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# Plato, Arendt and the Conditions of Politics

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**Abstract:** I will expose and discuss Arendt's genealogical account of the contemporary understanding of the human affairs and her critiques to a technocratic conception of politics which nowadays holds sway. Politics was for Arendt originally meant to be the place where men can manifest their individuality through speeches and deeds which can affect the life of the community, as actually happened in the public sphere of the polis, where citizens could meet and discuss as equals. Starting from Plato, the philosophical thought, modelled on the idea of logical and natural necessity, refused to acknowledge the peculiar status of public life and looked for universally valid criteria and ends according to which the city or the state should be shaped anew. The politician was no more a citizen taking part into public confrontation and became a skilled technician who can operate according to his abstract principles: the core moment of politics, rather than debate, becomes legislation. The existence of a plurality of men is obscured by the concept of a human nature which should allow to know, foresee and manipulate human behaviour. While praising Arendt's rehabilitation of participative politics and positive liberty, I will criticise her dismissal of the traditional framework insofar it remains necessary to edify and maintain a well-articulated institutional and social context which allows freedom to be possible without disappearing in a short time or to remain a privilege of a number of happy few.

**Keywords:** Hannah Arendt, genealogy of politics, instrumental reason

## 1. Introduction

Arendt famously blamed Plato for having started a philosophical tradition which, by subjugating politics to ontology, has radically misunderstood the nature of politics and more generally of the human world<sup>1</sup>. In doing so, Plato would have implicitly contributed to the disappearance of the public space which characterized the experience of the Greek *polis*. Arendt strongly opposes the understanding of politics as a problem-solving technique that aims at conforming the social reality to a predetermined standard, which science should be able to dictate. Politics, according to this framework, should be a matter only for experts who have been taught how to implement the common good. This technocratic conception of politics has become quite commonly held. We see, in Arendt's words «the body of peoples and political communities in the image of a family whose everyday affairs have to be taken care of by a gigantic, nation-wide administra-

tion of housekeeping»<sup>2</sup>. Echoes of this vision can be easily found in the rhetoric of 'there is no alternative'<sup>3</sup> that is often employed nowadays to defend (and to put outside of a serious debate) neoliberal-oriented policies: governments, in order not to fail, should do 'homework', take advice from commissions of 'wise men', and follow prescribed 'recipes' and 'cures'. The most important decisions, as a much celebrated former Italian Prime Minister once stated, must be «protected from the electoral process»<sup>4</sup>.

Far from being just the product of the recent circumstances, this approach to politics has a very long history. Arendt's genealogical account traces it back to Plato: by showing that this conception of politics originated from a serious misunderstanding of the peculiar status, meaning and goals of the human affairs, Arendt wishes to rehabilitate a different understanding of politics<sup>5</sup>, which was experienced in the life of the Greek *polis* (and, in modern times, in sporadic resurgence of participative experiences during revolutions). Politics was not meant to be a profession exercised by an *élite* of skilled technicians, but was conceived as the possibility of every citizen to realise himself as an individual recognised by a community of peers. Such an experience could be secured only by the participation to public life, where men could manifest themselves as free individualities able to display their differences on a ground of equality.

## 2. The Stages of the Human Condition

We can have a better understanding of these statements by keeping in mind Arendt's phenomenology of practical life as she describes it in her magnum opus, *The Human Condition* (1958). For Arendt practical life is made up of three different categories which reflects all the possible interactions men can establish between them, nature and the world: labour, work and action.

1) With labour Arendt means the activities required for the self-preservation and reproduction of human life. Through labour, men struggle to satisfy their needs through in order to simply preserve their biological functions as other animals do. They act as slaves of a natural necessity. Their life is entirely spent in the meaningless cycle of a process which alternates «toiling and resting, labouring and consuming, with the same happy and purposeless regularity with which day and night and life and death follow each other»<sup>6</sup>. Thus, everyone simply behaves as a member of an animal species, to the point that Arendt employs the expression *animal laborans* (labouring animal) to define this way of life.

The forms of organisation established with the purpose of securing the survival and the propagation of the species presuppose from the beginning a hierarchical structure and the division of roles. This was the case of family, which Aristotle defined as the first natural society: men are supposed to earn nourishments and women to generate and rise children, and for this reason, women must be subordinated to men<sup>7</sup>.

