FROM CITIZENSHIP TO THE SPACE OF APPEARANCE: ARENDT, HAITI, AND THE PROBLEM OF POLITICAL EXCLUSION

A Dissertation

by

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Submitted to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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May 2016

Major Subject: Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation critically examines current notions of citizenship in order to address political exclusion in the context of the legacy of slavery and colonization in the African Diaspora. To this end, I consider the work of political philosopher Hannah Arendt in light of an analysis of the Haitian Revolution to show that the rights afforded by citizenship are not enough to overcome contemporary forms of exclusion that remain bound up with this legacy. Beyond citizenship, I argue that coming to terms with the global impact of slavery and colonization today depends on developing political forms of historical memory that enable the transgressions of the past to appear in public so that they are able to authentically guide democratic practice and policy formation.

DEDICATION

To my parents

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I have been very fortunate to have the support and friendship of many who have made it possible for me to undertake this project and usher it to completion. First, and perhaps above all, I wish to express my gratitude to my dissertation director, Ted George. At every turn in this project, Professor George has proven to be a gifted teacher, judicious mentor, and complete friend. Through his unwavering care and trust in my potential, he has helped me stretch beyond my limitations, expecting the very best at every juncture and enabling me to achieve far more than I ever thought possible. The immense respect and generosity of spirit that he has shown me since our work began has left a lasting impression, and I very much look forward to a rich friendship and many more projects together in the years to come.

I am deeply grateful to my committee members in the Philosophy Department, Dan Conway and Claire Katz, who have been pillars of support since my arrival at Texas A&M. This project would not have been possible without their encouragement and commitment to my success, as well as their challenging insights into my project throughout the course of my dissertation research. I would also like to thank Cynthia Bouton who not only served on my dissertation committee, but who also directed my M.A. thesis in history. Her continuous investment in my growth as a scholar, both in history and philosophy, has been crucial for shaping the trajectory of my research program, and the abiding kindness and generosity she has shown me since we began working together has impacted me in ways that exceed expression.

My friends and family have been remarkable sources of strength throughout this process. In particular, I would like to thank Charles and Danielle Carlson, who have not only helped me through some of the most challenging times during this process, but who have also been there to celebrate each success that has followed in the wake of these challenges. Last, but certainly not least, I would like to thank my family, and especially my parents, Katy Hackerman and Brian Gaffney, as well as my brother, Tyler Gaffney, for believing in me from beginning to end. I could not ask for a more loving and supportive family, and this project certainly would not have been possible without them.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I.1. Project Summary

Philosophers of all stripes are concerned with the problem of political exclusion. In its broadest formulation, political exclusion may be understood as the loss of one's status as a member of a political community, whether this takes shape through the explicit denial of the rights of citizenship or the tacit marginalization of certain individuals within a particular political community by such means as systemic racism, sexism, or class-based oppression that precludes their full recognition as citizens. While approaches to exclusion are as many as they are diverse, recent discourses in mainstream political philosophy, epitomized by the work of figures such as Richard Rorty, John Rawls, and Jürgen Habermas, have tended to stress the importance of expanding the rights of democratic citizenship to those who have yet to be integrated within the structures of liberal democracy. My dissertation challenges the wisdom of such approaches by critically examining current notions of citizenship for coming to terms with the global impact of the European legacy of slavery and colonization on political practice today.

I take my point of departure for thinking about exclusion from the work of political philosopher Hannah Arendt, whose analysis of statelessness, along with the distinctive notion of citizenship that she develops in light of it, offers a novel critical perspective on liberal approaches to the problem of political exclusion. While Arendt has

come to be associated in recent scholarship with thinkers who endorse the expansion of the structures of liberal democracy, I argue that she has a deeper affinity to twentieth century critics of the Enlightenment, who maintain that violence and exclusion are contained within these structures and thus approach the problem of exclusion by calling for critique. By putting Arendt in dialogue with this heritage of political thinkers, my aim is to bring into focus the prescience of her critical insights into some of the basic assumptions that underlie notions of citizenship inherited from the liberal political tradition. With this, I maintain that while the critical dimension of Arendt's political philosophy has yet to be fully appreciated, it not only plays a formative role in her political ontology, but also offers a crucial point of departure for intervening in contemporary discourses in liberal political theory, providing a frame for diagnosing forms of exclusion that remain operative in the structures that organize modern political life and thereby exposing the dangers involved in the expansion of these structures.

