.5). As Euben glosses, any Hellenism here is neither a matter of idealism nor of nostalgia but instead 'an attempt to think through the present without being presentistic' (2000, p.162).

Neither do I find evidence that she was blind to its shortcomings. I agree with, for example, Peter Fuss, who like many, recognises:

Arendt makes no attempt to gloss over the appalling injustice<sup>87</sup> - indeed moral blindness and profound philosophical inconsistency - inherent in Greek slavery. And, although she herself makes no special point of it, I would add that much the same needs to be said concerning Greek male chauvinism (PETER FUSS, 1979, p.175 #8).

Of course, Arendt does describe the polis in considerable detail; however, while Arendt clearly admires the attempt to create and nurture a political space for words and deeds, she is just as clear on its shortcomings. It is hard to read *The human condition* and come away thinking that Arendt wishes to resurrect the polis for today. As Shmuel Lederman points out:

Arendt did not take the agonal spirit to be an unreserved ideal, but rather was sympathetic to aspects of it while being very much aware of its inherent dangers (SHMUEL LEDERMAN, 2014, p.329).

The polis as presented in *The human condition* is clearly individualistic and agonistic, but worse than this, or rather because of this, it also constitutes a kind of politics *in extremis*. As Arendt

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<sup>87</sup> See, for example, in *The human condition*, where Arendt references slavery as 'the violent injustice of forcing one part of humanity into the darkness of pain and necessity' ([HC] 1998, p.119).

sees it, what allowed the polis to flourish also led to its demise: the original polis was too concerned with the agonal spirit at the expense of the more deliberative flavour she picks up on in *On revolution*. As I discuss later in this section, the speech aspect of action (which comprises words and deeds) is particularly related to the condition of plurality, while the deed aspect is more associated with the condition of natality. In *The human condition*, with its account of ancient politics, Arendt emphasises more the agonal spirit of action: of action over speech and natality over plurality. In later works such as *On revolution*, this emphasis is reversed and greater emphasis is placed on speech over action and plurality over natality. In a sense, it can be said that the original Greek polis was too *hardcore*:

One, if not the chief, reason for the incredible development of gift and genius in Athens, as well as for the hardly less surprising swift decline of the city-state, was precisely that from beginning to end its foremost aim was to make the extraordinary an ordinary occurrence of everyday life ([HC] 1998, p.197).

David Arndt similarly argues that:

Arendt did not idealize the Greek polis, or hold it up as a model to be emulated. She knew the freedom and equality of its citizens depended upon the domination and enslavement of noncitizens (DAVID ARNDT, 2019, p.53).

Finally, and most fundamentally, what much of the polis-critical literature on Arendt ignores is her clear use of the polis as metaphor. Not only in *The human condition* but in various other



places<sup>88</sup>, Arendt identifies the polis as a space of and for freedom. Thus Mary Dietz reminds readers:

As for Arendt's views [in *The human condition*, p. 196], it is important to remember that she is not concerned 'with the historical causes for the rise of the Greek city-state,' but rather with how the polis (as a metaphor for politics) functions as a 'remedy' for the 'frailty' of human action (MARY G. DIETZ, 1995, p.44).

Maurizio Passerin d'Entreves agrees and returns us to the very thing that is Arendt's main point: 'The *polis*, properly speaking, is not the city-state in its physical location' ([HC] 1998, p.198):

Arendt is not simply referring to the political institutions of the Greek city-states, bounded as they were to their time and circumstance, but to all those instances in history where a public realm of action and speech was set up among a community of free and equal citizens ... the *polis* stands for the *space of appearance* (MAURIZIO PASSERIN D'ENTRÈVES, 1994, pp.76-77).

In spite of the attention given in the literature to Arendt's admiration of the polis, David Marshall is surely correct in saying that the majority of commentators on Arendt do not detect any fundamental fetishisation of the polis in her writings, and furthermore have recognised that the admiration she exhibits for the polis does not prevent her from a deep engagement in modern political realities (2010b)<sup>89</sup>. Informed by a close reading of Arendt's recently published *Denktagebuch*<sup>90</sup> (book of thoughts), Marshall argues that Arendt's interest in the polis was a

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<sup>88</sup> See for example *Freedom and politics: a lecture*: 'This space is always and everywhere that men live together in freedom, without domination or subjugation' ([FP/TWB] 2018, p.243).

<sup>89</sup> See, for example, Peter Fuss, who like many, finds: 'Arendt makes no attempt to gloss over the appalling injustice - indeed moral blindness and profound philosophical inconsistency - inherent in Greek slavery. And, although she herself makes no special point of it, I would add that much the same needs to be said concerning Greek male chauvinism' (1979, p.175 #8).

<sup>90</sup> David Marshall is referring to the following text: Hannah Arendt, *Denktagebuch*, ed. Ursula Ludz and Ingeborg Nordmann, 2 volumes (Munich: Piper, 2002).

means for thinking 'comparatively about spaces of appearances that were predominantly classical, but also at times distinctively modern' (2010b, p.139). There are numerous 'analogues of the Athenian city-state' in her work, most notably the various council systems described in *On revolution*: the Jeffersonian wards of the American republic; the Parisian *communes* of 1789; the Russian *soviets* of 1905 and 1917; the German Räte of 1918-1919; and the Hungarian *councils* of 1956. These *analogues* are presented by Arendt as public spaces and as spaces of freedom:

If we equate these spaces of freedom - which, following the gist, though not the terminology of John Adams, we could also call spaces of appearances - with the political realm itself, we shall be inclined to think of them as islands in a sea or as oases in a desert ([OR] 2006, p.267).

#### CLOSING STATEMENT

While some critics see the centrality of the polis in Arendt's writing as evidence of an essential nostalgia, Arendt's concern appears to me more sophisticated. Responding to the contemporary degeneration of politics and its absolute nadir under totalitarianism when it all but disappeared, Arendt recovers from the polis the original sense of politics as the space for speaking and acting with others on matters of common concern.

My reading of Arendt is that the ancient Greeks had one method for guaranteeing the continuance of the political world: exclusivity. Through ensuring some people (men) were freed from the necessities of life to speak and act in public, others (women and slaves) had to forego such freedom to take care of these necessities. It is more than clear that Arendt is fully aware of the composition of the Greek polis. It is, she writes, a place only for those 'people who were neither slaves, subject to coercion by others, nor laborers, driven by the necessity

of the biological process of life' ([FP/TWB] 2018, p.226). So when Arendt describes the restricted composition of the Greek polis as she does in *The human condition*, she does so with keen awareness of its exclusivity. Moreover, Arendt is equally aware and critical of the exclusivity of contemporary politics:

This space [the space of appearances] does not always exist, and although all men are capable of deed and word, most of them - like the slave, the foreigner, and the barbarian in antiquity, like the laborer or craftsman prior to the modern age, the jobholder or businessman in our world - do not live in it ([HC] 1998, p.199).

So while the polis clearly enjoyed a physical existence in time and space, in Arendt's writing it is not offered up as something for us to look back upon with nostalgia. Furthermore, nowhere in her writing does she argue that this Greek polis would be a suitable institution today. Arendt certainly thinks we can learn from the past, but she does not idealise it. As noted, even beyond the obvious social exclusivity of the polis, Arendt recognised other problems with it too. What is crucial though is to recognise that for Arendt the polis 'represents the space where ... freedom as action, properly understood as virtuosity, can appear' ([FP/TWB] 2018, p.226).

The polis is a public space but no one 'can live in it all the time' ([HC] 1998, p.199). People need to labour, to work, and to think, and these activities require private spaces. However, Arendt's argument is that humans need more than a private life; we need the reality of being seen and heard by others, and this necessitates a public space: 'To be deprived of it [a public space] means to be deprived of reality, which, humanly and politically speaking, is the same as appearance' ([HC] 1998, p.199).

To proceed further, we need to explore how the polis as a space of appearances relates to those two other key aspects of Arendt's thought: to judgement 'the other side of action' ([UP/EU] 1994, p.321), and to action itself; both of these are concerned with establishing, maintaining, and caring for the space of appearances. I begin with judging and with its foundation, thinking.

## SECTION II: THINKING AND JUDGING

Could *thinking* have prevented Adolf Eichmann from becoming a Nazi and organising the identification, assembly, and transportation of Jews from all over occupied Europe to their final destinations at Auschwitz and other extermination camps in German-occupied Poland? In her 1971 essay *Thinking and moral considerations*, Arendt hypothesises that Eichmann's actions were a consequence of his 'inability to think' ([TMC/RJ] 2003, p.159). Arendt makes high claims for thinking and at first sight the relevance of this to a thesis on Arendt and EAP may not be immediately obvious. However, if *thinking* is understood as critical thinking that 'brings out the implications of unexamined opinions and thereby destroys them' and so which can prevent people from being 'swept away unthinkingly by what everybody else does or believes in' ([TMC/RJ] 2003, p.188), its relevance becomes clearer; and clearer still, perhaps, if we understand the by-product of such thinking to be *judging*: 'the ability to see things not only from one's own point of view but in the perspective of all those who happen to be present' ([CC/BPF] 2006, p.218). If, finally, we understand that:

this ability ... can only be acquired and tested in a public forum where individuals have the opportunity to exchange their opinions on particular matters and see whether they accord with the opinions of others (MAURIZO PASSERIN D'ENTRÈVES, 2000, pp.253-254).

then we begin to get a sense of how these twin capabilities might be usefully discussed in relation to EAP. My contention, which I return to in the following chapter [CHAPTER 4], is that Arendt's work on these areas offers a type of democratic critical thinking that augments the common academic understanding of critical thinking.

There is an enormous amount of literature on the concept of judgement in the thought of Arendt<sup>91</sup>. No doubt part of the reason for this interest is that unlike other aspects of Arendt's work, her thinking on judgement was left incomplete. The fact that Arendt died with this major work on judgement unfinished has left commentators having to infer from lecture notes and assorted references to the subject found in other works dedicated to other topics what she might have gone on to say. Perhaps the principal debate is whether Arendt in fact had a unified theory of judgement: whether the treatment of judgement gleaned either from her later published (*Thinking and moral considerations*) or unpublished works (*Lectures on Kant's political philosophy; The life of the mind*), is a development or a contradiction of its treatment in her the earlier works that address the topic explicitly (*The crisis in culture; Truth and politics*). In short, some critics have argued that there exists in Arendt's work on judgement two models: on the one hand, there is the judgement of the actor in the *vita activa*, that is, his or her active capacity to decide how to act; and on the other is the judgement of the spectator in the *vita contemplativa*, a more passive capacity that enables the uninvolved witness to understand and make sense of the past<sup>92</sup>.

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<sup>91</sup> A good overview can be found in Jonathan Peter Schwartz' recent book-length study *Arendt's judgment: freedom, responsibility, citizenship* (2016).

<sup>92</sup> See David Marshall's (2010a) *The origin and character of Hannah Arendt's theory of judgment* for a longer discussion of these and other views. Marshall examines previously unpublished materials - early manuscripts and Arendt's book of thoughts (*Denktagebuch*) - to defend her theory of judgement against popular criticisms including the specific claim referenced above and below.

That there is a change in Arendt's presentation of judgement was evidenced by Ronald Beiner in his influential *Interpretive essay* (1992), written to accompany the publication of Arendt's lecture notes on Kant's *Critique of judgement*:

In her writings up until the 1971 essay, 'Thinking and moral considerations', judgment is considered from the point of view of the *vita activa*; in her writings from that essay onward, judgment is considered from the point of view of the life of the mind. The emphasis shifts from the representative thought and enlarged mentality of political agents to the spectatorship and retrospective judgment of historians and storytellers (RONALD BEINER, 1992, p.91).

Beiner's claim that Arendt has effectively two judgements initially received considerable support. Richard Bernstein found in the work of Arendt a 'flagrant contradiction' between 'thinking and acting' and that this 'comes into clear focus in her reflections on judging' (1986, p.221). Maurizio Passerin d'Entrèves wrote:

Arendt's theory of judgment incorporates two models, the actor's - judging in order to act - and the spectator's - judging in order to cull meaning from the past (MAURIZO PASSERIN D'ENTRÈVES, 2000, p.246).

In a similar vein, Majid Yar has written of his aim to:

separate out the two distinctive views on judgment which inhabit Arendt's work rather like Siamese twins - one is never quite sure where one ends and the other begins (MAJID YAR, 2000, p.2).

In the last few years, the two-model approach has been questioned by a number of commentators. Shmuel Lederman, for instance, reads Arendt differently from Beiner and argues that 'at no time did Arendt have an actor's theory of judgement. Judgement for her was always spectators' judgement' (2016, p.738). Similarly, Annelies Degryse argues for there being

a single model of judgement in Arendt, but suggests that it developed considerably over the course of her life as she ‘realizes that the capacity to judge is central for every human being, not only for the actors’ (2011, p.356). David Marshall’s examination of Arendt’s manuscripts and of her *Denktagebuch*<sup>93</sup> leads him to dismiss the view that her theory of judgement can be so easily divided into an early actor-theory and a late spectator-theory. He writes that from the outset:

Arendt understood judging as something undertaken by both the spectator and the actor. As a result, the hypothesis that Arendtian judgment evolved from a practice in the *vita activa* to a faculty in the *vita contemplativa* is overly simple and ought to be rejected (DAVID L. MARSHALL, 2010a, p.370).

Following Marshall’s persuasive lead, my discussion of judgement in this thesis does not discriminate between early or late accounts of judgement but instead offers a more global account. However, in acknowledging too that Arendt may not have left us with a finished theory, I also turn to commentators such as Lawrence Biskowski (1993), Patrick Hayden (2014), and Linda Zerilli (2005) who see and develop connections between Arendt’s work on judgement and her other political work. Before looking at judging, which after all is a kind of thinking, it is necessary to turn first to what Arendt means by thinking and to how this connects to and prepares the way for judging.

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<sup>93</sup> While Arendt’s *Denktagebuch* (twenty-eight handwritten notebooks) is not currently available in English, essays on the notebooks are: see, for example, *Artifacts of thinking: reading Hannah Arendt’s Denktagebuch* (ROGER BERKOWITZ AND IAN STOREY, 2017).

Arendt discusses the subject of thinking in numerous publications, ranging from short essays to the book-length treatment in *The life of the mind* ([LM] 1981). For the purposes of this thesis, I shall contain my discussion of thinking mainly to the more concise account contained in the essay *Thinking and moral considerations* ([TMC/RJ] 2003). In this essay, Arendt picks up on comments she had made earlier in her accounts of the trial of Adolf Eichmann and specifically about having termed him and his evil *banal* as opposed to wicked. What she meant by this was that, as far as she could judge from his performance during the trial, he appeared to be neither pathological nor ideological but a man of 'extraordinary shallowness' who demonstrated a 'curious, quite authentic inability to think' ([TMC/RJ] 2003, p.159). For Arendt, Eichmann was someone who never seemed to think about what he was doing, either in his role in the transportation of Jews or as a prisoner on trial. Extrapolating from this superficiality, his inability to think for himself and form his own judgements, and finding no wickedness as such, Arendt wonders if his evildoing is related to his banality, his lack of thought, and more generally, if the ability to judge may be dependent upon the ability to think:

Is our ability to judge, to tell right from wrong, beautiful from ugly, dependent upon our faculty of thought? ... could the activity of thinking as such, the habit of examining and reflecting upon whatever happens to come to pass, regardless of specific content and quite independent of results, could this activity be of such a nature that it 'conditions' men against evildoing? ([TMC/RJ] 2003, p.160).



While Arendt's accusation of banality attracted considerable opposition at the time<sup>94</sup> and troubles some today<sup>95</sup>, what she has to say about language and Eichmann's clichéd use of it is perhaps less controversial. Familiar language, she writes, has an insulating quality:

Clichés, stock phrases, adherence to conventional, standardized codes of expression and conduct have the socially recognized function of protecting us from reality, that is, against the claim on our thinking attention which all events and facts arouse by virtue of their existence ([TMC/RJ] 2003, p.160).

Arendt argues that while it is not possible for humans to function forever without these protections ('we would soon be exhausted' ([TMC/RJ] 2003, p.160)), what she sees in Eichmann is his utter failure to recognise any such claim on his thinking attention. Given that Arendt will argue we are all capable of thinking, the first question Arendt addresses in the essay is how thinking differs from knowing. Arendt draws on the distinction Kant makes between thinking and knowing. Thinking is a never-ending human need or urge to understand, even beyond the limits of knowledge ('The need to think can only be satisfied through thinking'), whereas the intellectual desire to know 'can be fulfilled by reaching its intended goal' ([TMC/RJ] 2003, p.163). However, the real difference between the two - thinking and knowing - is that thinking leaves nothing behind, unlike knowing:

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<sup>94</sup> Amos Elon notes in his *Introduction to Arendt's Eichmann in Jerusalem: a report on the banality of evil* that as well as receiving censure for her treatment of Eichmann from newspapers and figures such as Saul Bellow there was also a nationwide campaign launched in the United States to discredit Arendt in the academic world (2006).

<sup>95</sup> See, for example, a recent article in *The New Yorker* (RICHARD BRODY, 2013).

the activity [knowing] itself leaves behind a growing treasure of knowledge that is retained and kept in store by every civilization as part and parcel of its world. The activity of knowing is no less a world-building activity than the building of houses. The inclination or the need to think, on the contrary ... leaves nothing so tangible behind, nor can it be stilled by allegedly definite insights of 'wise men' ([TMC/RJ] 2003, p.163).

Arendt also observes that thinking is an activity that 'interrupts all doing' ([TMC/RJ] 2003, p.164). When we think, we halt what we were doing, and when we do something, we halt thinking (thinking is the mental equivalent of a cease and desist letter). Hence, when we think 'it is as though we moved into a different world' ([TMC/RJ] 2003, p.165). Connected with this observation is that thinking 'always deals with objects that are absent, removed from direct sense perception' ([TMC/RJ] 2003, p.165). Whether thinking of things present or absent, the 'object of thought is always a re-presentation' ([TMC/RJ] 2003, p.165), something that is made present to the mind via the imagination. As thoughts are representations or images of reality, thinking can be said to take us somewhere else, 'outside the world of appearances' ([TMC/RJ] 2003, p.165).

To summarise: thinking is something everyone is able to do ('it cannot be a privilege of the few'); it never settles (it 'has a "natural aversion" against accepting its own results as "solid axioms"'); and it 'deals with invisibles', that is, with things which are not present but that we re-present to ourselves via our imagination ([TMC/RJ] 2003, pp.166-167).

Given that thinking is so restless and unworldly, Arendt turns to Socrates as a kind of representative thinking man of the people (rather than a professional philosopher) to explore how thinking can be relevant for doing, for acting in the world. She explores Socratic thinking by looking at three similes commonly applied to him, the first two apparently by himself: he is

a *gadfly*, a *midwife*, and an *electric ray*. He was a gadfly because he knew ‘how to arouse the citizens’ and wake them up: without his interventions, they would ‘sleep on undisturbed for the rest of their lives’ ([TMC/RJ] 2003, p.174). He was a midwife because the midwife (in contemporary Greek society) would decide ‘whether the child was fit to live or ... was a mere “wind egg”<sup>96</sup> of which the bearer must be cleansed’ ([TMC/RJ] 2003, p.174). Like the midwife, Socrates delivered to people the upshot of their opinions and in so doing purged them of ‘those unexamined prejudgments which prevent thinking’ ([TMC/RJ] 2003, p.174). Finally, he was an electric ray in that he paralysed those he came into contact with, infecting them with the uncertainties and perplexities he himself felt.

This final ‘paralysis of thought’ is particularly significant in that its paralysing effect continues when we return from thinking, ‘leaving you no longer sure of what had seemed to you beyond doubt while you were unthinkingly engaged in whatever you were doing’ ([TMC/RJ] 2003, p.176). The implications of this paralysis are that thinking is subversive and anti-authoritarian (in her lectures on Kant, Arendt roundly describes these as the political implications of thinking). Thinking has:

an undermining effect on all established criteria, values, measurements for good and evil, in short on those customs and rules of conduct we treat of in moral and ethics ([TMC/RJ] 2003, p.176).

Hence Arendt’s famous phrase that ‘thinking itself is dangerous’ ([TMC/RJ] 2003, p.177): thinking destroys but ‘by itself, does not bring forth any new creed’ ([TMC/RJ] 2003, p.178). This is not to suggest that *not* thinking is without danger, of course. The habit of not thinking,

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<sup>96</sup> A wind egg is literally an unfertilised egg that cannot hatch (WILLIAM OSLER, 2001).

of not examining taken-for-granted values and rules of conduct, can be exploited; how easy, Arendt notes, it was for the Nazi and Stalinist regimes to turn conventional morality on its head and make killing not just acceptable but necessary for society. A key move in Arendt's argument occurs when she introduces Socrates' two *positive* propositions:

The *first*: 'It is better to be wronged than to do wrong' ... The *second*: 'It would be better for me that my lyre or a chorus I directed should be out of tune and loud with discord, and that multitudes of men should disagree with me rather than that I, *being one*, should be out of harmony with myself and contradict me' ([TMC/RJ] 2003, p.181).