2) But human life is not entirely determined by nature: the form of intercourse between man and nature does not consist just in toil and consumption, but also in a purposive transformation of the environment and in the construction of lasting items, which allow us to emancipate ourselves from the rhythms dictated by nature itself. Men can, for example, build shelters and walls to protect themselves from bad weather and wild animals. Against the instability of a cyclical nature, which destroys everything it gives life to, the *homo faber* edifies a stable and solid reality where human existence can safely take place. Unlike animals, men are able to build tools and artefacts to serve their purposes. The fabrication process involves the transformation of matter according to projects, models and purposes, which the artisan has in mind. He begins with an idea and ends with a product as compliant as possible to the imagined object. While the *animal laborans* is slave of necessity, the *homo faber* is fully master of himself and of his work, which follows directly from his plan. Matter can be employed as a means to craft instruments, and these instruments, in turn, can serve our purposes. Nature is shaped by the *homo faber*, «lord and master of the whole earth»<sup>8</sup> unto a world of items which have for us a signification as employable tools.

Although the *homo faber* can give purpose to the world, he is still unable to find a meaning for himself: the categories of instrumentality and of utility, through which he interprets things, suggest a *regressio ad infinitum* in the search of a final end, which should not become, in turn, a means for something else. *Homo faber*'s mind-set cannot provide this final end: he can employ his creative force either to empower the *animal laborans*, by offering him the instruments to increase his productivity and to make him dispose of more and more consumption goods, or to predispose the stage on which the last component of the human condition can take place: action.

3) While in the sphere of labour men simply behave like all the other animals, and in the domain of work they are barely executors of plans whose ultimate goals remain unknown and unquestioned, in the sphere of action they can finally appear as individuals, equal and different at the same time. Once they are emancipated from the tyranny of natural needs and protected from a hostile environment, men can finally reunite as equals in a community where nobody has to govern or be governed. Now existence receives a meaning in so far as each man is recognised by others not merely as something fungible and interchangeable, but as a peculiar individual, bearer of a unique point of view upon a common reality<sup>9</sup>. According to Arendt, men are not instantiations of a common human nature, but, when they are freed from natural necessity and do not act in a exclusively instrumental behaviour, a plurality of persons, whose difference emerges because they act and talk differently from each other. In being not qualified by properties or skills, individuals can reveals

themselves only through what they do and say. Action is the power that enables each and every man to start something new, unexpected and unpredictable, and which makes history irreducible to a set of laws or to a pre-determined process:

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. The fact that man is capable of action means that the unexpected can be expected from him, that he is able to perform what is infinitely improbable. And this again is possible only because each man is unique, so that with each birth something uniquely new comes into the world. With respect to this somebody who is unique it can be truly said that nobody was there before<sup>10</sup>.

While the effect of work is always predictable, an action never completely reflects the intentions of the agent because it immediately falls «into an already existing web of human relationships, with its innumerable, conflicting wills and intentions».

Since action is unpredictable, we can just form an opinion on what is actually happening and going to happen, without any possibility to appeal to an apodictic certainty and truth. We can judge situations only from our point of view, which is also unique as our faculty to act. We can only form opinions (*doxa*, from *dokei moi*, 'it seems to me') about social facts: the same reality can actually appear very different to different observers. Our perspective can be enriched only by the confrontation with others by means of speech, which becomes crucial for a better understanding of the social. As Kant already observed<sup>11</sup>, freedom of thought without freedom of speech would be meaningless:

Political thought is representative. I form an opinion by considering a given issue from different viewpoints, by making present to my mind the stand-points of those who are absent; that is, I represent them. [...] The more people's standpoints I have present in my mind while I am pondering a given issue, and the better I can imagine how I would feel and think if I were in their place, the stronger will be my capacity for representative thinking and the more valid my final conclusion, my opinion<sup>12</sup>.

In absence of an unequivocal truth, we lack of a criterion to impose our point of view to others: we can just try to persuade them by «courting their judgment», Arendt says quoting Kant's *Critique of Judgment*<sup>13</sup>, namely by suggesting that our perspective can better reflect the state of things we are both observing, but without being able to offer a definitive proof<sup>14</sup>. In so far we treat men as human beings, and not as tools, we cannot use neither logic (obviously as long as we are discussing human affairs and not mathematics and natural sciences) nor violence to make them agree with us, but we have to persuade them. Influencing people through persuasion is the essence of power, which is therefore the opposite of violence. If men were all the same, Arendt argues, there would be no need to communicate our thoughts nor to act in order to show others who we are:

Human plurality, the basic condition of both action and speech has the twofold character of equality and distinction. If men were not equal, they could neither understand each other and

those who came before them nor plan for the future and foresee the needs of those who will come after them. If men were not distinct, each human being distinguished from any other who is, was, or will ever be, they would need neither speech nor action to make themselves understood<sup>15</sup>.