With this, however, I argue that capturing the full weight of Arendt's analysis of exclusion depends on expanding her framework beyond the European nation-state to a more global set of political issues that are crucial for understanding the problem of exclusion today. These issues concern the memory of the legacy of slavery and colonization in the African Diaspora. To this end, I consider Arendt in light of an analysis of the Haitian Revolution (1791–1804) in order to challenge and deepen her political insights, particularly regarding her notion of citizenship. While this decisive event gave birth to the first instance of emancipation in the colonial world, the formerly enslaved who achieved French citizenship nevertheless remained subject to the violence

and exclusion that their enfranchisement promised to overcome. My project examines the echo of this original failure of Enlightenment citizenship in the racialized violence and exclusion that continues to haunt diasporic peoples decades and centuries after becoming citizens. With this, I show that addressing political exclusion today depends not only citizenship, as Arendt suggests, but also on the unending task of coming to terms with the repetition in present political life of the immemorial violence and exclusion of the past that I will argue is entailed by the very implementation of Enlightenment citizenship. Drawing on figures such as Jacques Derrida and Édouard Glissant, I thus maintain that we are called upon by these immemorial legacies to develop political practices of historical memory—whether these are institutionalized forms of remembrance, or public gatherings and protests—that go beyond citizenship so as to ensure that the transgressions of the past are able to appear in public and authentically inform democratic discourse and policy formation.

This project takes shape in three parts. I begin in my dissertation by elucidating the importance of Arendt's thought for exposing the limits of liberal notions of citizenship for addressing political exclusion today. Whereas recent scholars have emphasized Arendt's notion of the "right to have rights" in order to advance debate in liberal political theory, my project shifts the orientation of this discourse, bringing into focus her critical relation to the liberal tradition. To this end, I develop Arendt's characterization of political exclusion with reference, not only in her account of statelessness, but also to her less appreciated discourse on the political phenomenon of loneliness as it unfolds in her analysis of the susceptibility of the structures of modern

political life to totalitarianism. By developing Arendt's analysis of exclusion this way, my aim is to bring into renewed focus the decisive role that her critical concerns regarding the liberal tradition play in her insights into the failures and dangers of modern political life. We find in turning to this dimension of Arendt's work that statelessness is not exhaustive of her diagnosis of the problem of exclusion as those who emphasize the right to have rights suggest; on the contrary, it is symptomatic of a broader and more endemic form of exclusion expressed in the loneliness of modern individuals. Through her account of loneliness, Arendt demonstrates that the emergence of totalitarian regimes in the twentieth century cannot be thought apart from the structures of modern political life, but must instead be understood as an effect of the worldlessness that modernity itself has produced. This worldlessness has its basis in the destruction of the public realm in the modern era, a consequence, she thinks, of the tendency to elevate the protection of liberty in the private sphere to the highest aim of politics.[1] In light of this, I maintain that Arendt's notion of citizenship serves as the basis to critique and, in turn, to remedy the loneliness that has been generated by some of the very principles that animate the liberal tradition. It is in virtue of this critique, I argue, that Arendt is led to develop a lived and embodied conception of citizenship that is oriented not by the liberal concern for the expansion of rights in the private sphere, but rather by our shared responsibility to make one another visible in the public sphere.

[1] See Hannah Arendt, "What is Freedom?" in *Between Past and Future* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 142–69.

In the second part of this project, I argue that while Arendt's notion of citizenship provides a crucial frame for exposing the forms of exclusion that are perpetuated by notions of citizenship inherited from the liberal tradition, an internal inconsistency arises in her own notion of citizenship that keeps it from addressing the forms of exclusion that she diagnoses. This inconsistency turns on her account of the responsibility she believes citizens have to remember in political life. On Arendt's view, political life has the potential to engender an authentic sense of human belonging insofar as citizens take shared responsibility for preserving in their collective memory the legacy of the world they have inherited such that it can be appropriated anew and carried forward for future generations. She maintains, too, that it is only by participating in this event of appropriation through speech and action in the space of politics that human beings can enact their freedom and come into appearance as who they are in their singularity and diversity. Remembrance is thus central to Arendt's conception of political belonging, providing the means by which we fortify the shared reality of a common world, while simultaneously creating the conditions for the possibility of the event of appropriation that she associates with the enactment of human freedom. On the basis of this, Arendt argues that it is only by affirming one's citizenship in the space of politics through the commemoration of the legacy of the political tradition one has inherited that it is possible to overcome the worldlessness and loneliness that has made modern individuals susceptible to totalitarian domination.