Both propositions highlight a fact about our consciousness: that it is split. Each of us is, in a sense, plural in that we are conscious of ourselves. And Socrates' propositions point to the idea that because thinking is essentially a 'two-in-one' dialogue with ourselves, 'a soundless dialogue ... between me and myself' ([TMC/RJ] 2003, p.184), it is important that the dialogue be harmonious, 'that the two who carry on the thinking dialogue be in good shape, that the partners be friends' ([TMC/RJ] 2003, p.185). This is why according to his first proposition it is easier for me to live with an *injured* me than it is for me to live with an *injuring* me; in the first scenario, I am still friends with myself: I feel sorry for myself, perhaps, but I can still be my friend and harmony reigns; in the second, I am left with someone I do not particularly like or wish to remain friends with; I am harbouring a criminal, perhaps even a murderer, and harmony is shattered<sup>97</sup>.

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<sup>97</sup> Of course, there are many examples of this in literature. Arendt discusses Shakespeare's Richard III who, in dialogue with himself, finds he dislikes himself. Raskolnikov in Dostoevsky's *Crime and punishment* is another example.

The point Arendt is making is that thinking is a dialogue with oneself and, importantly, that this two-in-one thinking may result in conscience. The opposite is perhaps also the case, that the person who does not engage in this soundless dialogue may avoid having a guilty conscience:

He who does not know the intercourse between me and myself (in which we examine what we say and what we do) will not mind contradicting himself, and this means he will never be either able or willing to give an account of what he says or does; nor will he mind committing any crime, since he can be sure that it will be forgotten the next moment ([TMC/RJ] 2003, p.187).

From these considerations, Arendt concludes that thinking does not of itself do much good: it challenges rather than creates, and it prompts people to engage in conversation with themselves rather than act. However, it can be useful. In those dark times mentioned earlier when people are 'swept away unthinkingly by what everybody else does and believes in' ([TMC/RJ] 2003, p.188), then those people who do stop and think and refuse to follow become *political actors*. And these people, she suggests, are those who will be able to judge: rather than follow the herd, these people will be able to:

judge *particulars* without subsuming them under those general rules which can be taught and learned until they grow into habits that can be replaced by other habits and rules ([TMC/RJ] 2003, pp.188-189).

So having argued that thinking is essentially a negative faculty, the flipside of this is that we are now free to judge; and judging, as the 'by-product of the liberating effect of thinking' ([TMC/RJ] 2003, p.189), enables people to tell right from wrong. As Zoë Waxman explains:

Arendt's call for critical thinking as a way out of evil demands a 'pause' - a pause to judge what we are doing. For Arendt, what is crucial is that the pause between thought and action be acknowledged if action is to be allowed moral content. That pause is the moment of reflection which allows one to stand back and listen to one's feelings of unease (ZOË WAXMAN, 2009, p.100).

Though Arendt does not return to the case of Eichmann in this essay, the implication is clear: that had he been able to stop and think, he would have been better able to reflect on and judge his own actions, 'to tell right from wrong, beautiful from ugly' ([TMC/RJ] 2003, p.189).

Thinking then is disruptive, subversive, and anti-authoritarian. It is a purgative, ridding us of the clichéd and uncritical patterns which for Arendt so keenly characterised the thinking, as revealed in his speech, of Adolf Eichmann. Thinking thus clears the ground for judgement, as a decorator might strip down walls before redecorating. As she puts it in a talk (*Remarks of professor Hannah Arendt*), given to the *American Society of Christian Ethics*, Socratic thinking in its 'maieutic function' or in its 'mid-wifery' works to 'bring out all your opinions, prejudices, what have you' and this leaves you 'empty':

[This is a transcription of her talk] And once you are empty, then ... you are prepared to judge - that is, without having any book of rules under which you can subsume a particular case, you have got to say, 'This is good,' 'This is bad,' 'This is right,' 'This wrong,' 'This is beautiful,' 'This is ugly.' And the reason why I believe so much in Kant's critique of judgment is not because I am interested in aesthetics but because I believe that the way we say 'That is right, that is wrong,' is not very different from the way in which we say, 'This is beautiful, this is ugly.' That is, we are prepared to meet the phenomena, so to speak, head-on, without any preconceived system ([RPHA] 1973, [no pagination]).

If for Arendt Eichmann epitomises the unthinking individual, someone who neither engages in dialogue with himself (two-in-one thinking) nor with others, his nemesis is Socrates whose thinking is essentially critical thinking, a concept Arendt explores further in her lectures on

Kant. To think critically, she writes, means 'to blaze the trail of thought through prejudices, through unexamined opinions and beliefs' ([LKPP] 1992, p.36). While Arendt plays rather fast and loose with the work of Kant (RONALD BEINER, 1992) in her lectures on his *Critique of judgement*, making it difficult to properly distinguish at times quite where Kant ends and Arendt begins, what Arendt says about critical thinking here is a useful supplement to her earlier discussion of the subject in *Thinking and moral considerations*. Returning to the type of 'negative' thinking exemplified by Socrates, she draws attention to its essential *publicity*, and this becomes a key concept for Arendt:

What he [Socrates] actually did was to make *public*, in discourse, the thinking process - that dialogue that soundlessly goes on within me, between me and myself; he performed in the marketplace the way the flute-player performed at a banquet ([LKPP] 1992, p.37).

Critical thinking, as Arendt understands it from the practice of Socrates and the work of Kant, always has an element of publicity about it. Critical thinking, she writes citing Kant 'exposes itself to "the test of free and open examination," and this means that the more people participate in it, the better' ([LKPP] 1992, p.39). Of course, Socrates exposed his thinking orally and in person, while Kant exposed his thinking in writing, but the point is that in different ways, they recognised that the private nature of thinking was only half of the equation. Referring specifically to Kant, Arendt writes:

He believes that the very faculty of thinking depends on its public use; without 'the test of free and open examination,' no thinking and no opinion-formation are possible ([LKPP] 1992, p.40).

Given that thinking is a private and internal activity, what one finds out in thinking will disappear unless it is given expression, that is, communicated in some manner<sup>98</sup>. An important implication of seeing thinking as something that needs to be publicised and communicated in order to be properly tested, is that the thinking person must be 'willing and able to render an account of what he thinks and says' ([LKPP] 1992, p.41). This rendering an account - what Arendt terms *logon didonai* - is not about proving that what one says is true; it is a matter of being 'able to say how one came to an opinion and for what reasons one formed it' ([LKPP] 1992, p.41); this is similar in spirit to the demand often made of school students to *show your working*. And critical thinking, even of and about yourself, needs other people:

To think critically applies not only to doctrines and concepts one receives from others, to the prejudices and traditions one inherits; it is precisely by applying critical standards to one's own thought that one learns the art of critical thought. And this application one cannot learn without publicity, without the testing that arises from contact with other people's thinking ([LKPP] 1992, p.42).<sup>99</sup>

For Kant, this publicity does not take the form of the actual opinions (he uses the word *judgements*) of others but of their possible judgements. He argues 'that one can "enlarge" one's own thought so as to take into account the thoughts of others' ([LKPP] 1992, p.42). In the sections below, I explore this and other notions key to Arendt's conception of judgement.

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<sup>98</sup> Arendt does not discuss the obvious possibility that one can write thoughts down for *oneself* rather than for others, but the point she seems to be making is that unless one does write them down or communicate them in some fashion, they are liable to disappear; further, if they remain words to oneself, they will not be properly tested (the academic *viva voce* exam being one such test).

<sup>99</sup> I wish to draw attention at this point to the implication here that this kind of thinking can be learnt, a point I return to in the following chapter when I discuss how this has relevance for EAP.



## JUDGING ITSELF

Arendt turns to Immanuel Kant's *Critique of judgement* for her own theory of political judgement, finding in this work on judging the beautiful an account of judging that is in fact political: an intersubjective way of thinking and understanding that allows a person to transcend their own subjectivity and view a situation from the viewpoints of others. In short:

Arendt said that judgment ... is exercised in relationships with others. It involves visiting others - physically or in your mind - and consulting them, seeing things from their point of view, exchanging opinions with them, persuading them, wooing their consent (in Kant's lovely phrase) (ELISABETH YOUNG-BRUEHL, 2006, p.106).

My discussion below that unpacks these ideas centres largely on Arendt's essay *The crisis in culture*, this being the major piece on judgement that she published in her lifetime<sup>100</sup>.

In this discussion of culture, Arendt argues that politics and art are interrelated. If there is a 'common element connecting art and politics', Arendt argues it 'is that they both are phenomena of the public world' ([CC/BPF] 2006, p.215). Arendt distinguishes between consumer goods, use-objects, and works of art in terms of their worldliness, that is, their position *vis-à-vis* the human-made world. While consumer goods are soon consumed, and use-objects are designed to be used and are finally used up, works of art 'stay longer in the world than anything else, they are the worldliest of all things' ([CC/BPF] 2006, p.206). All these objects get to appear in the world, however briefly, but 'only works of art are made for the sole

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<sup>100</sup> Though it should be noted that her 1953 discussion of understanding - *Understanding and politics* ([UP/PR] 1953) - also references the concept of judging. However, this essay was written before Arendt turned from determinative judgments as discussed by Kant in his *Critique of pure reason* to reflective judgements as discussed in his *Critique on judgement*. This does not, of course, mean she thought judgement was determinative beforehand; she practised reflective judgement throughout her life but did not name it in terms of Kant's concepts until later. Nevertheless, as 'Arendt first grappling with the concept of judgment' (JEROME KOHN, 1994), much of what she writes in this essay about understanding is reconfigured in later works specifically as judging (see, for example, her discussion of imagination in this essay and how this mirrors her later account of imaginative visiting). For this reason, I make use of parts of this essay later in my discussion.

purpose of appearance' ([CC/BPF] 2006, p.207). As such, they are not to be judged on their utility but on their beauty:

The proper criterion by which to judge appearances is beauty; if we wanted to judge objects, even ordinary use-objects, by their use-value alone and not also by their appearance - that is, by whether they are beautiful or ugly or something in between, we would have to pluck out our eyes ([CC/BPF] 2006, p.207).

Having argued that works of art are meant to appear and be seen by others, and that this requires some manner of public space (as in an art gallery), Arendt compares them to political words and deeds (*action*) which similarly require publicity and space:

Truly political activities ... acting and speaking, cannot be performed at all without the presence of others, without the public, without a space constituted by the many ... These things [works of art] obviously share with political 'products', words and deeds, the quality that they are in need of some public space where they can appear and be seen; they can fulfil their own being which is appearance, only in a world which is common to all ([CC/BPF] 2006, pp.214-215).

And just as works of art as objects meant for appearance should be judged by the criterion of beauty, political words and deeds should similarly be judged in terms of their beauty or greatness. To this end, Arendt turns to Immanuel Kant's *Critique of judgement* which 'contains perhaps the greatest and most original of Kant's political philosophy' ([CC/BPF] 2006, p.216), even if Kant did not appreciate this himself. What for Arendt is most original about Kant's contribution to the matter of judgement is that it derives from a discussion of aesthetic *taste*, a subject not typically considered of political relevance.

Arendt, following Kant, argues that works of art cannot be judged as beautiful or not simply by deduction or by reference to a higher general rule; rather, it is up to individuals to come to

particular judgements. But this does not mean that aesthetic judgements are purely personal and subjective, which would put them beyond discussion. Against the notion that taste is subjective and arbitrary (and so not open to discussion), Kant claims instead that the activity of judging, unlike that of solitary thinking, has a *public* quality about it:

The power of judgment rests on a potential agreement with others ... in an anticipated communication with others ... it needs the presence of others 'in whose place' it must think, whose perspectives it must take into consideration, and without whom it never has the opportunity to operate at all ([CC/BPF] 2006, p.217).

Arendt thus distinguishes in Kant two kinds of thinking. The first (pure practical reason), as contained in his 1788 *Critique of practical reason* [*Kritik der praktischen vernunft*] and as expressed in his categorical imperative - '*always act in such a manner that the principle of your action can become a general law*' ([CC/BPF] 2006, p.216) - is based upon the Socratic tenet that rational thought must always be in agreement with itself: 'Since I am one, it is better for me to disagree with the whole world than to be in disagreement with myself' ([CC/BPF] 2006, p.216). The second kind of thinking - and this is the thinking necessary for judgement - is found in his *Critique of judgement* and concerns being able to 'think in the place of everybody else', a capacity Kant terms an 'enlarged mentality' ([CC/BPF] 2006, p.217). This capacity is not a matter of being in *actual* agreement with *oneself* but rather of being in 'potential agreement with others' ([CC/BPF] 2006, p.217):

the thinking process which is active in judging something is not, like the thought process of pure reasoning, a dialogue between me and myself, but finds itself always and primarily, even if I am quite alone in making up my mind, in anticipated communication with others with whom I know I just finally come to some agreement ([CC/BPF] 2006, p.217).

So, while the first kind of thinking is fundamentally *internal* (seeking self-agreement), the second kind is more *external* (seeking public agreement). And it is this 'potential agreement' that gives judgement its 'specific validity' ([CC/BPF] 2006, p.217). What Arendt means by this is that to be considered valid, judgements must be more than idiosyncratic 'privately held opinions' which 'lack all validity in the public realm'; judgements need to be able to 'transcend' these limitations and take other views into consideration<sup>101</sup> ([CC/BPF] 2006, p.217). It is important to note that while a judgement arrived at in this fashion may be considered valid, 'it is not valid for those who do not judge or for those who are not members of the public realm where the objects of judgment appear' ([CC/BPF] 2006, p.217). In Kant's words, judgment is valid 'for every single judging person' ([CC/BPF] 2006, p.217), and the emphasis here, according to Arendt, should be on the word *judging* (an attitude along the lines of *you have to be in it to win it*).

Arendt claims this kind of enlarged thinking, a thinking that engages with the imagined standpoints of others, is fundamentally political, and in two related ways: firstly,

the capacity to judge is a specifically political ability in exactly the sense denoted by Kant, namely, the ability to see things not only from one's own point of view but in the perspective of all those who happen to be present ([CC/BPF] 2006, p.218).

And secondly, that this same ability 'enables him [man] to orient himself in the public realm, in the common world' ([CC/BPF] 2006, p.218). This political ability or insight (*phronesis*) that for the Greeks<sup>102</sup> was the preserve of the statesman derives not from speculative thought but from

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<sup>101</sup> In *Lectures on Kant's political philosophy*, Arendt outlines how this is to be done - by force of imagination: 'To think with an enlarged mentality means that one trains one's imagination to go visiting' ([LKPP] 1992, p.43) - I return to this and discuss in more detail below.

<sup>102</sup> See, for example, Aristotle's *Nicomachean ethics* which contrasts the statesmen's practical wisdom (*phronesis*) against the philosopher's philosophic wisdom (*sophia*) (ARISTOTLE, 2009).

*common sense*, that is, our shared and hence common ability to perceive and understand and judge. Thus, the activity of judging is for Arendt 'one, if not the most, important activity in which this sharing-of-the-world-with-others comes to pass' ([CC/BPF] 2006, p.218).

So while every judgement will have a 'certain subjectivity' about it, our proclaiming that something is beautiful (rather than merely stating that it pleases me<sup>103</sup>) is an appeal to what we have in common with other people, something made possible by virtue of the fact that we are participants in a common and shared world:

In aesthetic no less than in political judgments, a decision is made, and although this decision is always determined by a certain subjectivity, by the simple fact that each person occupies a place of his own from which he looks upon and judges the world, it also derives from the fact that the world itself is an objective datum, something common to all its inhabitants ([CC/BPF] 2006, p.219).

That taste judgements draw upon a common world leads Arendt to make two important points. Firstly:

The activity of taste decides how this world, independent of its utility and vital interests in it, is to look and sound, what men will see and what they will hear in it ([CC/BPF] 2006, p.219).

In other words, the exercise of taste plays an important role in our maintaining and caring for the world: 'taste is the political capacity that truly humanizes the beautiful and creates a culture' ([CC/BPF] 2006, p.221). This being the case, a person with a cultivated taste, a good judge, is 'one who knows how to choose his company among men, among things, among

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<sup>103</sup> As Kant writes, we do not tend to say that something is beautiful *for me*: 'Many things may be charming and agreeable to him; no one cares about that. But if he proclaims something to be beautiful, then he requires the same liking from others; he then judges not just for himself but for everyone (1987, p.55).

thoughts, in the present as well as in the past' ([CC/BPF] 2006, p.222). Hence, taste 'decides not only how the world is to look, but also who belongs together in it' ([CC/BPF] 2006, p.220).

Arendt's second point is that it is the nature of taste judgements not to compel agreement from others but to persuade others of their validity. As Arendt writes:

They [taste judgements] share with political opinions that they are persuasive; the judging person - as Kant says quite beautifully - can only 'woo the consent of everyone else' in the hope of coming to an agreement with him eventually. This 'wooing' or persuading corresponds closely to what the Greeks called *πειθελν* [peithein], the convincing and persuading speech which they regarded as the typically political form of people talking with one another ([CC/BPF] 2006, p.219).

Taste judgements then are not purely personal, but neither are they statements of fact or rational truths: they 'cannot be 'proved by argument' ([CC/BPF] 2006, p.219). Rather, they are 'open to discussion' and are 'subject to dispute' because 'we hope that the same pleasure is shared by others' and we 'expect[s] agreement from everyone else' ([CC/BPF] 2006, p.218). They are opinions and as such work to persuade. And as opinions they are also disclosive. Our tastes and judgments - what and who we judge to be beautiful and good - reveal much about ourselves:

Wherever people judge the things of the world that are common to them, there is more implied in their judgments than these things. By his manner of judging, the person discloses to an extent also himself, what kind of person he is, and this disclosure, which is involuntary, gains in validity to the degree that it has liberated itself from merely idiosyncrasies ([CC/BPF] 2006, p.220).

In summary then, Arendt finds in Kant's concept of judgement a way to think about how to make political judgements without relying on generalities or theories; a way of thinking that:

allows a person to transcend the subjectivity and privacy of perceptions and come to what is known as common sense (Kant's terms was *sensus communis*, the common human understanding of something, as opposed to *sensus privatus*.) (ELISABETH YOUNG-BRUEHL, 2006, p.166).

Political judgements, like aesthetic ones, involve other people in that they reference the views or standpoints of others present, and this is done through enlarging the mind or representative thinking. In the next section, I address more fully this most important concept<sup>104</sup> and the 'special art' (LINDA M.G. ZERILLI, 2005, p.176) that brings it about - *visiting*.

#### REPRESENTATIVE THINKING AND VISITING

In the essay *Truth and politics*, Arendt offers a short supplement to the account she gives in *The crisis in culture of Kant's enlarged mentality*. In this essay, she describes it as *representative thinking*. The essay distinguishes between opinion and truth and of different kinds of truth: rational truth (that is, mathematical, scientific, and philosophical discoveries and theories), and factual truth (that is, the facts of events in the affairs of humans). After arguing that truth, from the perspective of politics, is fundamentally despotic and anti-political since it compels agreement and quashes debate and does not 'take into account other people's opinions, and taking these into account is the hallmark of all strictly political thinking' ([TP/BPF] 2006, p.237), Arendt outlines what she means by political thinking:

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<sup>104</sup> The concepts of representative thought and enlarged mentality are fundamental to Arendt's work on judgement. While Arendt uses both terms to describe critical thinking and judgement, textual evidence suggests that the terms are virtually synonymous and as such I will use one or the other interchangeably here. For example, In *Truth and politics*, Arendt discusses what she means by representative thinking and then adds that 'It is this capacity for an "enlarged mentality" that enables men to judge' ([TP/BPF] 2006, p.237). See also David Antonini: 'Arendt will use the concepts of both enlarged mentality and representative thinking in her corpus when discussing Kantian aesthetic judgment. I read her as suggesting that these concepts are largely interchangeable within Kant's thought, and her usage of them suggests the same' (2020, p.28).

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 are stand somewhere else, and hence look upon the world from a different perspective; this is a question neither of empathy, as though I tried to be or to feel like somebody else, nor of counting noses and joining a majority but of being and thinking in my own identity where actually I am not. The more people's standpoints I have present in my mind while I am pondering a given issue, the better I can imagine how I would feel and think if I were I in their place, the stronger will be my capacity for representative thinking and the more valid my final conclusions, my opinion ([TP/BPF] 2006, p.237).

Representative thinking is on the face of it a simple idea: we can form better, in the sense of less idiosyncratic and more rounded, opinions by enlarging our standpoint to include the standpoints of others. It is:

a capacity for presenting to oneself the perspectivalty of the world, of taking cognizance of the many points of view through which a matter must be seen and evaluated (SEYLA BENHABIB, 2003, p.191).

Such thinking is not a crude representation of standpoints: it 'does not blindly adopt the actual views of those who stand somewhere else', that is, it is not a matter of empathy; and neither does it simply involve 'counting noses and joining a majority' ([TP/BPF] 2006, p.237). Rather such thinking is characterised as 'being and thinking in my own identity where actually I am not' ([TP/BPF] 2006, p.237). What representative thinking seems to involve then, as Lisa Jane Disch argues, is a kind of storytelling, a matter of:

constructing stories of an event from each of the plurality of perspectives that might have an interest in telling it and imagining how I would respond as a character in a story very different from my own (LISA JANE DISCH, 1994, p.158).