Deeds and speeches cannot for Arendt be reduced to mere instrumental or strategic behaviour: in that case, she says, they would be easily replaced by violence and by a purely symbolic and formalized language. We engage in them because they allow us to reveal ourselves, and in this consists for Arendt the greatest self-fulfilment men can achieve: «we believe that the joys and gratifications of free company are to be preferred to the doubtful pleasures of holding dominion»<sup>16</sup>.

The distinction between work and action, *poiesis* and *praxis* lies, as Aristotle said, in the fact that the first is persecuted in order to achieve something else, the second for its own sake. We can renounce to labour (the citizens of the *polis* could do this thanks to the institution of slavery), and to work and still be considered proper human beings, but a life deprived of the faculty to act and talk does not differ from the life of a beast or the functioning of a machine. The Greeks understood the necessity of action for a meaningful life and instituted the *polis* as public space for this purpose. The Greeks considered as really human only those who, despising their natural existence, «prefer immortal fame to mortal things». The others «content with whatever pleasures nature will yield them, live and die like animals». Politics was the realm where everyone could reveal himself and achieve immortality through great deeds and speeches, thus artificially securing for the individual what nature had reserved only for the species. For the Greeks the *polis* was «first of all their guarantee against the futility of individual life, the space protected against this futility and reserved for the relative permanence, if not immortality, of mortals»<sup>17</sup>. Men could show themselves only in the stable background edified by the *homo faber*, and then be remembered by another kind of *homo faber*, the author of poems and songs about the glory of heroes.

The civic virtue which deeds and speeches can express was well distinguished from a technical skill or a particular knowledge, and regarded as a possession of every man, as it is well attested by the myth told by Protagoras in the homonymous platonic dialogue, where Zeus recommends Hermes to give everybody the political art<sup>18</sup>.

Plurality, unpredictability of human action, the epistemological status of political judgments, the consensual nature of power, the use of persuasion in order to achieve it and the quest for immortality through action are thus the characteristics of the political life Arendt traces in the *polis*. Plato would have waged war against these features of public life in his project of a philosophical reform of politics, a war which was indeed well motivated by the peculiar status of the contemplative life philosophy had discovered and by the relation it had to engage with practical life.

### 3. The Nature of Philosophy

Philosophy was born for Arendt, which follows

Plato's and Aristotle's own account of the origin of this discipline, out of an act of wonder in respect of the existence of things. It is a solitary act through which the thinker confronts himself with the meaning of the whole universe. Philosophy begins with an awareness of this invisible harmonious order of the *kosmos*, which is manifest in the midst of the familiar visibilities as though these had become transparent<sup>19</sup>. The philosopher suddenly realises that existence of things requires a necessary and eternal ground, otherwise it would be impossible. The task the philosopher decides to accomplish is to make this necessary ground, which Parmenides first called Being, accessible to reason. But in order to do this, the philosopher has to turn away from the world of the simple opinion, which accept appearances as such, without questioning them and without needing an ultimate ground to justify them. He must turn his gaze to what is eternal and to what is closer to eternity: the cyclical motions of celestial bodies and the unchangeable necessity of mathematical objects. The philosopher's gift, writes Plato, is to grasp «the eternal and unchangeable», while the others keep wandering «in the region of the many and variable»<sup>20</sup>.

The philosopher discovers another way to secure immortality that is not exposed to the risk of being forgotten, unlike the memory action leaves before itself. He will reject the glory the city is able to grant to those who contribute to its common life and will try to assimilate himself to the eternity of the highest realities.

While the agent aspires to leave a mark into the world history, to impress the seal of his linear existence into the cycle of nature, the philosopher completely annihilates his individuality to become one with the universal order. He accepts it as it is, and glorifies it as necessary. Instead of the instable motion and unpredictability of action, he chooses the everlasting quiet that is proper of contemplation.

Differently from *doxa*, truth requires no collective effort in order to be discovered, and it cannot be subject to any protestation: it requires the individual capacity to see things as they are and necessarily are (something which imposes itself as self-evident), and to make logical inferences starting from it.

Plato and Aristotle knew for sure that the world of human affairs was rooted in opinion and contingency: because of this Plato held it in low consideration, and Aristotle distinguished between *theoria*, the capacity to contemplate things as they are, and *phronesis*, practical wisdom. Assuming the incompatibility between common sense and the «world turned upside down», that the philosopher discovers through contemplation, we could therefore imagine that thinkers could simply decide to abstain from politics in order to freely pursue their *bios theoretikos*.

Heraclitus, for example, renounced his aristocratic rights in favour of his brother in order to undertake his philosophical research without constraints. Aristotle clearly acknowledged the uselessness and unsuitability of the philosopher for public affairs<sup>21</sup>. Then, why did Plato feel the need to interfere with public life? An easy answer could lie in the episode of Socrates' death and in the need of the philosopher to protect himself from the crowd by making the city the most suitable place for his contemplation.

Plato was indeed shocked by the public condemnation of his greatest teacher, but it would be a mistake to interpret the Republic as a reaction to the hostility of the city towards contemplative life:

There are hardly any instances on record of the many on their own initiative declaring war on philosophers. As far as the few and the many are concerned, it has been rather the other way round. It was the philosopher who of his own accord quitted the city of men and then told those he had left behind that, at best, they were deceived by the trust they had put in their senses, by their willingness to believe the poets and be taught by the populace, when they should have been using their minds, and that, at worst, they were content to live only for sensual pleasure and to be glutted like cattle.<sup>22</sup>

Socrates, whom Plato had seen as the proof of the hostility of the city towards the thinker, never thought of himself to possess wisdom of the kind philosophers usually claimed for themselves. For Arendt his vocation was a political one. He questioned everybody's opinions, not to destroy them or to replace them with truth, but to verify their coherence and test their resistance to discussion:

The role of the philosopher, then, is not to rule the city but to be its 'gadfly', not to tell philosophical truths but to make citizens more truthful. The difference with Plato is decisive: Socrates did not want to educate the citizens so much as he wanted to improve their *doxai*, which constituted the political life in which he too took part. To Socrates, maieutic was a political activity, a give and take, fundamentally on a basis of strict equality, the fruits of which could not be measured by the result of arriving at this or that general truth.<sup>23</sup>

Socrates still saw the root of all possible truths in *doxa*: in his admission to know only that he knew nothing «he had accepted the limitations of truth for mortals, its limitations through *dokein*, appearances, and because he at the same time, in opposition to the Sophists, had discovered that *doxa* was neither subjective illusion nor arbitrary distortion but, on the contrary, that to which truth invariably adhered». He was sentenced to death not because he tried to divert men from their affairs in order to lead them towards the truth, but because he tried to awake in the people a moral conscience (the maxim to act in order to be always in harmony with ourselves) which could exhort to disobey the laws and not to respect the opinions commonly shared by the city. In contrast, Plato, who believed in the existence of an eternal truth to be grasped through philosophy, refused to value opinion at all: God, and not men, should be the measure of all things<sup>24</sup>. Still believing in the public role of the philosopher, as his master did, he nonetheless introduced a highest goal for his existence which was different from the self-fulfilment in the public space (which Socrates, according to Arendt, never questioned): the assimilation to the divine reality.

By doing this, Plato was forced to redefine the end of politics itself. Since the only possibility to have a meaningful life consists in the vision of truth, politics must be degraded to a means, whose goal should be to secure that the life of the philosopher does not meet any obstacle. Like the man of action is not able to understand the end and meaning of the contemplative life because he keeps judging it within the standards of politics, in the same

way the philosopher's transfigured mind becomes unable to recognise any intrinsic value in political action. This insurmountable misunderstanding is fairly depicted in Plato's famous myth of the cave. The only occupation which the cave dwellers are able to undertake is contemplation, although not of things as they really are, but just of shadows, which they try to guess what they stand for:

It belongs to the puzzling aspects of the allegory of the cave that Plato depicts its inhabitants as frozen, chained before a screen, without any possibility of doing anything or communicating with one another. Indeed, the two politically most significant words designating human activity, talk and action (*lexis* and *praxis*), are conspicuously absent from the whole story. The only occupation of the cave dwellers is looking at the screen; they obviously love seeing for its own sake, independent from all practical needs. The cave dwellers, in other words, are depicted as ordinary men, but also in that one quality which they share with philosophers: they are represented by Plato as potential philosophers, occupied in darkness and ignorance with the one thing the philosopher is concerned with in brightness and full knowledge. The allegory of the cave is thus designed to depict not so much how philosophy looks from the viewpoint of politics but how politics, the realm of human affairs, looks from the viewpoint of philosophy.<sup>25</sup>