As Arendt mentioned in *The crisis in culture* essay, the key to this kind of thinking is disinterestedness, of being able to think beyond one's own particular circumstances and imagine how the world looks from the perspectives of others. Of course, not all opinions are formed in this manner. As Arendt acknowledges, 'nothing is more common, even among highly sophisticated people' than to 'form an opinion that takes only my own interests, or the interests of the group to which I belong, into account'; but an opinion becomes more valid to the extent that it is liberated from one's own private interests and imaginatively engaged with the possible viewpoints of others: 'the very quality of an opinion, as of a judgment, depends upon the degree of its impartiality' ([TP/BPF] 2006, p.237). The way such opinions are formed then is 'truly discursive' ([TP/BPF] 2006, p.238). Our thinking runs:

as it were, from place to place, from one part of the world to another, through all kinds of conflicting views, until it finally ascends from these particularities to some impartial generality ([TP/BPF] 2006, p.238).

In Arendt's discussion of Kant, the idea that critical thinking is in some manner public leads her to the notion of impartiality and how this can be achieved. This is not an absolute impartiality, 'not the result of some higher standpoint' ([LKPP] 1992, p.42), but a relative impartiality 'obtained by taking the viewpoints of others into account' ([LKPP] 1992, p.42). For Kant, the person of 'enlarged mentality' attempts to stand in the place of all others (at least all those who judge) when making a judgement; the person of 'enlarged mentality' adopts 'the standpoint of the world citizen' ([LKPP] 1992, p.44). Arendt, as Lisa Jane Disch argues, does not subscribe to this 'universal' position but rather prefers the 'general' - meaning the impartiality of the judgement arrived at is not abstract but *situated*; it is come by taking into consideration

‘the particular conditions of the standpoints one has to go through in order to arrive at one’s own “general standpoint”’ ([LKPP] 1992, p.44).

Representative thought is achieved through visiting. Arendt, following Kant, employs the metaphor of visiting and of training one’s imagination to go visiting. There are two aspects of *visiting*: the imaginative visit and the people visited. In Kant’s theory of judgement, imagination plays a role in critical distancing that makes a general standpoint possible, but in Arendt the imagination is given an additional role: for ‘bridging the abysses to others’ ([UP/EU] 1994, p.323), that is, for imaginatively visiting the standpoints of others. Hence, visiting involves a very specific kind of imaginative journey. As Lisa Jane Disch has helpfully explicated, to visit in Arendt’s sense is to ‘travel to a new location, leave behind what is familiar, and resist the temptation to make yourself at home where you are not’ (1994, p.159):

Visiting is contrary to parochialism, which means simply to stay at home, contrary to ‘accidental’ tourism, which means to ensure that you will have all the comforts of home even as you travel, and contrary to assimilationism, which means forcibly to make yourself at home in a place that is not your home by appropriating its customs (LISA JANE DISCH, 1994, pp.158-159).

Visiting, she concludes, instead enables the ‘disorientation that is necessary to understanding just how the world looks different to someone else’ (1994, pp.158-159). Visiting, then is a kind of thinking that takes the thinker out of his or her particular box. Gert Biesta also sums this up clearly:

Visiting is therefore not to see through the eyes of someone else, but to see with your own eyes from a position that is not your own. Visiting is therefore a form of decentred thinking - a thinking where one is out of one’s centre (GERT BIESTA, 2016, p.187).

The second aspect of visiting involves the notion of good company. As mentioned earlier, in *The crisis in culture*, Arendt writes that the truly cultivated person, that is, the person who is able to judge, is 'one who knows how to choose his company among men, among things, among thoughts, in the present as well as in the past' ([CC/BPF] 2006, p.222). In other words, our decisions about right and wrong will depend upon not just the number of standpoints we can represent but their quality. Bhikhu Parekh has queried the usefulness of this representative thinking, arguing that 'A slave-owner may place himself in the position of his slave and reach the conclusion that if he were a slave, he would happily accept his slavery' (1981, p.179), and it is true that Arendt has little to say about what good company is. Gert Biesta's gloss on this matter is that good company should be read as diverse or broad company. Rather than surrounding ourselves with like-minded people, we instead move out of our echo chamber and expose ourselves to other contrary positions. Or as Arendt puts it in her *Dedication to Karl Jaspers*, 'one has to live and think in the open and not in one's own little shell, no matter how comfortably furnished it is' ([DKJ/EU] 1994, p.213). A good example of this, also in Arendt's work, is the figure of Gotthold Lessing (1729-1781) who Arendt describes as someone who chooses to think and engage with rather than withdraw from the world around him. For Lessing, 'debate was freedom' ([OHDT/MDT] 1973, p.15) and:

thought does not arise out of the individual and is not the manifestation of a self. Rather, the individual - whom Lessing would say was created for action, not ratiocination - elects such thought because he discovers in thinking another mode of moving in the world of freedom ([OHDT/MDT] 1973, p.16).

However, whether the path to such enlarged thinking is straightforward is another matter. As Donald Gillies has noted:

It is not clear how one is to decide whom to 'visit' and on what basis, except through some developmental process of trial and error, a growing sense of judgement about whom and what to value (DONALD GILLIES, 2016, p.154).

As I shall argue in the following chapter, this is where education and the classroom of *actual* rather than only *imagined* communication with others can play a part. As Gillies also points out, Arendt's formulation of visiting ['To think with an enlarged mentality means that one trains one's imagination to go visiting' ([LKPP] 1992, p.43)], would seem to indicate that:

the development of enlarged thought is achieved through its very practice: by visiting the viewpoints of others one increases one's capacity for enlarged thought and representative thinking (DONALD GILLIES, 2016, p.154).

The spaces of education, and particularly of university education, are ideal for such practice.

#### RE-JUDGING

To close this section, I return briefly to the debate concerning the place and significance of judgement in Arendt's work. As referenced earlier in this section, arguments have been made that Arendt had two theories of judgement, one for actors and one for spectators, and commentators such as Ronald Beiner evidence for this the differing treatments of the matter found in her early and her late works. The matter is complicated by Arendt herself perhaps, such as in her remark made to her friend Hans Jonas while preparing for the 1973 and 1974 Gifford lectures on *The life of the mind*, that 'I have done my bit in politics, no more of that; from now on, and for what is left, I will deal with transpolitical things' (1977, p.27), a remark

that suggests she herself thought that in this late work she was looking at judgement from a more philosophical than political perspective.

Of the many writers who have discussed Arendt's theory of judgement, I have found two in particular, Lawrence Biskowski and Patrick Hayden, especially illuminating. Neither writer thinks the way in which Arendt describes her understanding of judgement is beyond criticism, but rather than pitting her various presentations of the subject against each other, they look to see what they have in common and at how judgement relates to other aspects of her work - and in particular to her pivotal concept of action.

Biskowski argues that much of the confusion over Arendt's intent in a number of areas is due to her pushing too far distinctions she has made<sup>105</sup>. In the case of judgement, the distinction at hand is that between the *vita activa* and the *vita contemplativa*:

Beiner, Bernstein, and a host of others consider it important to ask whether and to what extent Arendt's conception of judgment participates in the *vita activa*, or whether it is confined to the various mental activities and faculties that comprise the *vita contemplativa*. They fail to see, and this is partly Arendt's fault, that this ancient distinction is ultimately misleading. The life of the mind (or at least its constituent faculties and activities) and the life of action are best thought of not as 'lives' at all, but rather as dimensions or moments of human existence. As such, and very clearly in Arendt's work, they are interrelated in any number of complex ways (LAWRENCE J. BISKOWSKI, 1993, p.872).

Biskowski makes the sensible point that Arendt's distinction here is important and useful but should be seen 'as a kind of heuristic device' (1993, p.873) in highlighting differences and should not be asked to bear more weight than it can bear. Regarding Arendt's concept of

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<sup>105</sup> Though not mentioned by Biskowski, an example of this can be found in *Reflections on Little Rock*. The distinctions made here between the private, social, and public realms are perhaps carried too far: because schools are seen as social rather than public places, their makeup - who attends, who does not - should be a parental matter outwith the control of federal government.

representative thinking then, while Arendt's treatment of it appears to distinguish between the acting-judging political agent in some places (such as in *Truth and politics*) and the non-acting judging spectator (in *Lectures on Kant's political philosophy*), Biskowski argues, and this makes intuitive sense too, that judgement cannot be exclusive to one or the other:

This quality of judgment - the necessity of taking a stand - seems indispensable not only to historians and storytellers, but also to agents participating in democratic politics (LAWRENCE J. BISKOWSKI, 1993, p.873).

So while Arendt rightly highlights how the spectator is in a better position to judge than the actor, s/he has more critical distance from the event and so enjoys more impartiality, Biskowski points to the fact that humans are both actors and spectators:

We are both actors and spectators; we act, we observe, we continually interpret the meaning of actions and events, even if we ourselves at times are profoundly involved and interested in them. Many of the same qualities and capacities that make for good retrospective judgment are also required for forward-looking political judgments. The spectator and the actor cannot be considered as fundamentally opposed archetypes; rather, to use the hermeneutic metaphor, living and acting in the world require us to tack back and forth from one to another. In more Arendtian terms, we need to understand 'actor' and 'spectator' as different but closely related moments in an expanded *vita activa*. Freedom comes from our capacity for action, but effective or well-conceived action depends on our capacity to stand and judge. This is why Arendt calls judgment the 'most political' of the intellectual capacities (LAWRENCE J. BISKOWSKI, 1993, p.874).

Of course, Arendt seems to acknowledge this when she writes that the 'spectator sits in every actor' ([LKPP] 1992, p.63).

In a similar move, Patrick Hayden argues that judging is intrinsically related to action:

Judgement is political ... in so far as it presupposes the fundamental condition of plurality, and requires a diverse community of equals who develop, exchange, share and critique each other's claims and opinions. The activity of judging is indispensable for meaningful political action, Arendt shows, drawing as it does upon representing, imagining and communicating one's perspectives and experiences with others (PATRICK HAYDEN, 2014, p.167).

For Hayden, there are not two models of judgement but rather 'two elementary ways to judge and grasp the meaning of events' (2014, p.180): the retrospective view of the uninvolved spectator, and the present perspective of the engaged actor. Both have their strengths and weaknesses: in acting, we may rush and come to a hasty judgement, as we lack the distance needed to really think; in spectating, while we have the advantage of seeing the action at a distance 'from the vantage point of the world' (p.181), we miss out on the happiness of acting:

While the spectator's perspective is thus absolutely essential to reclaim the critical autonomy of judgement (and human dignity with it), it is also the case that political action opens up the space for the very possibility of reflective judgement. Judgement can never transcend action, while action is meaningless without judgement. The perspectives of spectators and actors are not inevitably contradictory, then, but instead form two sides of the same coin, even if those two sides are bound together uneasily (PATRICK HAYDEN, 2014, p.182).

In short, Biskowski and Hayden argue that judgement in Arendt is a kind of reflective understanding that enables us to make sense of events and activities, both in the past and in the present.

In light of this, it is worth considering another of Arendt's essays which helps make clear the connections between judging and understanding. This essay, first published as *Understanding and politics* in 1953 in *Partisan Review*<sup>106</sup>, appears to have been conceived before Arendt's turn

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<sup>106</sup> *Partisan Review*. 40(4), pp.377-392.

to Kant's third critique (of judgement)<sup>107</sup>, for here she references Kant's *Critique of pure reason* (and his determinative definition of judgement) rather than his *Critique of judgement* (and his reflective definition).<sup>108</sup> Nevertheless, the essay addresses the very problem which makes such determinative judgements impossible, that is, the absence of universal rules<sup>109</sup>. It is precisely this absence that Kant only found in aesthetics but that Arendt finds more generally in the political arena - and which prompts her own yet-to-be-developed theory of judgement. Not only this, but the role given to the imagination in this essay foreshadows the description of visiting (see above) that emerges in her later accounts of judgement. She writes in this essay that the imagination works in two significant ways: it enables us 'to see things in their proper perspective ... so that we can see and understand ... without bias and prejudice'; and it works 'to bridge abysses of remoteness until we can see and understand everything that is too far away from us as though it were our own affair' ([UP/EU] 1994, p.323). In other words, it serves to distance us from some things and to bring us nearer to other things, precisely the kind of imaginative critical thinking Arendt later describes as visiting.

This essay, I suggest, helps clarify several aspects of her theory of judgement. Firstly, she makes it clear that understanding is 'so closely related to and inter-related with judging' ([UP/EU] 1994, p.313). Secondly, she argues that our capacity for judgement is underpinned by a kind of imaginative and critical understanding that enables us 'to take our bearings in the world' and 'to be at home on this earth' ([UP/EU] 1994, p.323). And thirdly, the hard distinction some

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<sup>107</sup> David Marshall's textual investigations suggest Arendt's turn to Kant's third critique (of judgement) occurred between 1955 and 1957 (2010a).

<sup>108</sup> Determinative judgements: 'if the universal (the rule, principle, law) is given, then judgment ... subsumes the particular under it'; reflective judgements: 'only the particular is given and judgment has to find the universal for it' (1987, pp.18-19).

<sup>109</sup> For Arendt totalitarianism is not only a horribly original phenomenon but 'its very actions constitute a break with all our traditions; they have clearly exploded our categories of political thought and our standards for moral judgments' ([UP/EU] 1994, pp.309-310).



critics have drawn between the actor and the spectator disappears. The distinction she does make (between preliminary understanding and a more informed understanding: 'Understanding is based on knowledge and knowledge cannot proceed without a preliminary, inarticulate understanding' ([UP/EU] 1994, p.310)), rather lends support to the claim by Biskowski and Hayden that if we are to talk about differences between the judgement of the actor and the judgement of the spectator, all we are really saying is that the latter judgement is more likely to be impartial given it enjoys greater distance from the event being judged. Finally and significantly, Arendt acknowledges very clearly here that thinking and acting cannot be *completely* divorced from each other, for 'preliminary understanding', she writes, 'always consciously or unconsciously is directly engaged in action' ([UP/EU] 1994, p.322). In other words, understanding (that enables judging) is not simply related to action but is necessary for any kind of worldly orientation, including acting:

If the essence of all, and in particular of political, action is to make a new beginning, then understanding becomes the other side of action, namely, that form of cognition, distinct from many others, by which acting men ... eventually can come to terms with what irrevocably happened and be reconciled with what unavoidably exists ([UP/EU] 1994, pp.321-322).

This is not to say that thinking or judging or understanding give rise to action but rather that on some level it is involved in everything we do as acting humans. The concept she ends the essay with, King Solomon's 'gift of an "understanding heart"', nicely sums up the kind of critical, imaginative, and representative thinking that Arendt has in mind, a faculty that allows us to 'take our bearings in the world' ([UP/EU] 1994, p.323).

While we can point to differing treatments of judgement in Arendt's work, these differences are perhaps more usefully understood not as hard distinctions but as differences of degree.

Understanding and judging are necessary for all people, spectators and actors alike. As

Biskowski writes:

the critical distance of the spectator is necessary for enlarged thinking, good judgment, and therefore good or prudent or well-conceived action. Conversely, it is also true that the sheer experience of acting is necessary for the spectator to really understand the meaning of actions (LAWRENCE J. BISKOWSKI, 1993, p.874).

While understanding and judging do not tell one how to act, they help our orientation in the world:

For Arendt, the world is the entire pragmatic web of relationships in which human beings are caught up, the total interplay between people, things, and relationships. The world serves as a context and record for action, and it can also provide ... an ethical foundation or orientation for political judgment (LAWRENCE J. BISKOWSKI, 1993, p.879).

As Biskowski argues, both political action and political judgement are deeply connected to the world and to its care. While the political actor in striving for glory is clearly concerned with what the world thinks, there is a concern too with the aftershocks of acting, with 'what the world will be like in the wake of one's acting' (1993, p.880). But the world cannot be cared for by action alone: 'The world depends for its reality and its continued existence, first, upon the presence of others who have seen and heard and will remember' ([HC] 1998, p.95). It needs, in other words, others who witness, talk about, remember, and judge, people such as Gotthold Lessing for whom the world in all its plurality is the object of discourse. Judging then, like acting, is a way of engaging with and caring for the world. As Young-Bruehl writes:

Just as acting together gives people the 'enlargement of power' that none can have along, *Urteilskraft* (which means literally, 'judgment-power' not just 'judgment-craft' or the art of judgment) gives them an experience of the world and of other people that makes them mentally powerful; well-traveled; not isolated but connected; not provincial but cosmopolitan. Judgment is the faculty that prepares a person to be the Kantian idea: a world citizen (ELISABETH YOUNG-BRUEHL, 2006, p.166)

I began this section with an indication that thinking and judging as conceptualised by Arendt hold potential relevance to the field of EAP. Both thinking and judging involve conversation - either with oneself (thinking) or with others or potential others (judging). Thinking serves to help dissipate prejudices and then our attempt to judge brings us to an informed standpoint, to a greater degree of understanding. *Thinking* is that critical conversation with oneself that 'brings out the implications of unexamined opinions and thereby destroys them' and that can stop one from being 'swept away unthinkingly by what everybody else does or believes in' ([TMC/RJ] 2003, p.188). *Judging*, the by-product of such thinking and allied to *understanding*, is 'the ability to see things not only from one's own point of view but in the perspective of all those who happen to be present' ([CC/BPF] 2006, p.218). Both of these, I argue in the following chapter, are important in EAP in that they constitute a kind of enhanced democratic critical thinking that augments the common academic understanding of critical thinking; moreover, the transitional position EAP occupies in the university makes it the ideal educational space for international students to practise and develop these abilities.

Of course, judgements appear in the world as opinions (ELISABETH YOUNG-BRUEHL, 2006), and as political opinions they are persuasive and so examples of action. Curiously, apprehending Arendtian opinions/judgements as examples of speech has been less focused on in the literature on Arendt and judgement. A notable exception is the recently published essay by

David Antonini: *Rethinking judgment and opinion as political speech in Hannah Arendt's political thought* (2020). Antonini draws attention to the obvious but underemphasised fact that opinions are 'modes of speech':

I am suggesting that judgment has not been properly conceived of as both a reflective capacity - when one critically engages the standpoint of others - and as a mode of political speech, that is, something offered in the presence of others as articulated speech (DAVID R. ANTONINI, 2020, p.26).

While coming to a judgement (or opinion) is the result of thinking representatively, its expression is then a matter of action in that it operates as political speech: often persuasive and always disclosive. It is to this matter, speaking and acting in public, that I turn to in the final section of this chapter.

### SECTION III: SPEAKING AND ACTING

It is striking that two of the most recent book-length studies to appear on Arendt, David Arndt's *Arendt on the political* (2019) and Ned O'Gorman's *Politics for everybody: reading Hannah Arendt in uncertain times* (2020), both begin their respective defences of politics by drawing on Arendt's faculty of action and specifically to 'what Arendt called the lost treasure of the American Revolution - the public happiness of political action' (DAVID ARNDT, 2019, p.1)<sup>110</sup>. In distinguishing between the private life of an individual and his or her 'second life' as a citizen ([PRPI/TWB] 2018, p.506), Arendt locates public happiness in 'the experience of public freedom' ([APH/TWB] 2018, p.214) such as that reportedly experienced by two of the Founding Fathers, Thomas Jefferson and John Adams, who enjoyed 'in Congress - the joys of discourse,

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<sup>110</sup> Indeed, Ned O'Gorman's opening sentence is explicit: 'This is a book about happiness' (2020, xi).

of legislation, of transcending business, of persuading and being persuaded' ([APH/TWB] 2018, p.206), as well as by the French poet and writer René Char during his time fighting for the French Resistance ('these essential years ... my treasures' ([APH/TWB] 2018, p.205)), and by those attending public meetings and participating in demonstrations in more contemporary times (NED O'GORMAN, 2020), that is in *action*.

As discussed in my **INTRODUCTION** and in **CHAPTER 1**, politics is what happens when people 'are together in the manner of speech and action' ([HC] 1998,p.199). Arendt's theory of action has been hailed by numerous writers as one of the most significant contributions to modern political thought. Bhikhu Parekh, for example, makes the following claim:

It is hardly an exaggeration to say that she is the only philosopher in the history of political thought to undertake extensive investigations into and offer a perceptive analysis of the nature and structure of political action (BIKHU PAREKH, 1981, p.125).

Maurizio Passerin d'Entreves (1994) makes a similar claim for Hannah Arendt's theory of action, identifying the radical distinction Arendt makes between making (*poiesis*) and doing (*praxis*) - in Arendt's terms, between *work* and *action* respectively - as being particularly significant. More recently, Paul Voice has argued that 'Arendt's great contribution to contemporary political thought is her conceptualization of political action as a distinct category of philosophical enquiry' (2014, p.36). Agreeing with these and others as to the value of Arendt's concept of action, I set out in this section what action means in Arendt's work and explore in more detail the key aspect of this concept - *speech* - in readiness for a discussion in the following chapter [**CHAPTER 4**] of the significance of this analysis for EAP, a field which after all,

is primarily concerned with the development of academic literacy and oracy of international students.