From this perspective, the cave dwellers must be seen as fully incapable of successfully accomplish what they are supposed to do (knowing), and the philosopher must feel entitled to offer them guidance to the vision they couldn't obtain in any way, except under his leadership. Everybody (in the philosopher's eye) desires, without knowing it properly, the same good the philosopher has been able to find. Men living according to opinion are compared to people on a ship who are looking for a good captain but do not acknowledge that this role requires a great amount of competence<sup>26</sup>.

The city must be then modelled by the philosopher and made conform to the eternal reality he is able to grasp. This is actually the *modus operandi* of work, which in this way takes the place of action as key category of political philosophy. Men, like the clay employed by the artisan, must be shaped according to the idea of justice and of good in order to reproduce in the city the same harmony which inhabits the whole *kosmos*. Men must be forced, for their own good, to accept it, either after being instructed to see the same truth philosophers see (or a surrogate of it), or through violence or menaces of punishment in the afterlife like those Socrates employs in the concluding myths both of the Republic and Gorgias. The same discipline the philosopher must impose upon himself in order to be apt to contemplate, by subjugating body and desires, must be replicated in bigger scale in the city by subjugating the citizens who are unable to reach the truth: philosophers must give order or institute laws. In other words, they must become kings.

In the *Laws*, indeed, Plato more prudently opted, instead of the direct rule by philosopher-kings, for «the construction of the public space in the image of a fabricated object», where «the compelling factor lies not in the person of the artist or craftsman but in the impersonal object of his art or craft»<sup>27</sup>. The core moment of politics, rather than debate or common commitment to the same cause, becomes legislation according to a concept of a

human nature which should allow to know, foresee and manipulate human behaviour. This step will have lasting effect in the political thought, even after the meaning of a contemplative life went completely lost with the scientific revolution and the advent of modernity.

Politics continued to be seen as a means for a superior end, even by philosophers who, like Aristotle, clearly distinguished between the life of the philosopher and the one of the politician. Also for him the main feature of politics is the difference between those who govern and those who are governed. The superior end assigned to politics can change with the ages or with the personal understanding of the philosopher, but the paradigm remains unchanged: in the Middle-Age we find politics to be a means for the salvation of souls, for safety in Hobbes, for protection of life and property rights in Locke and in the liberal tradition, for the enhancement of productivity and progress in the contemporary political economy.

Also in modern times politics kept being identified with the art of governing men through laws. For example in Hobbes' *Leviathan* the sovereign is identified with the legislator, be it a monarch or an assembly, in Rousseau's social contract the main aim of the general will is also legislation, and politics' goal is to reunite men under laws. For both Rousseau and Kant liberty consists in obedience to the same laws we have given consent to. The paradigm Arendt criticises, pertains thus both to antiquity, where laws were modelled on the immutable structure of *kosmos*, and modernity, where laws are the result of procedures developed by man himself.

Not less ubiquitous between antiquity and modernity is the need to evade from this paradigm in order to recover a meaningful existence outside theoretical life (which has for Arendt become impossible in our modern conception of the physical world, which is no more seen as a self-structured order, but as a mathematical construction superimposed over an otherwise chaotic reality) and the simple and meaningless reproduction of the biological process in a consumerist life.

Despite being ignored by theory, the experience of an authentic public life has for Arendt temporarily re-emerged after classical antiquity in the revolutionary movements starting from the XVIII century (the American and the French Revolution, the Paris Commune, the experience of the Soviets during the Russian Revolution, the movement of Resistance against Nazism during the Second World War, the Hungarian Uprising, the Protests of 1968), in a spirit of participation and commitment to a common enterprise through the constitution of councils, assemblies and other forms of public debate<sup>28</sup>. This 'lost treasure of revolutions' certainly testifies the importance of positive liberty as condition for a meaningful life, and its rehabilitation by Arendt is crucial in our times, where a technocratic conception of politics, this time dictated (as Arendt had already recognized) no more by philosophers but by political economists, holds sway.

Nevertheless, Arendt seems to ignore that the sphere of *praxis* is not self-subsistent, but requires a well-articulated institutional and social context which allows people to become individuals and not to remain victims of natural needs and of alienated work; otherwise political freedom is doomed to disappear in a very short time (as in the revolutionary experience) or to remain a privilege of a

number of happy few, like in the Greek *polis*.

Arendt's condemnation of the efforts to secure social justice (which, she believed, could be reached only through the development of technical progress) together with freedom, proves itself to be absolutely superficial and naive, especially when she has to recognise that even the American Revolution, which she has exalted for being free from that concern, has failed to achieve a durable republican and truly participative spirit<sup>29</sup>.

For us who live in a deeply impolitic age, our commitment must be the one of the *homo faber* aiming at looking for the necessary conditions which can make liberty something lasting. The problem of the institution of a true and lasting participative freedom cannot be thought outside the 'Platonic' (and Hobbesian) framework: as a matter of establishing ends and individuating adequate means which can make life worth living. A political thought for 'dark times' cannot be emancipated from this tradition because the freedom, Arendt rightly asks for, requires a foundation which only legislation and a fair socio-economic environment can grant and ensure. The Greeks were well aware of this, as Arendt shows:

Before men began to act, a definite space had to be secured and a structure built where all subsequent actions could take place, the space being the public realm of the polls and its structure the law; legislator and architect belonged in the same category.<sup>30</sup>

Politics, as Arendt conceived it, will be possible only in a more just and equal social order which is our task to think and project. Politics as legislation and social struggle can still have a value if it is thought as means for the advent of a stable public life, namely the 'kingdom of freedom', which also a good part of the philosophical tradition acknowledged to be situated beyond the borders of the simple wellbeing we can enjoy in private life and to be found in a shared enterprise.

I obviously do not mean to rehabilitate an authoritarian government, neither by philosopher-kings nor by a revolutionary avant-garde, in order to secure this objective. A rehabilitation of reason, not as thought of Being or as source of eternal truths, but as the power to create a meaning for our being in the world (as Arendt praises it in *The Life of the Mind* by drawing from Kant the opposition of thinking and knowing<sup>31</sup>), could be enough. Such a reason, as a point of view of the whole humanity, should be able to think a more just and equal social order and to remind mankind that the human condition does not exhaust itself in the present state of things. To those who object that every change is impossible because man is bound by an unchangeable nature or is the result of historical necessity, we must be able to answer in the same way Kant did in *Toward Perpetual Peace*:

Such a pernicious theory itself produces the trouble it predicts, throwing human beings into one class with other living machines, which need only be aware that they are not free in order to become, in their own judgment, the most miserable of all beings in the world<sup>32</sup>.

The recollection which Arendt accomplishes in her account of the Greek *polis* and also of the revolutionary tradition in Modern Age, can prove us that the current situation of the human affairs is nothing definitive, and that

history has been populated by examples of other possibilities, however ephemeral and imperfect they might have been. Through historical reconstruction, we give life again to these possibilities, and perhaps, can inspire a transformation of reality. In absence of any alternative, such thought proves itself to be the most political act we are able to perform.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> On Arendt's reading of Plato and, more generally, on the relationship between philosophy and politics, see M. ABENSOUR, *Against the Sovereignty of Philosophy over Politics: Arendt's Reading of Plato's Cave Allegory*, in *Social Research*, vol. 74, n. 4 (Winter 2007), pp. 955 – 982; D. VILLA, *Arendt and Heidegger: The Fate of the Political*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1995; B. PAREKH, *Hannah Arendt and the Search for a New Political Philosophy*, Macmillan, London, 198; F. M. DOLAN, "Arendt on Philosophy and Politics", in D. VILLA, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Hannah Arendt*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001.

<sup>2</sup> H. ARENDT, *The Human Condition*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1958, p. 28.

<sup>3</sup> For a survey, see A. O. HIRSCHMAN, *The Rhetoric of Reaction: Perversity, Futility, Jeopardy*, The Belknap Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1991.

<sup>4</sup> M. MONTI, *Intervista sull'Italia in Europa*, Laterza, Bari, 1998, p. 84.