Despite criticism (see **section i**) occasionally levelled at Arendt that her interest in the polis was essentially nostalgic and that in the words of Richard Wolin she viewed 'modern political life as a precipitous fall from the glories of a highly mythologized Periclean heyday' (2001, p.69), I pointed out that it is clear even from Arendt's own presentation of the polis that its function was not so much to facilitate and memorialise *great deeds* but *great speeches*:

In the experience of the *polis*, which not without justification has been called the most talkative of all bodies politic, and even more in the political philosophy which sprang from it, action and speech separated and became more and more independent activities. The emphasis shifted from action to speech, and to speech as a means of persuasion rather than the specifically human way of answering, talking back and measuring up to whatever happened or was done. To be political, to live in a *polis*, meant that everything was decided through words and persuasion and not through force and violence ([HC] 1998, p.26).

If Arendt is nostalgic about anything (though I submit nostalgia is the wrong word not only because there is no evidence of any desire to return in any sense to ancient Greece but also because, as Roy Tsao (2002) has pointed out, Arendt repeatedly distances herself from many aspects of the ancient Greek understanding of politics), it was for speech and occasions for public and distinguishing speech. While Arendt is not uncritical of the polis and its 'incessant talk' ([CH/BPF] 2006, p.51), it should be clear from a reading of the totality of Arendt's work, that speech and especially public speech was her principal concern.

In Arendt's account of politics as outlined in *The human condition*, action is one of the three activities that together constitute the active life of humans, the others being *labour* and *work*.

In order to better understand action and how speech is part, indeed the determining part, of

action, we need to be clear how action relates to and is distinguished from those other activities of the *vita activa*, labour and work.

### THE VITA ACTIVA

While Arendt's understanding of politics remains consistent across her works, it is arguably in *The human condition* ([HC] 1998) that her radical political thinking is expressed most forcefully, a thinking that begins with an examination of what she terms the *vita activa*, 'human life in so far as it is actively engaged in doing something' ([HC] 1998, p.22), in contradistinction to the life of contemplation and thought, the *vita contemplativa*<sup>111</sup>. In the ancient Greek experience, Arendt finds the three fundamental activities of humans, *labour*, *work*, and *action*, 'those general human capacities which grow out of the human condition' [the condition that is of our existence on Earth] ([HC] 1998, p.6), at their most unambiguous. Thus we have the activity of labour which corresponds to the human condition of life, that is, to our biological existence as living creatures on the planet; that of work, the activity responsible for the distinctly human world we have fashioned, which corresponds to the condition of worldliness; and finally, that of action, which is tied to the condition of plurality, plurality being the fact that human beings are plural (an observation memorably characterised as 'platitudinous but philosophically revolutionary' (MARGARET CANOVAN, 1992, pp.110-111). Together these activities reveal what it means to be a human subject to these conditions.

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<sup>111</sup> For this discussion of the *vita activa*, I draw upon *The human condition* which contains the fullest analysis of the *vita activa* as well as a recently published 1964 lecture entitled *Labor, work, action* ([LWA/TWB] 2018) which offers a more succinct account.

## The labor of our body

In terms of the conditions of human life that Arendt delineates in *The human condition*, 'Labor is the activity which corresponds to the biological process of the human body ... The human condition of labor is life itself' ([HC] 1998, p.7). Labour refers to the activity of maintaining human life through the repetitive, cyclical, and never-ending processes necessary for existence, such as those of ingestion and excretion, cooking and cleaning:

the labouring activity itself must follow the cycle of life, the circular movement of our bodily functions, which means that the labouring activity never comes to an end as long as life lasts; it is endlessly repetitive ([LWA/TWB] 2018, p.295).

As the activity of labour never stops but takes place continually and endlessly in order to sustain human life, it has no specific beginnings or ends. As soon as one stage of the process ends, the other stage begins, and so on, round and round in the endless cycle of life: 'where one must eat in order to labor and must labor in order to eat' ([LWA/TWB] 2018, p.299). In popular culture, the songs *The bare necessities* and *Circle of life* (and *Circle of poo*) describe this activity rather nicely<sup>112</sup>. Hence labour, unlike the activities of work and action, is characterised by Arendt as an obligatory activity which:

stands under the sign of necessity, 'the necessity of subsisting' as [John] Locke used to say, or 'the eternal necessity imposed by nature' in the words of [Karl] Marx ([LWA/TWB] 2018, p.295).

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<sup>112</sup> *The bare necessities* is a song from the animated 1967 Disney film *The jungle book*. *Circle of life* is a song from Disney's 1994 animated film *The lion king*. A parody song called *Circle of poo* showing the endless circle of food and defecation features in the *South Park* episode *A very crappy Christmas* (2000).



In their labouring aspect, Arendt describes humans as *animal laborans* or labouring animals. Arendt notes that for the ancient Greeks, 'What men share with all other forms of animal life was not considered to be human' ([HC] 1998, p.84), and since there is nothing in labour that distinguishes people from animals or from each other, activities of labour can be said to obscure or lessen our individuality as human beings. People as labourers are subject to nature and insofar as they are creatures of nature, they are replaceable. As Homer has Glaucus say in the *Iliad*:

Men come and go, just like the leaves in their seasons. / The wind scatters one year's leaves on the ground, but the forest / bursts with new buds as soon as springtime arrives, / and it is the same with men: one generation / comes to life while another one passes away (HOMER, 2011, p.99).

For the Greeks, labour was considered slavish as it was carried out by slaves in the privacy of the home. While Arendt never condones slavery, she speaks of the value of keeping the essential activity of labour in its proper place, which for her is a private and non-political place. The private realm is not only a necessary one of privacy, the 'life of hearth and family', but is also the realm of deprivation, since here one is 'deprived of things essential to a truly human life' ([HC] 1998, pp.58-59). Labour for the ancient Greeks and for Arendt is pre-political: it something that must be attended to before it is possible to focus on political concerns. Drawing on the ancient Greek view that because labour was a necessity, it was also a deprivation, in that it divested one of a public life, Arendt characterises labour as an activity that lacks freedom.

## And the work of our hands

To put it simply, the activity of *work* makes our human world from the natural earth. It creates the artificial things that are designed to last - and thus our world: 'Work is the activity that corresponds to the unnaturalness of human existence ... The human condition of work is worldliness' ([HC] 1998, p.7). While labour produces consumables, work produces objects which are intended to remain in the world, at least for a certain period of time. In Arendt's words, work makes 'use-objects, and their proper use does not cause them to disappear' ([LWA/TWB] 2018, p.298). In their working aspect, humans are fabricators or makers - *homo faber*.

Work differs from labour in that unlike cyclical labour, work is linear and so has 'a definite beginning and a definite predictable end' ([LWA/TWB] 2018, p.299). This means the activity of work is 'entirely determined by the categories of means and ends' ([HC] 1998, p.143). The products of work are made to meet particular desired ends in accordance with the idea or plan of the worker and so the end justifies the means: 'the wood justifies killing the tree, and the table justifies destroying the wood' ([LWA/TWB] 2018, p.301). Hence, work is utilitarian in nature:

The perplexity of utilitarianism, the philosophy, as it were, of *homo faber*, is that it gets caught in the unending chain of means and ends, without ever arriving at some principle which could justify the category, that is, the utility itself ([LWA/TWB] 2018, p.302).

While there is more scope for human freedom in work than in necessary labour, as work involves humans planning and then producing their plans, it is important to bear in mind that as work is instrumental it is not an activity of freedom: the activity is always driven by and

rooted in the past, in the previously imagined plan. Though originally conceived of as ends, the products of work are designed to be used for something else: the chair is made in order to provide comfort. Hence, products of work join the means-end chain themselves. In this manner, meaning is always deferred:

the most worldly of all activities loses its original objective meaning, it becomes a means to fulfil subjective needs; in and by itself, it is no longer meaningful, no matter how useful it may be ([LWA/TWB] 2018, p.302).

As a fabricator, *homo faber* 'becomes lord and master of nature herself insofar as he violates and partly destroys what was given to him' ([LWA/TWB] 2018, p.299). This violation, however, also makes our world habitable. Work creates a refuge from nature, providing stable structures in which humans can shelter and feel secure. It produces 'this world of durable things', an 'objective' world within which we can live:

Viewed as part of the world, the products of work - and not the products of labor - guarantee the permanence and durability without which a world would not be possible at all ([HC] 1998, p.94).

Importantly, work for Arendt refers to both physical products, the buildings, for example, in which we reside but also more abstract products such as cultural artefacts, as long as they are recorded (as poems or laws, for example). The remark ascribed to Frida Kahlo '*Pinto flores para que nunca mueran*' [I paint flowers so they will not die], expresses this activity well.

Work then, plays an essential role in making our world habitable in that work produces objects, but these objects, or conditions for action, become common only insofar as they are spoken about, made objects of public discussion and judgement. So while the activities of labour and

work are necessary and useful in themselves, they do not constitute a human life of freedom.

This is in stark contradistinction to action. As Arendt notes, for the ancient Greeks:

Neither labor nor work was considered to possess sufficient dignity to constitute a *bios* [life] at all, an autonomous and authentically human way of life; since they served and produced what was necessary and useful, they could not be free, independent of human needs and wants ([HC] 1998, p.13).

Nevertheless, in sustaining humans of life and in providing humans with a measure of stability against the natural world, the activities of labour and work enable the time and space necessary for human action. In ancient Greece, those men whose private needs were catered for by others enjoyed the freedom to take on civic and political duties, to participate with their equals in the governance of the city and its people. These men, freed from necessity, were members of the polis and as such were men capable of public speech and public action.

## ACTION

While labour and work are activities that belong to and are appropriate for the private realm of human existence in that they serve private interests and concerns, *action* is quintessentially a public matter. As Arendt makes clear throughout her work, this distinction between private and public is crucial. In a recently published essay, *Public rights and private interests: a response to Charles Frankel*, Arendt presents this distinction in terms of two lives:

Every individual in the privacy of his household is subject to life's necessities and has the right to be protected in the pursuit of his private interests; but by virtue of his citizenship he receives a kind of second life in addition to his private life ([PRPI/TWB] 2018, p.506).

In other words, people *qua* individuals enjoy private rights and interests, while people *qua* citizens enjoy public rights. The problem Arendt identifies is not that these two realms exist, nor that there is an inevitable conflict between these two sets of interests, but that the distinction between the two is collapsing:

The reckless pursuit of private interests in the public-political sphere is as ruinous for the public good as the arrogant attempts of governments to regulate the private lives of their citizens are ruinous for private happiness ([PRPI/TWB] 2018, p.507).

So, what does Arendt mean by action? When Arendt discusses action, she will sometimes use the terms speech and action almost interchangeably. More usually, however, she refers to action with the phrase *speech and action* (or *words and deeds*), which more clearly reveals that action is always a composite activity of word and deed.

At the heart of action lies human plurality, the fact that humans are both fundamentally the same as each other (we recognise and understand each other) and yet utterly distinct from each other. While every living thing in the world is distinct, only humans are able to distinguish themselves and express their distinction: 'only he [man] can communicate himself and not merely something - thirst or hunger, affection or hostility or fear' ([HC] 1998, p.176). And this distinctness is revealed through our speaking and acting with one another in a human community. Speaking and acting are not merely ancillary to a fully human life but necessary to it. As Arendt writes, we can, given the right circumstances and for good or ill depending on one's perspective, live without labouring and live without working, but we cannot live a fully human life without acting and speaking:

A life without speech and without action, on the other hand ... is literally dead to the world; it has ceased to be a human life because it is no longer lived among men ([HC] 1998, p.176).

But this does not mean these are imposed upon us in the way that labour and work are imposed upon the majority of us; rather our words and deeds are testament to our freedom as human beings to begin something new:

To act, in its most general sense, means to take an initiative, to begin (as the Greek word *archein*, 'to begin,' 'to lead,' and eventually 'to rule' indicates), to set something in motion (which is the original meaning of the Latin *agere*). Because they are *initium*, newcomers and beginners by virtue of birth, men take initiative, are prompted into action ([HC] 1998, p.177).

This capacity for initiation gives action its uniqueness; moreover, since 'It is in the nature of beginning that something new is started which cannot be expected from whatever happened before' ([HC] 1998, pp.177-178), it also makes action something of a miracle:

The new always happens against the overwhelming odds of statistical laws and their probability, which for all practical, everyday purposes amounts to certainty; the new therefore always appears in the guise of a miracle ([HC] 1998, p.178).

The disclosive and miraculous quality distinguish genuine action from mere behaviour where 'speech' is often 'mere talk' and 'action' simply an 'achievement' ([HC] 1998, p.180).

Action is always something undertaken by a person but not every human act is an act in the sense Arendt means. In a discussion of power, that is, 'the human ability not just to act but to

act in concert' ([OV/CR] 1972, p.143)<sup>113</sup>, she elaborates on the character of these words and deeds:

Power is actualized only where word and deed have not parted company, where words are not empty and deeds not brutal, where words are not used to veil intentions but to disclose realities, and deeds are not used to violate and destroy but to establish relations and create new realities ([HC] 1998, p.200).

Of course, I may attempt to control how I appear in public, but whenever I speak and act more spontaneously in public, I am in danger, as it were, of revealing who I am. And so venturing into the public realm and acting, as EAP students doubtless know very well, requires a certain courage, a point I return to briefly in **CHAPTER 4**:

The connotation of courage, which we now feel to be an indispensable quality of the hero, is in fact already present in a willingness to act and speak at all, to insert one's self into the world and begin a story of one's own. And this courage is not necessarily or even primarily related to a willingness to suffer the consequences; courage and even boldness are already present in leaving one's private hiding place and showing who one is, in disclosing and exposing one's self ([HC] 1998, p.186).

The fundamental and defining aspect of action is that the performance of the act reveals the agent of the action, the *who* not the *what* of the agent. Action, as the cliché goes, reveals character. Or as David Arndt puts it: 'We understand *what* people are in general terms; but we understand *who* they are in light of their actions and words' (2019, p.93). Another way of looking at this is in terms of the distinction Arendt makes in her essay on Karl Jaspers (*Karl Jaspers: a laudation*) between the individual and the person ([KJL/MDT] 1973). If the individual

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<sup>113</sup> *Power* is to be differentiated from *strength* (a natural and individual quality); *force* (the discharge of energy); *authority* (a matter of respect); and *violence* (always instrumental in character). Power is actualised when and where people act together ([OV/CR] 1972, pp.143-145).

is the private person, the person is the personhood or personality we reveal when in public.

Arendt likens this personality to the Greek *daimon*, that is:

the guardian spirit which accompanies every man throughout this life, but is always only looking over his shoulder, with the result that it is more easily recognized by everyone a man meets than by himself ([KJL/MDT] 1973, p.76).

This personhood, the unique qualities that together constitute our personality, are revealed only in acting and speaking, though as Arendt acknowledges, they are implicit in everything we say and do. In the performance of an act, I disclose more than the fact that I am a white, male teacher of English. In acting (acting and speaking simultaneously), I also announce myself as the doer of the deed and claim ownership of my act. In this manner, I reveal to others the person I am. Arendt places a great deal of emphasis on this revelatory nature of action. Through action, human beings escape from the processes of biological life that characterise labour as well as the instrumental mentality that characterises work<sup>114</sup>.

To recap: action is a mode of human togetherness, a coming together of people to speak, discuss, and debate with others about common concerns. In coming together in this manner as public citizens, a space is created that is political and it is in this space, and only this space, that people are able to appear to each other as unique individuals and shine<sup>115</sup>. However, as noted above, while this space can be an institutional and formal space (such as the polis or the Floor of the House of Commons), it can just as easily exist outside of traditional political spaces:

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<sup>114</sup> It is worth noting here that Arendt's insistence on the distinctiveness of action to disclose is perhaps one of those occasions when she overdoes her distinctions a little in order to make a point. For as Biskowski puts it: 'Arendt draws this distinction so sharply and insistently that it is easy to miss her declaration that self-disclosure "is implicit in everything somebody says or does," and that the self "can be hidden only in complete silence and perfect passivity" ... One can certainly reveal through word and deed who one is in the close, intimate circle of one's friends. Indeed, in the modern world, this is the only arena where most individuals feel comfortable doing so' (1993, p.877).

<sup>115</sup> The activity of judging similarly works to create and maintain and care for public spaces; see the preceding **section ii: thinking and judging**.



in a council building, a café, a park, even on the street. Though only in a budding form, as *educational action* (as I discuss in **CHAPTER 4**), can (or should) it exist in a classroom.

## TWO ACTS

It can be helpful to consider contemporary examples of action. In the essay mentioned earlier (*Public rights and private interests: a response to Charles Frankel*), Arendt points to the jury system as providing perhaps the only institutional public space remaining in which people can act as citizens, speaking and acting in the presence of equal others on matters of public concern. The jury member is a private individual person with his or her own private interests, but when serving or acting as a jury member, s/he takes on the role of the impartial (in theory, at least) citizen who should deliberate with other and equal impartial citizens. As Arendt observes, it is the locality that matters here, that determines the role and the task, and that equalises people who are not equal outside of this place, role or task. No matter the social and economic status of the jurors, when serving as jurors, everyone is equal. In such a space then, it becomes relatively straightforward to think of an example when a person might act, that is, when a juror might find the words to persuade his or her peers that they are perhaps mistaken in their judgement as to the suspect's guilt or innocence.

One classic illustration of such action can be found in the 1957 Sidney Lumet film *12 Angry Men* in which Henry Fonda plays Juror 8 [FIGURE 6], who is initially the only jury member to vote not guilty and who eventually persuades all the other jurors to vote similarly.



FIGURE 6: HENRY FONDA AS JUROR 8 IN SIDNEY LUMET'S 12 ANGRY MEN (LEIGH SINGER, 2020)

The film effectively demonstrates how one person's persuasive speech can effect change<sup>116</sup>. The second example of action occurs in a space which while public is not intended to be a space for citizens but for private individuals. In July 2018, Elin Ersson, a lone student activist on board a plane at Gothenburg airport, tried to prevent the deportation of an Afghan asylum seeker from Sweden [FIGURE 7].

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<sup>116</sup> When the other jury members are all shown to be behaving as private individuals rather than acting as impartial public citizens, this is seen negatively, and so the point about the expectation of impartiality and public equality stands.



FIGURE 7: ELIN ERSSON IN ACTION (BBC, 2019)

In the live Facebook stream (which went viral), we see Elin refusing to sit down until the man was removed from the flight. Standing alone in the aisle, she says:

I am not going to sit down until this person is off the plane ... I am not going to sit down ... What is more important, a life, or your time? (BBC, 2019).

When a passenger responds that the deportation is perfectly legal: 'Your country has rules', she does not dispute it but instead replies: 'I'm trying to change my country's rules'. Elin is aware that she requires others for her protest to be effective: 'As long as a person is standing up and if more people are standing up, then the pilot cannot take off' (BBC, 2019). After she explains the reasons for her protest to another passenger, he then reports this to some others. 'We are with you' he says. Then we hear Elin say to the camera: 'the football team at the back

is actually standing up. I want to salute them for standing up'. Slowly, the atmosphere in the plane becomes supportive of her, though a male passenger stands up and attempts to take her phone. 'Can't she see she is frightening the children?' he asks. However, the crew return her phone and escorts the man back to his seat. After a few minutes, Elin is told the deportee is being taken off, and she herself exits the plane (BBC, 2019).

In making her stand, she inserts herself into the world, acts and speaks in the presence of others, and in so doing, discloses herself, her courage. For almost ten minutes, Elin is acting alone, and it is unclear how the situation will develop. Elin's face reddens and she cries, first it appears from the stress of the situation, and then with seeming gratitude when a few passengers gradually declare their solidarity with her. Perhaps even more evident here than in the first example, is that the agent of the act could not control the consequences of her actions. This action has produced a story to be told, remembered, and told again.

These two examples perhaps also highlight the two basic elements of action, the word and the deed. While both facets are necessary for action, the emphasis can vary as in the above examples, with the word assuming prominence in the first act and the deed in the second. These two aspects of action can be linked to the two conditions of action, *plurality* and *natality*:

If action as beginning corresponds to the fact of birth, if it is the actualization of the human condition of natality, then speech corresponds to the fact of distinctness and is the actualization of the human condition of plurality, that is, of living as a distinct and unique being among equals ([HC] 1998, p.178).

Speech and action as separate activities are obviously indispensable - we speak to communicate and we act as in we 'do' things all the time, but separately these activities lack the essential qualities of Arendt's activity of action:

Action and speech are so closely related because the primordial and specifically human act must always also answer the question asked of every newcomer: 'Who are you?' ([LWA/TWB] 2018, p.304).

Hence, as D'Entreves pointed out, *action entails speech and speech entails action* (1994, p.71). However, while action has always been a matter of sharing words and deeds, speech appears to be the determining aspect of action. While action and speech are closely related, it is speech that reveals. Without speech:

action would not only lose its revelatory character, but ... it would lose its subject ... Speechless action would no longer be action because there would no longer be an actor ([HC] 1998, p.178).

It is the revelatory quality of the accompanying speech that essentially determines whether a human act remains a gesture or an achievement or whether it is raised to the status of action. In the following part of this section, I turn to Arendt's understanding of action as speech, speech being fundamental to the activity of EAP.

## ACTION AS SPEECH

In a fascinating analyses of orality and literacy in Arendt's 1964 German-language interview with the journalist Günter Gaus<sup>117</sup>, Daniel O'Connell and Sabine Kowal explore, among other things, the differences between the interview as an authentic oral performance and the published transcript that had all those qualities characteristic of speech (for example, hesitations, contractions, and paralinguistic phenomena such as laughter) removed<sup>118</sup>. While acknowledging that the move from orality to literacy was significant in that it reduced 'the magnificence of the human voice and the beauty of human facial and gestural form' (1998, p.552), the authors argue that 'Arendt's interview is excellent because her openness, spontaneity, and genuineness carry with them, in the speech of a human being, self-disclosure' (1998, p.560). As Arendt says in the interview: 'I know that in every action the person is expressed as in no other human activity. Speaking is also a form of action' ([WRLR/EU] 1994, p.23).

The reason for mentioning this interview is that it takes us to a key aspect of speech as action, an aspect which can be overlooked. Firstly, it is important to note that for Arendt 'many, and even most acts, are performed in the manner of speech' ([HC] 1998, p.178), and secondly, that while such speech often takes the form of persuasion, this is not its only or even main characteristic. In discussions of Greek democracy, Arendt points to speech and to the

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<sup>117</sup> The full interview in German and with English subtitles is currently available on *YouTube* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RfoaHBTafzU> (HANNAH ARENDT, 2020).

<sup>118</sup> The interview was first published in German as 'Was bleibt? Es bleibt die Muttersprache' in Günter Gaus, *Zur Person*, Munich, 1965. An English translation by Joan Stambaugh of the interview titled 'What remains? The language remains': a conversation with Günter Gaus appears in various places including *Essays in understanding 1930-1945: formation, exile, and totalitarianism* ([WRLR/EU] 1994, pp.1-23). Note the English translation offered by Stambaugh differs from the translation that appears in the YouTube video - for reasons discussed in the article by O'Connell and Kowal (1998).

importance of persuasion in politics and in the polis in several places. For example, in an essay *Socrates in The promise of politics*, Arendt writes:

To persuade, *peithein*, was the specifically political form of speech, and since the Athenians were proud that they, in distinction to the barbarians, conducted their political affairs in the form of speech and without compulsion, they considered rhetoric, the art of persuasion, the highest, the truly political art ([PP] 2005, p.7).

And in a comparable passage in *The human condition*, writes:

To be political, to live in a *polis*, meant that everything was decided through words and persuasion and not through force and violence. In Greek self-understanding, to force people by violence, to command rather than persuade, were prepolitical ways to deal with people characteristic of life outside the *polis*, of home and family life ... or of life in the barbarian empires of Asia ([HC] 1998, p.26).

Certainly, political speech has an important persuasive role in Arendt's work, and I will say more about this in the section below, but it is important to emphasise, as Roy Tsao has also done, that Arendt's views do not consistently align with those of the ancient Greeks as she represents them. In an article that analyses some of the differences between Arendt's 1958 English-language version of *The human condition* and her own 1960 translation of this into German as *Vita activa oder Vom tätigen Leben*, Tsao finds the German version removes many of the ambiguities that are present in the English version and more specifically reveals:

not only that her own understanding of action departs from the Greeks', but that it does so in a way that clarifies the intended limits of her prior appeal to their ideas with respect to the nature of the public realm (ROY T. TSAO, 2002, p.99).

In this regard, I want to draw attention to the sentence that immediately proceeds the passage on the polis cited above from the English version of *The human condition*. Discussing how the understanding of action developed over time so that words and deeds began to separate and gain some independence from each other, Arendt writes the following:

The emphasis shifted from action to speech, and to speech as a means of persuasion rather than the specifically human way of answering, talking back and measuring up to whatever happened or was done ([HC] 1998, p.26).

Clearly, there is a distinction being made here between speech to persuade and speech that is responsive to events. While Arendt does not elaborate on this immediately, it becomes apparent from other passages in *The human condition* that there is more to political speech than persuasion. There is public speech that responds to circumstances, that announces and reveals the *who* of the speaker, and that reveals, as it were, in freedom<sup>119</sup>. Through speech and action, humans are able to disrupt normal processes and initiate something new and unexpected. We act to mark the world, to put our stamp on it, and in so doing we express ourselves. As Biskowski notes, this is a crucial point for Arendt:

Animals live their lives entirely under the sway of causality; all their activity reflects *what* they are. Their behavior reflects only natural necessity, the instinctual activities necessary to keep them and their species alive. This is also part of the nature of human beings. But human beings are not only *whats* but also *whos*. We each have an individual identity entirely different from that of every other human being who ever lived or will live. This unique identity realizes itself in the world through action, which is the virtual opposite of behaviour (LAWRENCE J. BISKOWSKI, 1993, p.876).

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<sup>119</sup> Action, unlike labour and work, enables this disclosure because in acting we actualise our freedom as humans. In labour, our individuality is constrained as is our freedom: we behave and perform roles and fulfil functions. In work there is more scope for individuality and freedom but as work is determined by prior causes and articulated ends it lacks the freedom of action. Only in action and speech, in interacting with others through words and deeds, can we reveal who we personally are.



Hence, I suggest that Arendt's concept of speech cannot simply be equated with persuasion, though persuasion is important; speech is timely, public and revealing, revelatory and ringed with freedom.

Of course, the reason why I find this emphasis on speech significant is quite simply that just as speech lies at the heart of Arendt's political thinking, speech is an important, if not the most important, aspect of the classroom practice of EAP. For while academic writing is obviously a major focus within the EAP classroom, and such writing is often persuasive in nature, the classroom environment itself is constituted by speech and particularly speech in English. This shared interest in oracy is perhaps not entirely surprising given that both EAP and Arendt have a conception of speech which is in various ways rhetorical. But while the term *rhetoric* is often taken to signify only speech to persuade, I wish to suggest that Arendtian speech is rhetorical in a purer sense: while it is sometimes persuasive it is always disclosive. I develop this idea of Arendtian speech as rhetorical in the concluding section of this chapter below.

#### AND AS RHETORIC

Andrew Norris suggests Arendt offers a 'direct defense of the rhetorical politics of opinion and appearance' (2015, no pagination). Rhetoric is often described along the following lines: it is 'the theory and practice of persuasive communication' (CHAÏM PERELMAN, 1984, p.129); or even more simply, it is 'speech designed to persuade' (BRYAN GARSTEN, 2006, p.5). And because of its persuasive character, it has been widely recognised since Aristotle as being a deeply political mode of speech:

If rhetoric, so formulated, has as its object 'the study of discursive techniques functioning to provoke or increase the support of minds to the theses which one presents for approval,' [Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, *Traité de l'argumentation, la nouvelle rhétorique*, 1976, p.1] rhetoric's role is central in politics. All those who in Greek and Roman antiquity preferred an active life to the contemplative life didn't hesitate to attribute to it at least as much importance as philosophy (CHAÏM PERELMAN, 1984, p.129).

Likewise, Garsten notes that 'Persuasive talk is the currency of the democratic realm' (2006, p.2) while Richard Toye reminds us that 'rhetoric is a foundation-stone of civil society and an essential part of the democratic process' (2013, pp.3-4). This ancient notion of persuasive speech is precisely what Arendt is referring to when she describes politics as the activity of people coming together and persuading others, and being persuaded oneself, to act in certain ways. But it is more than simple persuasion. As David Arndt reminds us, rhetoric as understood in the polis was 'the art of public speech among citizens' (2019, p.58), that is, it is speech made without compulsion, public and oriented to opinion rather than philosophical and oriented to truth.

What perhaps has been less discussed or ignored in relation to rhetoric is its revelatory potential. When we speak to persuade others, we also reveal something of ourselves. Toye cites the language scholar Victor Klemperer (1881-1960) who drew attention to the revelatory aspect of Nazi speech in his *Language of the Third Reich*<sup>120</sup>: 'what a man says may be a pack of lies - but his true self is laid bare for all to see in the style of his utterances' (RICHARD TOYE, 2013, p.1). As Toye elaborates, rhetoric is not simply 'a surface phenomenon ... but gives its author away, even as he or she attempts to dissemble' (2013, p.2). This idea of speech being revelatory clearly chimes with Arendt's notion of speech/action which allow human beings to 'distinguish

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<sup>120</sup> Victor Klemperer. 2006. *The language of the Third Reich: LTI: lingua tertii imperii: a philologist's notebook*. Translated by Martin Brady. London: Continuum. Originally published in German as *LTI: Notizbuch eines philologen* in 1947.

themselves instead of being merely distinct' ([HC] 1998, p.176). This reveal, this 'disclosure of who [not what] somebody is' ([HC] 1998, p.178), can only take place through our words and our deeds, but chiefly through our words.

As Richard Toye highlights, Aristotle's famous account of rhetoric maintains there are three rhetorical genres:

- forensic or courtroom rhetoric
- epideictic or display rhetoric
- deliberative rhetoric

Notwithstanding the fact that in practice the distinction between these three is often less than clear (RICHARD TOYE, 2013), it would appear that the latter, deliberative rhetoric, holds the most relevance to the matter at hand here as it describes speech used to persuade others to a course of action; however, the second genre, epideictic, is also interestingly relevant, even though it is this genre that according to Perelman has contributed to the modern denigration and 'reduction of rhetoric to a theory of figures of style, or ornate language' (1984, p.129). While the other two genres often involve what Perelman describes as a 'contest' in that the judicial or political speakers sought to 'defend opposing theses' (1984, p.129), epideictic rhetoric (for example, a funeral oration) positioned the audience as 'only spectators'. In this manner, epideictic rhetoric 'was appreciated as a work of art' but was eventually understood only as art and then as 'literature in the bad sense of the word' (1984, p.130). The split that Perelman identifies between rhetoric as persuasion and rhetoric as artistic effect is he argues unfortunate but revealing because at the heart of all rhetoric lies the epideictic, and this is significant as it gets at the root of Arendt's notion of disclosive speech.

Turning back to Arendt, in her account of politics in *The human condition*, action and speech are presented as the only activities judged by the Greeks as properly political; however, as mentioned above, she then describes how with the advent of the polis, words not deeds came to be considered of central importance. Hence she writes in the *Prologue* that 'speech is what makes man a political being' ([HC] 1998, p.3) and later that 'Speechless action would no longer be action' ([HC] 1998, p.178). The reason for this is that, in a passage recalling the one cited earlier on 'the specifically human way of answering, talking back and measuring up to whatever happened or was done' ([HC] 1998, p.26), an act 'becomes relevant only through the spoken word in which he identifies himself as the actor, announcing what he does, has done, and intends to do' ([HC] 1998, p.179). For speech to be political, however, it must be public speech - it requires the presence of others.

As Andrew Norris (2013) has highlighted, political speech for Arendt is revelatory in that it reveals who one is as a public person and it is also potentially glorious. Arendt reminds us in *The promise of politics* that the Greek word for opinion, *doxa*, also means fame or splendour, which is why it is related to the political realm wherein which people can appear and show themselves as they really are. Lawrence Biskowski sums this up and its relation to the polis neatly:

A large part of the Greek fascination with politics, at least as Arendt describes it, centers on the hope that by freely speaking and acting in public an individual could disclose his unique identity, earn fame and glory, inspire stories which might survive him, and thus participate in the immortality of the polis (LAWRENCE J. BISKOWSKI, 1993, p.870).

What makes speech potentially glorious, however, is not that its content is 'great'. Referring to the description of Achilles in the *Iliad* as 'the doer of great deeds and the speaker of great words' ([HC] 1998, p.25), Arendt explains what this meant:

In distinction from modern understanding, such words were not considered to be great because they expressed great thoughts; on the contrary, as we know from the last lines of the *Antigone*, it may be the capacity for 'great words' (*megaloi logoi*) with which to reply to striking blows that will eventually teach thought in old age ([HC] 1998, p.25).

In other words, as Norris puts it:

the greatness of speech is not a matter of inherently great ideas, but of their being spoken, and hence of their being spoken in a particular context, to particular people, and in a particular way (ANDREW NORRIS, 2013, p.214).

This idea of 'the right words at the right moment, quite apart from the information or communication they may convey, is action' ([HC] 1998, p.26) for Arendt. Such speech is something that is timely, opportune, and felicitous, or *kairos* (the god of opportunity) in classic Greek rhetoric<sup>121</sup>.

Hence, it is precisely in this sense that political speech is not simply a matter of persuasion and neither is it rhetorical in its limited sense as referring to the study of tropes. It is timely, revelatory, and public speech. Perhaps the most famous example here, and certainly one of Arendt's favourites, is Pericles' famous funeral oration: what makes it great in Arendt's sense is that it constitutes Pericles' way of 'answering, talking back and measuring up to whatever

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<sup>121</sup> See Richard Toye's *Rhetoric: a very short introduction* for a succinct account of classical Greek rhetoric (2013).

happened or was done' ([HC] 1998, p.26). This is why Arendt sometimes describes action in Machiavellian terms as a kind of *virtù*, that is:

the response, summoned up by man, to the word, or rather to the constellation of *fortuna* in which the world opens up, presents and offers itself to him ([WIA/BPF] 2006, p.137).

Action as speech then is not only persuasive, though it can be. It is, as Norris argues citing Arendt, revelatory and public speech 'that reveals the speaker as "answering, talking back and measuring up to whatever happened or was done"' (2013, p.200). And so it is in this sense that Norris can also write that Arendt offers a 'direct defense of the rhetorical politics of opinion and appearance' (2015, no pagination). I develop this notion in relation to the EAP classroom below, for in the final chapter [CHAPTER 4], I return to the aim of the thesis and bring together the various threads already discussed, those of EAP; Arendt and education; and Arendt and politics, in order to discuss some of the possible theoretical and practical implications of reading EAP alongside Arendt.

# CHAPTER 4

## CHAPTER 4: AN EDUCATIONAL AND POLITICAL DISCUSSION

*The aim of this chapter is to advance my argument that EAP (as well as the university in which it typically operates) can usefully be seen as operating on the borderline between, in Arendt's terms, education and politics, and as such is well positioned to play a significant role in the political education of students as democratic citizens. EAP, in other words, has educational and political purposes. This being the case, given the specific remit of EAP to support English-learning international students in their academic progress, it would be reasonable to expect EAP to play a major if not leading part in the political education of this cohort of students. This does not mean EAP should be politicised; rather that Arendt's ideas on education and the distinction she makes between a 'strong' and a 'wrong' sense of politics<sup>122</sup> offer another way of conceptualising EAP as neither entirely pragmatic (and 'apolitical') nor first-wave critical (and potentially politicised) but rather radical conservative, valuing both preservation (conservative) and renewal (radical). This chapter first substantiates this position and then goes on to tease out some of the more practical implications of seeing EAP in these terms.*

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<sup>122</sup> *Strong* politics is Arendtian *action* (as distinguished from *labour* and *work*); *wrong* politics is politicised education (JORIS Vlieghe and Piotr Zamojski, 2019; Joris Vlieghe and Piotr Zamojski, 2020). See also **PAGE 207** below.



## SECTION I: THE RADICAL CONSERVATISM OF EAP

The key message of this thesis is that because EAP exists on the borderline between the Arendtian realms of education and politics, her writings on both education and politics (despite her insistence on their mutual exclusivity as realms) can gainfully be employed to critique and illuminate its practice.

Firstly, a reminder of the differences between the two realms. Arendt makes a clear distinction between education and politics: on the one hand, we have the private realm of education and the young, and on the other, the public realm of politics and adults. The task of education is to help children cross the educational-political Rubicon and this is to be achieved by simultaneously protecting them from the adult political world while gradually introducing them into it. This requires of educators an assumption of their natural authority as adults over children. Arendt makes no bones about this: education is not a *laissez faire*, democratic free-for-all but a 'dictatorial intervention, based upon the absolute superiority of the adult' ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.173). Hence politics, which involves 'joining with one's equals in assuming the effort of persuasion and running the risk of failure' ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.173), is not just unsuitable for children, but something from which they should be protected until they are ready to participate in it as educated (in Arendt's sense) and prepared adults.

Of course, in presenting education as an introductory process and as something distinct from politics, it is important to ask at what point childhood and education end (for Arendt, they do come to a determinate end) and adulthood and politics begin. As we have already seen, Arendt addresses this question explicitly towards the end of *The crisis in education*, suggesting that 'this end probably coincides with graduation from college rather than with graduation from

high school' ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.192). Up to this point in time education, that is, schooling, aims 'to introduce the young person to the world as a whole'; subsequent educational interventions which specialise rather than generalise and which introduce the young and others not to the world as a whole but 'to a particular, limited segment of it' ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.192), are not strictly speaking matters of education but of learning (learning, unlike education, being never ending).

The picture painted above corresponds to the definition of education as schooling that Arendt provides in *Reflections on Little Rock* and *The crisis in education*. Education involves only the young, and the point at which education ends and politics begins is a matter of age (meaning the young rather than the old) and of specialisation (meaning it teaches a segment of the world rather than the whole of it). There is, however, the case of adult and university education to consider. As noted in the earlier chapter on education, Arendt makes a distinction not only between education and politics but also between different types of 'adult education': that which is 'politically irrelevant' because it does not attempt to 'educate' adults, and that which by implication is politically relevant and thus potentially coercive because it does attempt this:

In the political realm we deal always with adults who are past the age of education, properly speaking, and politics or the right to participate in the management of public affairs begins precisely where education has come to an end. (Adult education, individual or communal, may be of great relevance for the formation of personality, its full development or greater enrichment, but is politically irrelevant unless its purpose is to supply technical requirements, somehow not acquired in youth, needed for participation in public affairs.) In education, conversely, we always deal with people who cannot yet be admitted to politics and equality because they are being prepared for it ([WIA/BPF] 2006, pp.118-119).

By implication, there must exist in opposition to *politically irrelevant* adult education *politically relevant* adult education. This latter can be characterised in terms of its intention 'to supply

technical requirements, somehow not acquired in youth, needed for participation in public affairs' ([WIA/BPF] 2006, p.119). This kind of adult political education, as distinct from the politically irrelevant kind that more modestly aims to enrich the individual, is potentially dangerous since it aims to educate those who are, *qua* adults, already educated, and as Arendt reminds us, 'the word "education" has an evil sound in politics' ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.173)<sup>123</sup>. Hence, it is more accurately described as 'a pretense of education when the real purpose is coercion' ([CE/BPF] 2006, pp.173-174). In short, Arendt argues that despite education having a political role to play in society (namely, the preparation of people for adult political participation), it must not be allowed to become a politicised endeavour.

While Arendt does not provide examples of this politically relevant education, the following could reasonably be surmised: that while an adult evening class focusing on photography or even philosophy probably does not have the political purpose of preparing students for participation in the public realm (though of course this may well be a by-product), language education courses (typically known as *ESOL* - English for Speakers of Other Languages - courses) in the UK that include citizenship learning<sup>124</sup> could well have this as one of their purposes (given that their stated aim may be to provide those technical skills deemed necessary for full participation in the UK). A more obvious because extreme example of such political education can be found in the 'voluntary' Muslim camps in the far western Xinjiang region of China. According to the leaked China Cables published in *The Guardian*, these camps, far from being

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<sup>123</sup> Peter Lilja usefully elaborates on this: 'Education within the sphere of the political, in other words, is nothing more than a hidden strategy for depriving adult men and women of their political agency by someone who takes it upon him- or herself to exercise an interpretative prerogative in relation to the political debates or questions at hand' (2018, p.546).

<sup>124</sup> See, for example, this parliamentary paper outlining the need for language and civic education for first and second language migrants to the UK (SELECT COMMITTEE ON CITIZENSHIP AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT, 2018).

vocational training centres, appear to be places for at the very least ideological education transformation (EMMA GRAHAM-HARRISON, 2019).

University education is neither a clear example of adult education nor of education (as in schooling) proper. As discussed in Chapter 2, the university is a continuation of education, in Arendt's terms, and yet is also clearly different from that *sui generis* institution for the activity of education, the school. But even this purest of educational institutions exists in a kind of transitional space which is neither fully private nor fully public: while it has its feet, so to speak, in the relative safety of the private realm characterised by authoritarian relationships, it also 'turns children toward the world' (EMILY ZAKIN, 2017, p.123), that is, in the direction of the free and equal political world of those already educated. Now if the school is that transitional institution that takes young people from the privacy of the family home to the publicity of the world, then the university, which in Arendt's account continues from where the school leaves off, is likewise poised between domains, albeit considerably further towards the end of the private-public, educational-political axis. As noted earlier, Peter Euben argues that universities (and other higher education institutions) are probably best understood in Arendt's framework as being 'both the end point of education and the beginning of politics' (2001, p.186). Students at university are there to be educated and yet are already 'our fellow citizens' (PETER EUBEN, 2001, p.186), having reached the age of majority (Scotland: age 16; rest of the UK: age 18) with the legal capacity to enter into legally binding contracts and to vote.

## EAP ON THE BORDER

Given the above discussion, whether EAP, which is nominally educative and yet involves adults and operates in a university setting? As it sits on the border between education and politics, operating, like the university, towards the end of education and the beginning of politics, it has within it elements of both activities.