<sup>5</sup> Arendt's conception of politics has been the subject of a great number of studies. Among them, see C. CALHOUN, J. MCGOWAN, eds. *Hannah Arendt and the Meaning of Politics*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1997; M. CANOVAN, *The Political Thought of Hannah Arendt*, J. M. Dent, London, 1974; S. DOSSA, *The Public Realm and The Public Self: The Political Theory of Hannah Arendt*, Wilfred Laurier University Press, Waterloo, Ontario, 1988; M. GOTTSEGEN, *The Political Thought of Hannah Arendt*, State University of New York Press, Albany, NY, 1993; M. PASSERIN D'ENTREVES, *The Political Philosophy of Hannah Arendt*, Routledge, New York and London, 1994; E. YOUNG-BRUEHL, *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World*, Yale University Press, New Haven 1982.

<sup>6</sup> H. ARENDT, *The Human Condition*, p. 106.

<sup>7</sup> ARISTOTLE, *Politics*, I, 1252a.

<sup>8</sup> H. ARENDT, *The Human Condition*, p. 139.

<sup>9</sup> See P. BOWEN-MOORE, *Hannah Arendt's Philosophy of Natality*, Macmillan, London 1989.

<sup>10</sup> H. ARENDT, *The Human Condition*, p. 178.

<sup>11</sup> I. KANT, *Was heißt sich im denken orientieren*, in KANTs *gesammelte Schriften*, Bd 8, hrsg. von der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, G. Reimer, Berlin, 1923, p. 8.

<sup>12</sup> H. ARENDT, Truth and politics, in *The New Yorker*, February 25, 1967, Daniel REMNICK, New York, p. 54. On this topic see also L. BRADSHAW, *Acting and Thinking: The Political Thought of Hannah Arendt*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1989.

<sup>13</sup> I. KANT, *Kritik der Urteilkraft*, in KANTs *gesammelte Schriften*, Bd 5, hrsg. von der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, G. Reimer, Berlin, 1913, p. 237.

<sup>14</sup> Arendt's reading of Kant's theory of reflexive judgment as fitter than his political thought for evaluating politics was developed in her *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1982. See G. KAPLAN, C. KESSLER, eds., *Hannah Arendt: Thinking, Judging, Freedom*, Sydney: Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1989; J. NEDELISKY, R. BEINER, eds. *Judgment, Imagination, and Politics: Themes from Kant and Arendt*, Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, New York, 2001; M. PASSERIN D'ENTREVES, *Arendt's theory of Judgment*, in D. Villa, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Hannah Arendt*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001.

<sup>15</sup> H. ARENDT, *The Human Condition*, p. 175.

<sup>16</sup> H. ARENDT, *Truth and Politics*, p. 62.

<sup>17</sup> H. ARENDT, *The Human Condition*, pp. 45 – 46.

<sup>18</sup> PLATO, *Protagoras*, 322 b – e.

<sup>19</sup> H. ARENDT, *The Life of the Mind*, Harcourt, Orlando, 1977 – 1978, p. 143.

<sup>20</sup> PLATO, *The Republic*, 484ab.

<sup>21</sup> ARISTOTLE, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1141b.

<sup>22</sup> H. ARENDT, *The Life of the Mind*, p. 81.

<sup>23</sup> H. ARENDT, *Philosophy and Politics*, p. 81.

<sup>24</sup> PLATO, *The Laws*, 716 c – d.

<sup>25</sup> H. ARENDT, *Philosophy and Politics*, p. 96.

<sup>26</sup> PLATO, *The Republic*, 488 d – 489a.

<sup>27</sup> H. ARENDT, *The Human Condition*, p. 247.

<sup>28</sup> Arendt's account of this resurgence in modern times is to be found in *On Revolution*, Viking Press, New York, 1973. See also S. BENHABIB, *The reluctant modernism of Hannah Arendt*, Sage Publications, London, 1996; J. ISAAC, *Arendt, Camus and Modern Rebellion*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1992; A. WELLMER, *Arendt on Revolution* in D. VILLA, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Hannah Arendt*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001.

<sup>29</sup> For criticism, see for example H. J. HOBBSBAWN, *Hannah Arendt on Revolution*, in Id., *Revolutionaries*, The New Press, New York, 2001.

<sup>30</sup> H. ARENDT, *The Human Condition*, pp. 194 – 195.

<sup>31</sup> H. ARENDT, *The Life of the Mind*, pp 53 – 68.

<sup>32</sup> I. KANT, *Zum ewigen Frieden*, in KANTs *gesammelte Schriften*, Bd 8, hrsg. von der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, G. Reimer, Berlin, 1923, p. 378; *Toward Perpetual Peace*, in *Practical Philosophy*, translated and edited by Mary J. Gregor, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996.