Broadly speaking, EAP can be understood in educational terms as an activity that seeks to introduce newcomers into the world. However, this world that EAP introduces the students into is, on the face of it, relatively narrow. As the study of English *for* academic purposes, EAP has the overriding purpose of familiarising international students with the various Englishes used in academia in order for them to participate effectively in its various settings; it seeks, in other words, only to introduce people into the English-speaking academic part of the world and not the world as a whole. This is a specialised activity and one that operates through the use of tailored materials that scaffold learning and through dedicated classes that provide the students with the space in which to learn and to practise the language and skills deemed necessary for successful participation in higher education.

Having said that EAP is a specialised activity, it is arguably more educational (in Arendt's sense) than other university programmes of academic study for the very reason that it is 'language education' (KEN HYLAND AND PHILIP SHAW, 2016, p.2). For while all university disciplines are concerned with language and with socialising newcomers into their particular academic discourses, English, and this means general as well as academic English, is EAP's *raison d'être*. I noted in Chapter 2 the crucial role that language can play in the Arendtian educational task of leading people into the world: Arendt gives the example of how in America English

contributes to the Americanisation of its citizens, many of whom do not speak English as their first language<sup>125</sup>. I noted too how Roger Berkowitz draws attention to the account given by Richard Rodriguez of the critical role English played in the formation of his 'public identity' and in his 'learning to be a public person' (2020, p.17).

So while education in Arendt's terms concerns the introduction of children and young people into the world, a fact which on the face of it precludes EAP from consideration as educational, I suggest that because the primary responsibility of EAP is to introduce adults (and often but not always young adults) into a new linguistic world, it does have some similarities with Arendt's notion of education as schooling; at the very least, thinking about EAP in terms of Arendtian education is illuminating.

On the other hand, it is important to remember that EAP is a largely adult affair: its students are, for the most part, already educated in Arendt's sense. That EAP recognises this is apparent in its double positioning of international EAP students as both novices and experts. While it conceptualises international students as (Arendtian) newcomers to the English speaking world of academia, it also recognises that these same students may be authorities, at least relative to EAP tutors, in their own particular academic disciplines and certainly in their own languages. So while these international students may be said to come to EAP in order to be properly introduced to *part* of the world, the English-speaking realm of adult and worldly academic existence, they are at the same time educated adults and are already 'acquainted with the

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<sup>125</sup> Arendt points to 'The political role that education actually plays in a land of immigrants, the fact that the schools not only serve to Americanize the children but affect their parents as well' ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.174).

world' ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.186), the world as a whole. Hence, these students are simultaneously newcomers and educated adults.

If viewed as an example of adult education rather than of education proper, then the question is whether it is offering those 'technical requirements, somehow not acquired in youth, needed for participation in public affairs' (making it a politically relevant activity), or whether it is aimed more at 'the formation of personality, its full development or greater enrichment' (in which case it is not) ([WIA/BPF] 2006, p.119). Arguably, EAP offers both personal enrichment and technical requirements. And since it does have a part to play in preparing international students for political participation, we need to be mindful that this is not carried out coercively so as to remove their 'chance of undertaking something new' ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.193).

While EAP is not strictly educational in Arendt's sense, her notion of education as an introduction into the political world is a useful metaphor for thinking about university education in general and EAP in particular. Similarly, Arendt's notion of adult education being either politically relevant or politically irrelevant is also useful in respect to EAP for thinking about its potential for coercion. Given this, it makes sense to think of EAP, like the university in which it is generally housed, as operating on the educational edge. If universities do indeed function as 'both the end point of education and the beginning of politics' (PETER EUBEN, 2001, p.186), then EAP might be said to constitute a tipping point for international students.

In summary then, I suggest that EAP is a kind of adult education that has both educational and political responsibilities. It should educate about a segment of the world and at the same time prepare students for the larger political world they are entering. It should help to preserve the natality of these newcomers through a non-politicised education and at the same time help

prepare them for later political life through affording them opportunities to speak and act and judge. The EAP classroom so conceived becomes a halfway house: it is a space wherein students are prepared educationally for academia; and it is also a space wherein they are prepared for possible future political participation without engaging in it in the process. The special nature of EAP means that it functions as a kind of additional school or finishing school for newly-arriving international students. Or, to put it in more theatrical terms, EAP offers a partly sheltered or protected rehearsal space for increasingly risky (because witnessed, judged, and assessed) university performances.

### A SECOND WAVE AND A THIRD SPACE

Having located EAP in broadly Arendtian terms as being at the end of education and the beginning of politics, I now show how this suggests a notion of EAP that differs from both pragmatic and critical EAP. I term this third approach to EAP *radical conservative*.

#### **Pragmatic and critical EAPs**

As observed in Chapter 1, EAP can be very broadly conceptualised in terms of two very different, if not antagonistic, pedagogic positions. In its starkest form, this debate centres on whether the teaching of EAP should proceed on the basis of a pragmatic and accommodationist pedagogy or a critical one. Should it, in other words, limit its scope to helping students master the recognised conventions and values of academic language, or should it actively encourage the questioning of these? Of course, EAP could strive to do both or navigate these possibilities in different ways. In this section, I remind the reader of the key



elements of these approaches before setting out my radical conservative version inspired by reading Arendt.

Pragmatic EAP is concerned with teaching students the dominant academic discourse norms (Anglo-American) so that they are prepared for the literacy demands of the academy. In its defence, it argues that EAP students are newcomers to the world of English-speaking academia and that in order to be accepted by the academy and subsequently by the academic publishing houses, they must - initially at least - learn the rules and follow them. As A. Suresh Canagarajah (1999) pointed out more than twenty years ago, the demand that students do conform to the dominant discourse norms is particularly strong in centre countries (those countries with English as the first and dominant language: the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand and Australia).

Lovisa Bergdahl and Elisabet Langmann (2018) identify two broad educational positions with respect to how they view the past:

Theorist [*sic*] and educationalists on the more conservative end of the educational spectrum tend to draw on a nostalgic vision of a 'lost but grand past' ... Theorist [*sic*] and educators at the critical/radical end of the educational spectrum often tend to take the opposite stance, arguing that education comes to function as an instrument for reproduction and domination when it one-sidedly supports the knowledge and values of dominant groups in society (LOVISA BERGDAHL AND ELISABET LANGMANN, 2018, p.372)

In short, the 'traditional/conservative' position involves 'restoring (from the past)' while the 'critical/radical' position involves 'rebuilding (for the future)' (2018, p.372). Pragmatic EAP can be positioned at the conservative end of the spectrum since it also:

views tradition and cultural heritage rather uncritically, that is, as something relatively stable and worth restoring. The task of education, according to the conservatives, is to transfer the dominant morals and values of society from the old generation to the coming generation (LOVISA BERGDAHL AND ELISABET LANGMANN, 2018, p.372).

While pragmatic EAP seeks to reinforce the prevailing norms, critical EAP actively seeks to challenge, and lead students in challenging, them. Rather than 'treating these conventions as though they were natural - the product of common sense', critical pedagogy regards them as 'naturalized - the product of relations of power' (ROZ IVANIČ, 1998, p.81). As such, these academic norms are seen to reflect broader societal norms serving to perpetuate the status quo and marginalise less powerful groups; and of particular relevance to EAP, of course, are those international students disadvantaged or marginalised or both through not having English as a first language. Hence, critical EAP seeks not only 'reforms in academic institutions' but also 'to improve conditions in the workplace and community' (SARAH BENESCH, 2001, xviii). In terms of the same two educational positions used by Bergdahl and Langmann above, critical EAP can be broadly aligned with the 'critical/radical' approach which seeks not to restore from the past but to break with it and its 'repressive domination' (2018, p.372). Critical EAP wants 'the next generation to be emancipated from past injustices and from the hegemony of the present society' (2018, p.372).

The main theoretical problem with pragmatic EAP is its 'political naivety' (CHRISTOPHER J. MACALLISTER, 2016), that is, its reluctance to recognise that adopting a position of political neutrality does not make it a neutral enterprise:

Traditional EAP's ideology of pragmatism does not raise concerns about the relationship of EAP teachers to official curricula, pedagogy, and assessment. Instead, it assumes that their role is to prepare students for the requirements they face or will face in their academic classes. This political position appears as neutral because it upholds the status quo, yet it is no more neutral than one that interrogates existing demands and assumptions (SARAH BENESCH, 2001, pp.136-137).

In accepting that its duty is to prepare students for academic life and in accepting too that the best way to achieve this is by responding uncritically to the needs of academic disciplines, traditional EAP finds itself in the accommodationist position of endorsing tradition academic pedagogy and of power relations in academia and in society (SARAH BENESCH, 1993). Pragmatic EAP, in other words, risks being both educationally and politically conservative.

The main risk of critical EAP, meanwhile, is that with its clear political and emancipatory goals of liberating students from the past and guiding them towards creating a socially just future, it has the potential to ride roughshod over the (developing) views of the students themselves. As referenced earlier [CHAPTER 1], critical EAP 'shows the dominance of an overall meta-narrative of how the world should be' (CHRISTOPHER J. MACALLISTER, 2016, p.290). Indeed, many of the critical activities described by Benesch that involve, for example, the teacher bringing into class various micro or macro political topics for students to discuss, operate with a political agenda; consciously or otherwise, the teacher may find themselves leading the students towards a predefined vision of the future and so in effect seizing 'from their hands their chance of undertaking something new, something unforeseen by us' ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.193).

Critical EAP, then, as least in its original *first wave* incarnation, sails perilously close to operating instrumentally, that is to say, as an educational means for the achievement of political ends, in its attempt to impose upon the young an old vision of how the new will look. Conceiving

education as a means to remedy what is wrong with the world is, as Arendt puts it, an ‘attempt to produce the new as a *fait accompli*, that is, as though the new already existed’ ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.173). And as Arendt writes: ‘we destroy everything if we so try to control the new that we, the old, can dictate how it will look’ ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.189).

This is not to say that education cannot make a difference to the social or political world. It clearly can and does. The danger lies in predetermining for the young the future they should work towards<sup>126</sup>. Critical EAP, in other words, in making education a means to a political end, risks politicising both its end and its means, its politics and its education. Recalling that for Arendt *action* is not the same as *work*, that is, it is not carried out in order to achieve an end, then critical EAP can be seen as operationalising *action* as *work*: rather than affording students the space in which to realise their own natality and act in the future, it talks in terms of ‘making the future’ and of ‘building and improving society’ as if action were ‘about making chairs and building and improving houses’ ([PP] 2005, p.58).

In light of the shortcomings of both pragmatic EAP and critical EAP, Macallister has argued the need for a ‘second wave critical approach’ (2016, p.290) that is politically aware (*contra* pragmatic EAP) but not driven by top-down emancipatory narratives (as in the first-wave critical approach) that can override the views of the students themselves. In more Arendtian terms, the approaches of pragmatic and first-wave critical fail to recognise the facts of *natality* and *plurality*. The answer, for Macallister, lies in developing critical EAPs (plural) which start

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<sup>126</sup> While my interest is in critical EAP, this danger is present in other critical ventures such as the modern inclusive education movement: ‘Trying to control how, when and who is included and emancipated risks not only instrumentalisation but also risks robbing the individuals we wish to free of opportunities to act and live in unpredictable ways ... The possibility of overturning societal structures cannot be preordered by the adult generation but exists only in the presence of an axiology that allows for the unforeseen and the unknown, which requires that we abstain from strict political and ideological control of what takes place in the school’ (MORTEN TIMMERMANN KORSGAARD, 2016, p.936).

with 'engagement with the local positions of students rather than a universal critical narrative that risks imposing its own regime of truth upon the EAP classroom' (2016, p.291). So while not abandoning critical concerns altogether, these would not be imposed from above but introduced 'from the bottom up' (2016, p.292). How precisely to accomplish this is, as Macallister acknowledges, not straightforward, given the difficulty posed by Eric Freedman (as mentioned in **CHAPTER 1**) that the speech of the teacher, critical or otherwise, is always going to be privileged and authoritative in the classroom, even in the democratic classroom where all voices are deemed to be equal.

In encouraging students to passively accept and accommodate themselves to the status quo, pragmatic EAP is in danger of being both educationally and politically conservative. Conversely, with its instrumental take on education as a means of achieving political change, critical EAP is in equal danger of being both educationally and politically critical. What I outline below is a second wave critical approach to EAP practice that tries to negotiate this 'intractable problem' (CHRISTOPHER J. MACALLISTER, 2016, p.292).

### **Radical conservatism**

In light of reading Arendt on education and politics, I propose that EAP operating around the end of education and the beginning of politics, should take a radical conservative approach. In other words, it should have two aims: to introduce students into academia (and this can be done critically); and help prepare students for their own possible and potential political participation outside the university (*not here and not now*).

As discussed in Chapter 2, Arendt's views on education can accurately be described as *conservative radical* or *radical conservatism*<sup>127</sup>. Simply put, Arendt is conservative in education so as to be revolutionary or radical in politics. The conservative aspect consists in wanting to protect or conserve the world from the new and the young from the world, while the radical aspect consists in affording the young the freedom to renew the world. And of course, these two aspects work together:

Exactly for the sake of what is new and revolutionary in every child, education must be conservative; it must preserve this newness and introduce it as a new thing into an old world ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.189).

Arendt's approach is conservative but - and the *but* is crucial - for the sake of the new; and as Mordechai Gordon writes, Arendt may be unique in this:

Arendt is one of the only modern thinkers who insists that we must be conservative in education for the sake of the new ... In Arendt's view, the most important goal of education is to help children become familiar with the world and feel secure in it so that they may have a chance to be creative and attempt something new (MORDECHAI GORDON, 2001a, pp.52-53).

So while Arendt's education is broadly speaking conservative, it is ultimately more concerned not with conserving the world as it is but with renewing it; it recognises that one should be acquainted with the world and become part of it before acting in it. Conservative education is needed to allow children to grow into adults who do not treat the world conservatively. As Anya Topolski puts it: 'Educating thus aims to create stability, to be conservative, to tell (and hopefully in so doing inspire) the stories of the past and tradition' (ANYA TOPOLSKI, 2008, p.269).

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<sup>127</sup> Both terms are used by Anouk Zuurmond (2016); Lovisa Bergdahl and Elisabet Langmann favour *radical conservatism* (2018).

Not only must the child be protected from the world while being educated about the world, but the revolutionary potential - or *natality* - of the child must be protected too. Hence, Arendt insists that 'education must be conservative; it must preserve this newness and introduce it as a new thing into an old world' ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.189). It is conservative in order not to destroy its potential radicalism.

Arendt's radical conservative views have been usefully distinguished from the conservative and progressive views by Lovisa Bergdahl and Elisabet Langmann (2018). I have already [CHAPTER 2] indicated that Arendt's views on education are informed by her understanding of the relationship between the past and the future. Her views are neither traditionally conservative nor progressive, but are better understood as occupying what the authors describe as 'a third position' (2018, p.372). In broad terms, the traditional or conservative approach to education is past-oriented and looks to restore past authority, whereas the progressive or critical tradition is future-oriented and looks to break with or even forget the traditions of the past and rebuild for the future (2018). If the conservative approach is to strengthen the next generations' ties with past tradition, and the critical or progressive approach is to cut these ties, the third approach instead seeks *preservation* and *renewal*, that is:

the preservation of what is valuable in a culture ('this is valuable to us, the old generation') and the freedom of every new generation to renew what has been passed on to them ('it is up to you, the new generation, to form and enliven the world anew') (LOVISA BERGDAHL AND ELISABET LANGMANN, 2018, p.373).

The third position is Arendt's radical conservative position: educators passing on to the young what they consider to be of value in such a way that the young are both equipped to feel able

‘to affirm, reject or renew’ it (2018, p.373). A radical conservative education conserves and passes the world on to the young so that they themselves are in a position to radicalise it.

This third way then does not reject the past out of hand; neither does it make the present a vehicle for a desired future. Put differently, it rejects what Joris Vlieghe and Piotr Zamojski (2019, p.867) characterise as the ‘wrong’ sense of politics (politicised education), but it values its ‘strong’ sense (Arendtian action)<sup>128</sup>; and it recognises too the role it can play in helping to prepare students for their possible future involvement in acting and judging as citizens.

Rather it is poised between the past and the future and in this space, call it the present, there is room for critical engagement with those values that have been passed down. And this space, which can be created anew in every class, is a space Eduardo Manuel Duarte (2010) suggestively terms ‘a conservatory’:

where students are able to be students, that is, to engage with the world from a distance, a location where they are able to think about this old world that, ultimately, they will be asked to renew and repair (EDUARDO MANUEL DUARTE 2010, pp.495-496).

Of course, and as has been discussed previously, given the crucial role education has in both developing the young and in introducing them into the world that they might ‘set [it] right anew’([CE/BPF] 2006, p.189) themselves, education cannot be entirely separated from political considerations. As Natasha Levinson (2002) reminds us, education has a political function in

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<sup>128</sup> ‘Politics in the strong sense ... always refers to action (as distinguished from labour and work) ... Politics in this wrong sense means that education is conceived of in terms of the preparation of newcomers to a new, imagined world, that is, when the educational is reduced to a mere means of realising a political dream’ (JORIS Vlieghe AND PIOTR ZAMOJSKI, 2019, p.867).



preparing the child for his or her future existence as a political actor in the world, a function that Peter Baehr expresses in terms of citizenship:

If one of the purposes of education is to prepare children for the common world they will renew as adults, and if that common world is one in which citizenship is a prominent feature, then educators would seem duty bound to prepare students for citizenship (PETER BAEHR, 2020, p.567).

However, as Peter Lilja reminds us, 'this task must be handled with care, in order for education to be truly emancipatory and not a tool for conformity and political passivity' (PETER LILJA, 2018, p.545)<sup>129</sup>.

Pragmatic and critical EAP both risk conformity. They both risk diminishing the natality and potential for genuine political change of those being educated: pragmatic EAP by encouraging an uncritical engagement with and hence continuation of a past; and critical EAP by emptying the past of value and encouraging the young to realise a future vision which is not of their own making. Both are in different ways, one holding on to the past and the other an imagined future, in danger of predetermining the future for its international students. Arendt's radical conservative approach to education takes seriously the need for educators to handle their preparation of the young for political participation with care.

While the conservative paradigm of education finds expression in pragmatic EAP, and the progressive one finds similar expression in critical EAP (most clearly in its first wave articulation), the third approach can be expressed in terms of radical conservative EAP. What I am suggesting here is that Arendt's radical conservative approach offers the kind of second

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<sup>129</sup> As noted in **CHAPTER 2**, Arendt is not unaware of this dilemma. Writing in *The crisis in education* about the American education system, she notes that while the educational activity is not a political activity it certainly has 'a political role', namely 'to Americanize' ((CE/BPF) 2006).

wave local critical EAP that Macallister imagines: a localised space within which students are, amongst other things, prepared for later possible political participation. This Arendtian version of critical EAP is not an emancipatory-modernist endeavour but an activity offering a space for students to think, act and judge, and to realise and develop their own natality as future political actors. The EAP classroom is thus educational but less conservative and more *political looking* than the school classroom. It is still a relatively safe and non-politicised environment, but it tends further towards the radical and political light of the world. The EAP classroom then can be likened to a theatre wherein the participants (actors and spectators) can rehearse for the real show, that is, the actual world of university academia and the wider political world that lies outside the university<sup>130</sup>.

## SECTION II: PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

In this thesis I have sought to conceptualise EAP in Arendtian terms as a radical conservative activity operating at or around the end of education and the beginning of politics and so furnished with both educational and political purposes. While both pragmatic EAP and critical EAP are both in danger, in differing ways, of striking from the hands of students their chance of undertaking something new, this Arendtian take on EAP seeks instead to preserve the revolutionary newness of students and prepare them for the future possibility of acting and so of changing the world, and, more to the point, in ways not managed and perhaps not even foreseen by us. So while pragmatic EAP is in danger through its educational and political conservatism of discouraging present and future action; and while critical EAP is in danger of turning genuinely free action into 'mere execution, which is determined by somebody who

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<sup>130</sup> Though see my refinement of this position below [PAGE 213].

knows and therefore does not himself act' ([PP] 2005, p.91); radical conservative EAP, seeks to prepare students for the world but in such a way that it 'leave[s] the work of revolution to them' (ROGER BERKOWITZ, 2020, p.20). In this final section, I outline what an Arendtian understanding of EAP means in more practical terms, looking first at the implications for the nature of the classroom space and then at the same for some of its activities.

#### CONCEPTUALISING THE RADICAL CONSERVATIVE SPACE

To recap: because it occupies a relatively advanced position around the end point of education and the beginning of politics, the EAP classroom is a complex educational space. While it is not entirely educational in the way Arendt understands education (the authoritative introduction of the young into the world by responsible and educated adults; schooling, in other words), neither is it genuinely political in the way Arendt understands politics (the public sharing of words and deeds with equal adult others on matters of common concern; active citizenship, in other words). The people at the chalkface of EAP are neither children in a school nor adults in a public-political arena but adults in a classroom. This being the case, though EAP can and should play a role in the political development of its participants, it is organised as an educational activity and so afforded an educational, not a political, space. (This is not to say that it could not become a political space: indeed this is a potential danger of critical EAP; as Arendt was well aware, student political action outside the university can easily move inside and endanger the unique freedom that universities enjoy<sup>131</sup>.) More precisely, it is a space which

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<sup>131</sup> I remind the reader (see **CHAPTER 3**) that while Arendt was supportive of university students participating and even leading political actions, her support was contingent on such activities taking place away from the university and outwith the educational realm. See particularly the final part of her *Crises of the republic: lying in politics; civil disobedience; on violence; thoughts on politics and revolution* ([CR] 1972).

allows for the further preparation (educationally and so with reduced risk) of citizens for more genuine political involvement (carrying greater risk) outside the university.

My conception of the radical conservative classroom owes something to Arendt's own practice as a university lecturer (as outlined in **CHAPTER 2**). While Arendt does not discuss her teaching practice in any great detail, the few comments she and others (especially her former students, Elizabeth Young-Bruehl and Jerome Kohn) have made, suggest she did not consider it to be a matter of schooling as such. While university education is obviously, in broad terms, educational in nature, the picture painted for us of the Arendtian university seminar is that of a place for the expression of opinions, a 'miniature polis' for budding 'citizens' (ELISABETH YOUNG-BRUEHL AND JEROME KOHN, 2001, p.255), thus involving some measure of almost political participation, that is, of acting and judging.

The *almost* here is significant for in the radical conservative EAP classroom, education is not made political; rather, students are prepared for possible future political activity as part of their education. This is an important distinction since as outlined in the earlier chapter on education (**CHAPTER 2**), there has been considerable interest, much of it critical, in the red line Arendt draws between education and politics, and a significant proportion of this concern has come from educationalists frustrated by Arendt's insistence that the two realms be kept apart. Because I do not conceptualise the EAP classroom as a political space, my account of it as operating at times *like* a miniature polis should be distinguished in name if not in practice both from Aaron Schutz's proposal for classrooms as quasi-publics (2001) and from Eric Gorham's notion of the university classroom as a political Arendtian space of appearances (2000).

As discussed earlier, Aaron Schutz, one of the first educationalists to raise the question of how Arendt expects children to transition from the one realm to the other, from being taught about the world (a matter of education) to acting and judging in it (a matter of politics), given that the two realms are to be kept apart, argues the need for educators to provide young people with opportunities for action (2001). This being the case, he proposes that educators 'construct quasi-publics in their classrooms' so that students can 'learn to participate in Arendtian public practices' (2001, p.330). There is considerable value in seeing the classroom in these terms for as Schutz writes, these quasi-publics would be controlled and limited in terms of 'the kinds of actions that are allowed' (2001, p.330). To my thinking, however, such control is indicative of the real nature of these spaces: that they are more educational than political. So quite apart from Arendt's unease noted above about on campus political action, such action as Schutz suggests is unlikely to be action as such because it is controlled and limited. Thus, for Levinson, the real question to be asked by educators should not be how to bring genuine political action into the classroom (which if it were to take place would threaten the educational space) but rather 'how to teach in ways that generate the sorts of insights into the world that might turn students into political actors' (2002, p.204).

As indicated earlier, viewing the EAP classroom as a potential miniature polis does not make it a political space. The radical conservative classroom can operate as a kind of miniature polis at opportune times, but this is not its only function. This really is where my account differs from that of Eric Gorham who also thinks about the university space in terms of a polis. In his somewhat neglected account of the university, *The theatre of politics: Hannah Arendt, political science, and higher education* (2000), Gorham draws on Arendt's political (interestingly, not educational) work to conceptualise universities as political spaces and specifically as *polis-like*

*spaces of appearances*, as *theatrical spaces* for the *performance* of politics by university students and staff members. Gorham argues that this notion of the university as a public space offers an alternative political justification for universities: as spaces of appearances where people can appear to others as members of a political society and express and disclose themselves.

While I appreciate Gorham's theatrical reimagining of the classroom space, for Arendt writes about political life in theatrical terms, with actors and spectators, he is, like Schutz, perhaps in danger of either bringing actual politics into the classroom or of artificializing action. If, in keeping with Arendt, we seek to protect the university space as an educational space, it might be better to think of the university space not as a *theatre of politics* as Gorham suggests but as an educational space for the *rehearsal of politics*. Or to put this differently, while I think Gorham is right to suggest the university classroom is a theatrical space, I see this more at the level of educational practice than actual political performance<sup>132</sup>.

Unlike Gorham who takes universities to be political sites because they are public spaces, I recognise the university as primarily, though not purely, educational. Much of what happens in the university takes place in an environment where one is encouraged to try new things, where one tries out new ways of speaking and acting and in the knowledge that it is relatively safe to do so and that the consequences are fairly limited. For this reason, my account has more in common with that given by Pols and Berding (2018) who make the useful distinction between educational action and genuine political action.

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<sup>132</sup> In fairness to Gorham, albeit at the risk of misapplication, what he seems to be proposing is close to what Wouter Pols and Joop Berding (2018) almost twenty years later regard as *educational action*, that is, not *real* action at all.

Beginning with the uncontroversial claim that for Arendt education is primarily a matter of introducing the young into the world, they argue that this amounts to being taught how 'to use the objects of the world ... the objects chosen by adults as worthwhile' (2018, p.43). These objects, they go on to delineate, are not 'only material, they are mental as well' (2018, p.43). Again, I think Arendt would concur with this description of what it means to learn about the world, that it is a matter of learning not only about the real things in the world and how to use them but the concepts too that exist in our socio-cultural and intellectual history. What they then argue takes the discussion in an illuminating direction. Whereas adults in the world are engaged in the activities of *labour* and *work* (and if they are fortunate, *action*) in terms of Arendt's *vita activa*, children instead are given school work. As they rightly claim, this work is not real work as 'the products of school work are not treated and used by others' (2018, p.43); instead, this is a world of school things which serves as preparation for the world of adult things. Hence, they can conclude: 'Introducing into the world means introducing children and young people into the world of objects and with it having the experience of work' (2018, p.43).

Not wishing to see education simply in terms of work and preparation for adult work, Pols and Berding turn their attention to *action*. Reminding us of the desire of many educators to incorporate in one way or another Arendtian *action* into the classroom, the authors highlight the point I have repeatedly made, that the two realms are fundamentally differently constituted: the realm of education is one of authority and inequality, while the realm of politics is one of freedom and equality. Given this seeming impasse, they propose an equivalent to the activity of action. In the same way as *school work* parallels *real work*, their concept of *educational action* parallels adult *political action*. What is educational action? Pols and Berding define it as the activity of taking initiative - acting - in the world of school. Arguing that school

children are 'open to formation' (2018, p.44), they point to the role educators have in not only introducing children to the world of objects and their use but inviting them to speak and act:

By doing so, he [*sic*] invites them not only to work with the objects the world consists of but also to take up positions, to take initiatives, and to insert themselves with 'word and deed' into the world. These words and deeds reveal the meaning of the objects they deal with, but in doing so they reveal themselves in the presence of others as well (WOUTER POLS AND JOOP BERDING, 2018, p.44).

In this manner, children act but not as adults do; because they act 'under the responsibility of the educator' (2018, p.44), they do so with, as it were, limited liability, with their acts having predictable and limited consequences. Educational action then is not political action but is 'still in budding' (2018, p.44):

Introducing into the world is a process of work and action, but not fully accomplished. It is a process of beginning: a beginning to work ... beginning actions (WOUTER POLS AND JOOP BERDING, 2018, p.44).

Thus, they conclude that while education is a matter of teaching about the world and about learning to use the material and mental objects of the world, 'it is also a matter of discussion and dialog: free work and beginning actions' (2018, pp.44-45).

While their distinction is applied only to the matter of schooling, it is an effective response to the seemingly intractable problem many commentators have struggled with: how, given Arendt's insistence that 'We must decisively divorce the realm of education from the others, most of all from the realm of public, political life' ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.192) can one stay largely faithful to Arendt and yet at the same time make use of her political concepts in the classroom? Wayne Veck and Helen Gunter have recently and sensibly pointed out that turning to Arendt



to better understand educational issues of concern need not involve using her ‘ideas as ready-made solutions’; their approach is ‘rather to enter into dialogue with her thinking’ (2020a, p.7). Moreover, given the hard distinctions Arendt makes (between education and politics) but given too the need she acknowledges for ‘experts and pedagogues’ to work out the ‘particulars’ of education ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.192), what Pols and Berding have offered here can be seen as a sensible ‘fleshing out’<sup>133</sup> or refinement of Arendt’s ideas, a refinement that advances rather than contradicts her theoretical position and that has practical application.

Hence, in spite of the difference in our contexts, school and university EAP, I find the approach of Pols and Berding both relevant and useful and, more to the point, consonant with my understanding that education and politics, like childhood and adulthood, are distinct as activities and yet also blur into each other at certain points as spaces, the university being a particular case in point. Of course, in the university setting the type of *work* and *action* would be more advanced than in the school, activities would be less scaffolded, and the space generally less controlled. As such, it would appear, at times, *like* a miniature polis. Specifically then, the distinction Pols and Berding make between educational and political action helps me to speculate on how it is perhaps more meaningful to speak of *educational* rather than *political* activity in EAP.

#### THE EDUCATIONAL MINIATURE POLIS IN ACTION

Having explored in theoretical terms the nature of the EAP space, I conclude with an account of the educational miniature polis itself. Beginning with a discussion of the educative nature of

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<sup>133</sup> Peter Baehr suggests that ‘an intelligent fleshing out of her [Arendt] contention - somewhat cryptic as stated - that educators are obliged to prepare youth in their transition to a world of joint responsibility where citizenship is at the core of that obligation’ is needed (2020, p.567).

the polis, I go on to describe this classroom in more practical terms and end with an indicative activity type.

### Education in the polis

The classroom as a miniature polis is a helpful conception for EAP but seeing it in these terms does not make it look any less educational. Indeed, and as Arendt points out in various works and most clearly in her essay on Socrates (see below), even the political polis is a place if not of education as such, remembering ‘the word “education” has an evil sound in politics’ ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.173), then certainly a place of learning. As Arendt points out in her essay *The concept of history*, life in the polis ‘to an incredibly large extent consisted of citizens talking to one another’ ([CH/BPF] 2006, p.51), and this experience of talking to one another about the world was in an important sense educative:

the Greek learned to exchange his own viewpoint, his own ‘opinion’ ... with those of his fellow citizens. Greeks learned to *understand* - not to understand one another as individual persons, but to look upon the same world from one another’s standpoint, to see the same in very different and frequently opposing aspects ([CH/BPF] 2006, p.51).

In other words, the polis was a place of improvement, albeit ‘in a specific and limited way’<sup>134</sup> in that it served as a training ground for the development of political understanding. As Arendt goes on to say, this kind of perspectival understanding which consists in ‘seeing the world (as we rather tritely say today) from the other fellow’s point of view - is the political kind of insight par excellence’ ([PP] 2005, p.18); and as discussed in the previous chapter, it is this understanding that allows us to judge. If we add to this the fact that it is the expression and

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<sup>134</sup> Thanks are due to the current Northern Ireland Secretary, Brandon Lewis, for this turn of phrase (BBC, 2020).

exchange of *doxa* or political opinion, speech, in other words, that constituted the political life in the polis, 'the most talkative of all bodies politic' ([HC] 1998, p.26), then it is clear that the polis and by implication the educational miniature polis constitutes what Shmuel Lederman describes as 'a highly democratic vision' (2016, p.736). Remembering also though that what I am dealing with here is first and foremost an educational polis, it is perhaps more aptly described as a kind of 'city ... made up of speakers learning to speak and helping one another to speak; the real city is a city in words' (GEORGE KATEB, 1994, p.769)<sup>135</sup>. To reiterate then, the educational miniature polis is a place of thinking and judging, of speaking and acting, of learning and of possible improvement, but not one of actual political speech or political judgement.

What does it mean to describe the EAP classroom as a miniature polis for budding citizens? In short, it means it is a place for the exchange of views. While the classroom is not part of the political realm in which 'the doing of great deeds and the speaking of great words' ([HC] 1998, p.173) have truly public consequences, it is nevertheless a space in which words and deeds can occur and, because this is an educational space, practised and reflected upon. Moreover, it is a relatively cushioned space<sup>136</sup>: it is not a political space but serves as a rehearsal space of appearances for possible subsequent political activity.

Such a highly democratic practice is not easily achieved:

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<sup>135</sup> George Kateb is here describing the almost polis as described in almost utopian terms by Arendt in her essay *Philosophy and politics* ([PP/SR] 1990); a slightly different version of this essay - *Socrates* - can be found in *Promise of politics* edited by Jerome Kohn ([S/PP] 2005).

<sup>136</sup> One could reasonably ask whether the university classroom more generally is sufficiently cushioned for minority groups, or whether, like the ancient Greek polis, it continues to exclude some at the expense of others.

If such an understanding - and action inspired by it - were to take place without the help of the statesman, then the prerequisite would be for each citizen to be articulate enough to show his opinion in its truthfulness and therefore to understand his fellow citizens. Socrates seems to have believed that the political function of the philosopher was to help establish this kind of common world, built on the understanding of friendship, in which no rulership is needed ([S/PP] 2005, p.18).

How might such an environment in which ‘ordinary citizens learn to see the world from the other point of view, acknowledging that each of them has a unique position’ (SHMUEL LEDERMAN, 2016, p.736) be brought about? Lederman’s unpacking of the implications are useful here:

In order to achieve that they would have, first, to be able to distinguish what is a prejudice, a ‘windegg’, and what is truthful in their own opinions; second, to be articulate enough to communicate the truths they arrive at to their fellow citizens; third, to understand the position of others (SHMUEL LEDERMAN, 2016, p.736).

In other words, if the EAP classroom is to operate as a space for the meaningful expression and exchange of opinions which affords participants a perspectival understanding of the world, then the participants in the room will need to be ‘articulate enough’ (through learning and doing) to speak to one another, and skilled (also through learning and doing) in listening to and acknowledging the positions of others. This, as mentioned in **CHAPTER 3**, also demands a certain amount of courage; and because this is a classroom, there will be lots of looking before leaping, as it were (but also, to keep it real, some leaping before looking<sup>137</sup>). They may also need practice in learning to think through opinions (their own as well as those of others) and in distinguishing these from prejudices and contradictions.

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<sup>137</sup> This is a reference to W. H. Auden’s poem, *Leap before you look* (W. H. AUDEN, 1966, p.200). See also **PAGE 2** and **PAGE 225**.

As argued in **CHAPTER 3**, critical thinking is not only something to be used in relation to external ideas and concepts but something that should be internalised because ‘it is precisely by applying critical standards to one’s own thought that one learns the art of critical thought’ ([LKPP] 1992, p.42). Critical thinking then is a matter that involves exposing one’s thoughts to the test of free and open examination, an examination that can be undertaken by oneself and (probably more effectively) with others. Critical thinking is an essentially negative process of purging from one’s thinking *windeggs* and prejudices and relies on the twin Socratic principles of knowing oneself and of being in agreement with oneself:

- know thyself [‘only through knowing what appears to me ... can I ever understand truth’ ([S/PP] 2005, p.19)]
- be free of contradictions [‘It is better to be in disagreement with the whole world than, being one, to be in disagreement with myself’ ([S/PP] 2005, p.18)]

The first injunction to know thyself concerns ‘knowing what appears to me’:

only through knowing what appears to me - only to me, and therefore forever related to my own concrete existence - can I ever understand truth ([S/PP] 2005, p.19).

As Arendt explains, this is not a reference to any kind of absolute truth but to an individual’s ‘comprehension of the world’ ([S/PP] 2005, p.14) that while different for every person has in common the fact that it is of the same world:

The assumption was that the world opens up differently to every man according to his position in it; and that the ‘sameness’ of the world, its commonness ... or ‘objectivity’ ... resides in the fact that the same world opens up to everyone and that despite all differences between men and their positions in the world - and consequently their *doxai* (opinions) - ‘both you and I are human’ ([S/PP] 2005, p.14).

Knowing thyself in other words involves discovering a truthful comprehension of the world, and this requires work, by oneself and with the aid of others. As George Kateb puts it: 'One must submit to examination, but one must also practice self-examination' (1994, p.773).

The second of Socrates' precepts spells out more precisely what speaking truthfully entails. Essentially, it is a matter of being 'in agreement' with oneself and of not saying 'contradictory things' ([S/PP] 2005, p.19). As discussed in **CHAPTER 3**, this idea of non-contradiction is related to plurality in that it 'comes from the fact that each of us, "being one," can at the same time talk with himself ... as though he were two' ([S/PP] 2005, pp.19-20). Ultimately, the person who is not in agreement with himself is unreliable, to himself and to others, and so not truthful.

The other and equally important side of this particular coin consists in the Socratic insight that 'nobody can know beforehand the other's *doxa*' ([S/PP] 2005, p.15):

I know that I do not have the truth for everybody; I cannot know the other fellow's truth except by asking him and thereby learning his *doxa*, which reveals itself to him in distinction from all others ([S/PP] 2005, p.19).

Given this, speaking with others, and particularly with someone who operates like Socrates in the drawing out of opinions, is necessary if we wish to 'make sure of the other's position in the common world' ([S/PP] 2005, p.15).

Of course, this has implications for the EAP students themselves but also for teacher and the management of the teaching space. In her essay on Socrates ([S/PP] 2005), Arendt presents us with a figure that is useful in this regard. The Socrates Arendt presents was not an educator and 'did not claim to be wise' ([S/PP] 2005, p.11). His mission was different: 'Socrates did not

want to educate the citizens so much as he wanted to improve their *doxai*' [opinions] ([S/PP] 2005, p.15), that is, to make their opinions more truthful. *Doxa* is the expression in speech of how the world appears to a person from his or her unique and distinctive point of view. It is essentially an expression of a person's uniqueness. Or as Arendt explains: '*doxa* was the formulation in speech of what *dokei moi*, that is, "of what appears to me"' ([S/PP] 2005, p.14).

Thus what Socrates attempts is to release the opinion or *doxa* 'that each individual carries but cannot quite send out without assistance' (GEORGE KATEB, 1994, p.769); for individuals benefit from some kind of support, typically in the form of one or more (Socratic) interlocutors, to discover what 'lies inside themselves, awaiting expressive birth and realisation' (GEORGE KATEB, 1994, p.769), that is, what their unique perspectives on the world are. To accomplish this Socrates acted as a *midwife* ([S/PP] 2005), helping 'others give birth to what they themselves thought anyway, to find the truth in their *doxa*' ([S/PP] 2005, p.14).

This is not to say that people cannot do this by themselves, of course: Arendt's conception of thinking as a two-in-one dialogue with oneself is an internalised version of the same activity. The point however is that it can be difficult by oneself for 'nobody can know by himself and without further effort the inherent truth of his own opinion' ([S/PP] 2005, p.15); our opinions need to be tested and this is probably most usefully done in the presence of actual others and not just with oneself (though the idea is that we can develop this capacity for perspectival thinking, what Arendt terms *enlarged* or *representative thinking*<sup>138</sup>, through practice). As Kateb succinctly puts it: 'One needs help, as an adult, to individuate oneself' (1994, p.771).

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<sup>138</sup> See **CHAPTER 3** for a discussion of these synonymous terms which Arendt uses to describe a kind of imaginative thinking that consists in having present in one's mind as many people's standpoints as possible while considering a given issue.

As EAP as described in this thesis is a radical conservative undertaking and operates in a third present space between past and future, its curriculum is grounded in the present. What this amounts to is, to appropriate Peter Euben's phrase, 'an attempt to think through the present without being presentistic' (2000, p.162). Hence, EAP should be happy for its content to reflect the academic practices and conventions that to the best of the field's knowledge are those valued by academia (as with pragmatic EAP), as this will provide the students the preparation they require; and while radical conservative EAP is not averse to interrogating these practices in light of the experiences of the people in the room, it resists, *contra* critical EAP, the urge to counter them with 'an overall meta-narrative of how the world should be' (CHRISTOPHER J. MACALLISTER, 2016, p.290). As noted earlier, Macallister's response to the 'grand narrative of liberation' (2016,p.291) that characterised critical EAP in its beginnings, is to suggest a more localised approach (using, for example, locally-produced coursebooks)<sup>139</sup>:

This is not to suggest that questions of social justice and students' rights in the academy are less important, but that the starting point needs to be an engagement with the local positions of students rather than a universal critical narrative that risks imposing its own regime of truth upon the EAP classroom (CHRISTOPHER J. MACALLISTER, 2016, p.291).

In practice then, radical conservative EAP, like Macallister's second wave critical EAP, is more of a local practice and focuses on the present, and on the people in the room, and on their thinking and judging, speaking and acting. The conservative aspect of radical conservative EAP consists in giving attention to the needs of the students *vis-à-vis* a teaching of the requirements of the academy, requirements that are considered to be of value and so 'worth studying'

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<sup>139</sup> Prominent examples in the field of localised critical approaches can be found in B. Kumaravadivelu (2003) and in Suresh Canagarajah (2014). See also **PAGE 227**.



(LOVISA BERGDAHL AND ELISABET LANGMANN, 2018, p.373); its radical aspect lies in its refusal to impose upon its students narratives of liberation. Instead, it focuses on the present and attends to the students in the here and now, and focuses specifically on those practices of speaking and judging which constitute the public realm.

### **The character of the educative miniature polis**

The radical conservative classroom is an educational space of appearances for the development of those Arendtian political skills and abilities of thinking and acting. Organised as a miniature polis, the classroom affords EAP students as budding citizens opportunities 'not only to think on their own but also to work together and to act "in concert"' (Wouter Pols and Joop Berding, 2018, p.47). Through the creation of opportunities for educational action, the EAP teacher aims to develop the confidence and courage of English-learning international students to think for themselves, engage with the perspectives of others, express their own opinions, and argue and deliberate with one another.

It is then 'a space devoted to thoughtfulness' (Jon Nixon, 2020a, p.60): a space in which participants are given time to think by themselves and with others, and all in the company of a teacher who acts with Socratic skill to help with the delivery of these thoughts; and it is also a space devoted to speech and action: a space of appearances into which participants insert themselves with their words and deeds, give their opinions and take initiatives.

The chief characteristics of the radical conservative EAP classroom organised as a miniature polis are as follows:

- It provides **space** for the student's **voice**: 'accepting that the students' beliefs, knowledge, experiences, concerns and desires are valid content in the language classroom' (SCOTT THORBURY, 2005, p.3).
- It is a space for **protected rehearsal** and for the exercise of **courage**: every participant as a budding citizen may be 'called upon to give his or her own opinion, to insert him or herself into that miniature polis' (ELISABETH YOUNG-BRUEHL AND JEROME KOHN, 2001, p.255) since 'The sense of danger must not disappear'<sup>140</sup> completely. Nevertheless, because this is an *educative* miniature polis, extensive use is made of risk-lowering strategies such as scaffolding, task repetition, and of feedback and feedforward; simply put, opportunities are created both for looking before leaping as well as for leaping before looking<sup>141</sup>.
- It is a space for **thinking** and **reflecting**: the teacher ensures time and space is provided for students to think, both by themselves (to think through thoughts and check them for contradictions) and with others (to test them out, get feedback on them, and improve them); and the teacher works Socratically to help students better understand themselves, refine and better express these thoughts.
- It is a space for **speaking** and **acting** in the presence of others: EAP students are given a host of opportunities for speaking and taking the initiative, including the following: for spontaneous speech in conversation and discussion; for planned and improvised speech in class debates; and for rehearsed and polished speech in presentations. Emphasis is also placed on speaking in different situations (monologues, dialogues, debates, discussions, and conversations) and in different registers (from the social and the informal to the formal and the academic), and on speaking *the right words ooh at the right time*<sup>142</sup>.
- It is a space that respects **nativity** and that **expects the unexpected**: the surprising is allowed to take place. The surprising may be deliberately engineered by the teacher in the form of a surprising word, image, or object<sup>143</sup>, or it may simply be encouraged to emerge through the introduction of risk-taking activities such as conversation and discussion.
- It **introduces the new to the old**: the tutor brings into the classroom objects of the world with which the students need to be acquainted. These objects could be matters of local or general interest (such as, in my context, Scottish expressions and customs) to more academic matters

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<sup>140</sup> The first line of W. H. Auden's poem, *Leap before you look* (W. H. AUDEN, 1966, p.200).

<sup>141</sup> Referencing the same Auden poem.

<sup>142</sup> A line from the song *Baby can i hold you* by Tracy Chapman (TRACY CHAPMAN, 2015).

<sup>143</sup> Recently, for example, I brought into the classroom a photograph I had taken of a nearby shop named *Thistle do nicely* and asked the students to 'explain' it.

(texts from a range of disciplines and from a range of academic contexts, local as well as international).

- It respects **plurality** and so is **perspectival**: it encourages the students to visit and engage with the various perspectives of others who occupy different standpoints on the world. Activities such as scenarios (see below) and role-playing that entail the imagining of and engaging with the perspectives of others are encouraged. As well as facilitating the discovery of and engagement with the local perspectives of those in the room, students are encouraged through the reading and discussion of texts (academic and otherwise) to visit those who are temporally or physically distant and so engage with the diversity of views within, across, and outwith academic disciplines.
- It encourages a **local criticality**: as B. Kumaravadivelu writes, a critical and / or local dimension can easily be introduced into classroom practice. He suggests, for example, critiquing coursebooks by 'asking learners to discuss how topics could be dealt with differently, from the point of view of their own linguistic and cultural perspective' (2003, p.166). Similarly, Suresh Canagarajah offers guidance 'for practising an EAP that creatively merges local and global concerns' (2014, p.93). This 'pedagogy of academic multilingualism' encourages students to engage 'with dominant conventions from the standpoint of one's traditions and values' (2014, p.101).

### **An indicative activity type**

I conclude with an indicative activity type from *Study speaking: a course in spoken English for academic purposes* (Kenneth Anderson, Joan Maclean and Tony Lynch, 2004). The book offers useful practice in a whole range of speaking activities such as discussions, presentations, and class seminars; but it also includes *scenarios*. This more unusual activity manages to offer educational practice of several political skills.

As first proposed by Robert J. Di Pietro (1987), scenarios are communicative role-playing activities based on real-life and often tense situations (for example, a dispute over repairs between a landlord and tenant) which encourage learners to use language purposefully in communicating with others in order to arrive at some kind of resolution. Students are assigned

roles (such as landlord and tenant) that require them to implement game plans through dialogues, though they are always themselves - no acting is required. The key to successful performance in a scenario is a combination of skills of persuasion and compromise, plus flexibility under pressure. In their book *Study speaking*, the authors take the scenario idea and apply it to a more academic context, making the situations and roles typical of those found in academia (looking for accommodation; failing to meet an essay deadline). As the authors explain, activities such as these that replicate actual situations are relatively uncommon in language learning courses:

The potential for confrontation results in interaction that reflects the unpredictability of such conversation. *Scenarios* provide experience in activities that require a flexible response under social pressure - a type that is often missing from the language classroom (KENNETH ANDERSON, JOAN MACLEAN AND TONY LYNCH, 2004, p.9).

As outlined in *Study speaking*, each scenario involves three main stages. In the first, **rehearsal**, the learners are assigned to one of two role groups (Role A or B), which separately discuss possible routes to their goal. In the second, **performance**, pairs of students from each role-group play out the scenario, keeping as closely as possible to the overall strategy that their group has planned. The final stage, **debriefing**, gives the class the chance to assess how well they have done, to suggest possible improvements or alternatives, and to focus on language form.

As well as providing students with various opportunities to practise speaking (and different types of speaking: planned and spontaneous) and further refine their speaking, scenarios push students towards engaging with a variety of perspectives other than their own, thereby helping

them to experience even if on a minor level the kind of imaginative visiting Arendt describes in her account of judgement.

In order for the EAP classroom to operate effectively as a miniature polis, as a place where students can speak and act, a facilitating teaching approach is necessary. We cannot know how the world appears to others other than through asking questions and listening. Hence the importance of talking things through for oneself and one's interlocutor. As mentioned above, one educative or Socratic task of the EAP tutor then could be expressed in terms of helping students individuate themselves and this requires a teaching approach that affords them this space. Such an approach in English teaching is that offered by *dogme*, Scott Thornbury's back-to-basics movement inspired by the *Dogme 95* film-makers collective:

It all started when Scott Thornbury teased out an analogy between the Dogme 95 film-makers collective and the current state of ELT. Dogme 95 (spearheaded by Lars von Trier) vowed to rescue cinema from its slavish allegiance to a Hollywood model of film-making, with its addiction to fantasy and special effects. ELT, Thornbury argued, had become similarly dependent on a constant fix of materials and technology, at the expense of the learning possibilities that could be harvested simply from what goes on 'within and between' the people in the room (to borrow Stevick's phrase). ELT needed a similar kind of 'rescue action' (LUKE MEDDINGS AND SCOTT THORNBURY, 2003, [no pagination]).

Eschewing a dependence on published textbooks but relying instead on the people in the room and the conversational communication that occurs in the classroom [FIGURE 8], the *dogme* approach focuses on emergent language (language the learners produce); it is materials light (without coursebooks); and it is conversation driven (teaching is a dialogue) (LUKE MEDDINGS AND SCOTT THORNBURY, 2009). It is an approach that in removing the clutter of books and technology, offers the learner space. It is this respect for space and time which makes this approach ideal

for the emergence and maintenance of the educational miniature polis for the rehearsal of political skills that students may or may not decide to put into action in their futures.

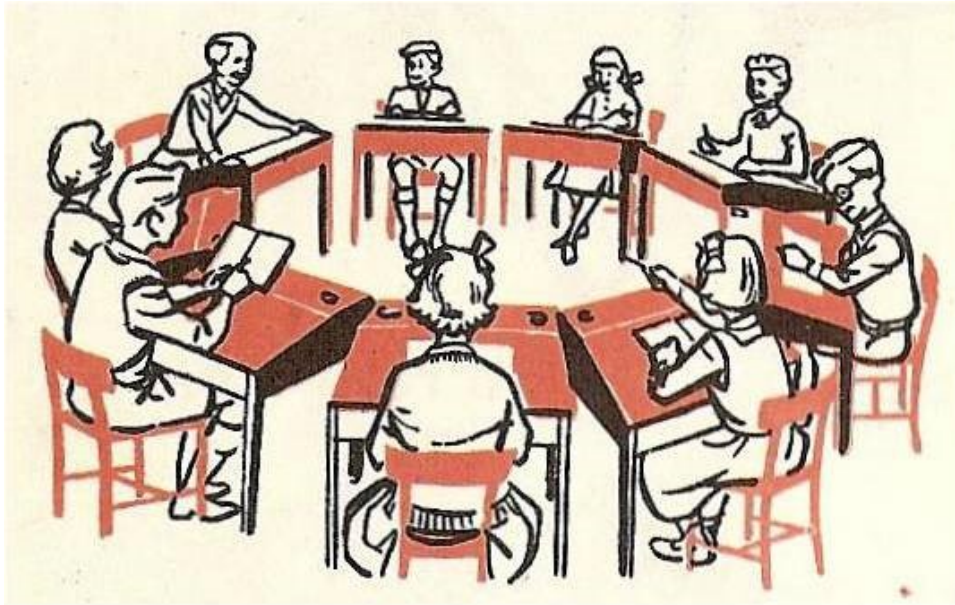


FIGURE 8: A DOGME CLASSROOM (SCOTT THORNBURY, 2010)

# CONCLUSION

## CONCLUSION

The aim of this thesis has been to offer a re-reading of some aspects of my professional context, the teaching of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) at the University of Edinburgh, in light of my reading of the work of the political thinker Hannah Arendt. Whilst on the face of it these two very different areas of interest would seem to have little in common, their interaction has proven to be both stimulating and illuminating, personally and professionally. In the hope of recovering, after a number of years on the job, an understanding of how EAP is meaningfully related to the wider world of education and politics, I found in the ‘rich and strange’ ([WB/MDT] 1973, p.206) work of Arendt the resources to help me consider anew how and why EAP might have a role to play in the political (in the Arendtian sense of acting and judging) education of English-learning international students.

The thesis proceeded on the basis of exploration and application. In **CHAPTER 1**, I set out the three contexts for the writing of the thesis: my personal life and interests; the professional context of EAP; and my intellectual interest in Arendt. This was followed by a discussion over two chapters of some of the key ideas of Arendt, with **CHAPTER 2** focusing on Arendt and education and **CHAPTER 3** on Arendt on politics. In **CHAPTER 4**, I returned to the subject of EAP and sought to apply to it some of these previously explored ideas. Now, and before offering a final conclusion, I include a summary of the main points made in these earlier chapters.

I referred to there being two main views within the field of EAP as to its main pedagogic purpose. Pragmatic EAP proceeds on the basis that it is there to support English-learning international students in mastering the various linguistic (and to a degree behavioural) norms



of the academy; critical EAP, on the other hand, encourages the questioning and challenging of these norms. I argued that while pragmatic EAP is naïve in not recognising the political implications of its position, the approach taken by politically-aware critical EAP is one that risks imposing upon its participants its own particular 'régime of truth' (MICHEL FOUCAULT, 1980, p.131).

In considering the relevance of Arendt to the thesis, I drew attention to the uniqueness of her political thinking and in particular to those spatial and theatrical elements which have resonated with many educationalists keen to 'apply' them to education. The problem I pointed out was that while Arendt is clear on what the political purposes of education are, she saw education and politics as not just different but as antithetical activities and warned against their conflation: as in when education is reduced to 'an instrument of politics'; or where politics is regarded 'as a form of education' ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.173) .

Arendt's two works on education describe it as a matter of schooling, the activity of which consists in the gradual introduction of the young into the adult political world. Education is seen as conservative in nature since its function is to protect (to protect the child from the world and the world from the child), but given this protection entails fostering 'what is new and revolutionary in every child' ([CE/BPF] 2006, p.189), her position is perhaps better described as conservative and radical (or radical conservative). I ended this chapter with a discussion of a very different educational context, that of adult and university education. Referring to Arendt's own practices as a university teacher, her former students described Arendt as creating a kind of miniature polis in which students should speak and act as budding

citizens in a polis. The main points I made here were to highlight the unique place universities are afforded in society and to reiterate the dangers of mixing politics with education.

I divided my exploration of Arendt the political thinker into three sections. In the first of these I discussed Arendt's understanding of the polis and the importance she attaches to politics as a space of appearances in which we appear to (and may be judged by) others when we speak and act. In the second, I looked at Arendt's ideas on thinking and on political and perspectival judgement: critical thinking is described as helping to clear the ground for judging, and judging in turn as the ability to think representatively or with an enlarged mentality, that is, from various points of view; as developed in **CHAPTER 4**, both critical thinking and political judgment may be improved by active participation in the talkative polis. I ended this chapter with a discussion of speech and action. Action involves our ability 'to take an initiative, to begin ... to set something into motion' ([HC] 1998, p.177), and part of action, arguably even the determining part, is speech: through speech, we not only express ourselves but reveal and individuate ourselves.

Neither appropriating Arendt's educational thinking for political purposes nor her political thinking for educational purposes, I have instead looked at her thinking on these matters in relation to the educational and political purposes of EAP. In **CHAPTER 4**, I tried to make explicit how the various educational and political ideas discussed in the thesis can thus be 'applied' to EAP. Positioning EAP at the point towards the end of education and at the beginning of politics, I suggested there are both educational and political ideas in Arendt's work that can be usefully thought about in relation to EAP. From her educational thinking, I borrowed the idea of education as an introduction into the world and heeded too her warning against its

politicisation. From her work on politics, I borrowed the idea of the polis as a dedicated place for action and judgement, that is, as a space for speaking and acting with others and as a space for listening to and learning about the perspectives of others.

Given its position between education and politics, I described EAP in Arendtian terms as a radical conservative endeavour and one that while occupying an educational space has an important role to play in the political education of its participants. This approach to EAP involves taking a local and bottom-up critical view of the academy (unlike pragmatic EAP) but does not seek (unlike critical EAP) to impose upon its participants a vision of how the world should be. Instead, it offers a controlled and educative present space for students to develop their critical thinking skills; to develop their ability to think representatively through listening to the views of others; and to practise speaking and acting with others. I ended by suggesting that such an educative miniature polis could be realised in the classroom with the aid of a dogme-style teaching approach that focuses on creating and nurturing a space for the people in the room to think and speak and act.

This reconsideration of the pedagogic purposes of EAP has thus resulted in 1) an understanding of EAP that differs in significant ways from that articulated by the two main contemporary approaches to the subject; and 2) a conception of the EAP classroom as a kind of educational miniature polis for the rehearsal of political skills, a space in which international students are recognised both as newcomers to the English-speaking academic world and as budding acting and judging citizens in the world at large.

And while I envisage such an EAP to be a good in itself, it may even be the case that the experience of acting with others in this kind of miniature polis affords international students a measure of happiness such that they will want to create anew such spaces [FIGURE 9].

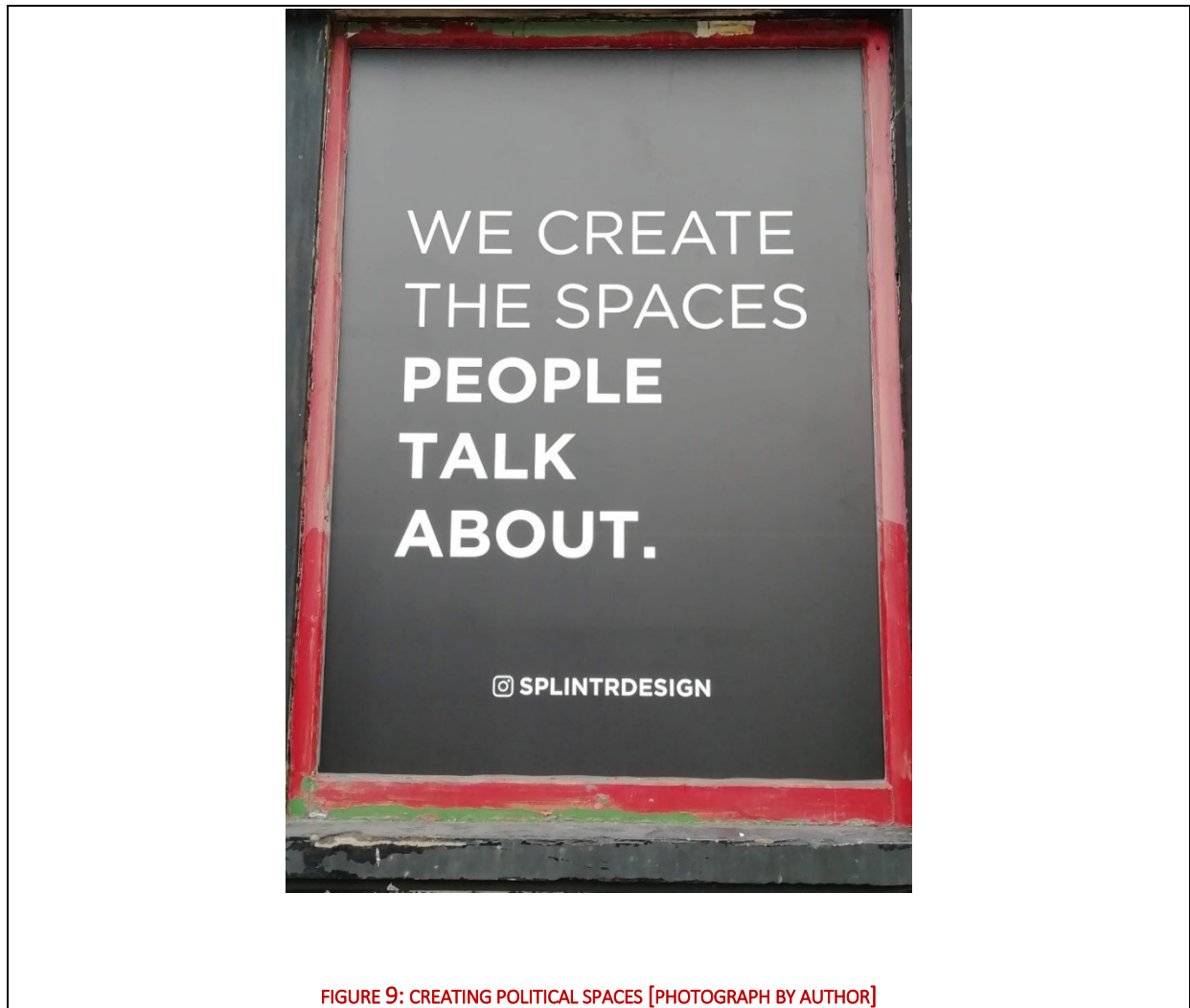


FIGURE 9: CREATING POLITICAL SPACES [PHOTOGRAPH BY AUTHOR]

In other words, as Arendt writes in *On revolution*:

The joys of public happiness and the responsibilities for public business would then become the share of those few from all walks of life who have a taste for public freedom and cannot be 'happy' without it ([OR] 2006, p.271).

Finally, while my suggestions here concerning pedagogic introductions into political participation have been applied to my own particular context of EAP, they could perhaps be applied more widely to higher education. For example, Zena Hitz (2020) in her book *Lost in thought: the hidden pleasures of an intellectual life* has recently raised concerns about the increasing ‘opinionization’ of higher education, that is, ‘the reduction of thinking and perception to simple slogans or prefabricated positions’ (2020, p.167). One of the reasons for this state of affairs, she argues, is the disappearance from higher education of person-to-person teaching. Instead of the echo chambers that are currently encouraged, higher education needs more intimate settings that allow for more forthright conversation (2020). The educative miniature polis I describe here is not an echo chamber; rather it is a *playful* space based on friendship and good faith. As Arendt writes in her essay *The eggs speak up*:

Extreme seriousness can become a real threat to the ease which so primarily characterizes all free societies ... All grace and all good faith in social gatherings are lost if analysis of ulterior motives or the search for possible sinister consequences is permitted to terrorize the free, and therefore sometimes playful and even irresponsible, minds of free men ([ESU/EU] 1994, p.281).

Such a playful space may prove useful to the field of EAP but also to other spaces, educational or otherwise, more widely. For Arendt, the people and the world are not the same: the world is that which ‘lies between people’ ([OHDT/MDT] 1973, p.12), and this in-between place is cultivated and improved through friendship, critical thought, and speaking and acting with others.

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