Yet, I will argue that the nature of the legacy of the modern political tradition resists being remembered in this way, thereby leading Arendt's notion of citizenship to

fall into contradiction. In order to develop fully the nature of the legacy of the modern political tradition and the inconsistency it entails in Arendt's notion of citizenship, I maintain that it is necessary to expand the horizon of our considerations beyond the European nation-state to a more global set of political concerns raised in colonial and post-colonial theory regarding the memory of slavery and colonization in the African Diaspora. To this end, I consider Arendt in light of an analysis of the Haitian Revolution, which began in 1791 on the heels of the French revolution when half a million enslaved Africans in the French colony of Saint-Domingue rose up in response to the promise of universal freedom set forth by the 1789 French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen. While there may be many ways to expand Arendt's thought within this global context, I turn to the Haitian Revolution for three reasons.

First, the Haitian Revolution has an important role to play in understanding what Arendt describes as the revolutionary tradition of the modern age. In bringing the ideals of the European Enlightenment into direct confrontation with the European legacy of slavery and colonization, it not only constitutes an especially radical moment in the Age of Revolution, but, as I will argue, also exposes a thread of the political tradition of the revolutionary Enlightenment concerning the limits of modern historical memory that Arendt fails to appreciate. In this, it provides a unique point of departure for challenging and deepening Arendt's conception of citizenship, and particularly the responsibility she believes citizens have to remember in political life. Second, the action taken by the Haitian revolutionaries exemplifies in several important respects the lived and embodied activity that Arendt associates with citizenship. Significantly, the enslaved in Saint-

Domingue achieved their emancipation in 1794 not through a call for independence from France, but rather through an explicit affirmation of the spirit of the French revolutionary legacy, declaring their intent to become French citizens in accordance with the Declaration of the Rights of Man. Yet, despite working in concert to appropriate anew the traditions, institutions, and values of the French revolutionary legacy in this colonial context, the formerly enslaved ultimately remained subject to the previous forms of violence and exclusion that their status as French citizens promised to overcome. Hence, my third reason for turning to the Haitian Revolution is to suggest that it offers an important counterexample to Arendt's conception of citizenship, indicating that even after citizenship is granted and affirmed, a specter of the violence and exclusion of the past may still remain present that has the potential to forestall the event of appropriation that Arendt associates with human freedom.

As I will suggest, this event epitomizes an original failure of Enlightenment citizenship to make good on the promise of universal inclusion set forth by the political tradition of the revolutionary Enlightenment. This failure, I maintain, turns on a problem concerning historical memory that is specific to the modern era, which I will call "the paradox of remembrance." Affirming one's citizenship in the way that Arendt suggests involves not only remembering the legacy of the political tradition one has inherited, but also forgetting those histories of violence and exclusion that are incompatible with it. Yet, insofar as the Enlightenment project demands universal inclusion through the expansion of citizenship, these histories of violence and exclusion do not stand outside of or in opposition to the legacy of the tradition we have inherited, but are instead bound

up with it. Hence, I turn to the Haitian Revolution to suggest that the very implementation and affirmation of Enlightenment citizenship necessitates the covering over of a part of the legacy that we are tasked with preserving. Moreover, I will argue that while these histories of violence and exclusion may fail to come into full presence as a part of the collective memory of the modern political community, our inability to remember them does not mean that they fall into oblivion when citizenship is granted, as Arendt suggests; on the contrary, I maintain that because they are bound up with the political legacy that we are tasked with preserving, they merely remain unappropriated, leaving their trace in the traditions, values, and institutions that hold modern political communities together and repeating themselves in the violence and exclusion that continues to keep those who were once cast out from appearing in the modern political arena.

In the third part of this project, I examine the echo of this original failure of Enlightenment citizenship in the racialized violence and exclusion that continues to haunt diasporic peoples decades and centuries after becoming enfranchised. To this end, I turn to the philosophical concept of repetition to give contour to the political implications of the paradox of remembrance that I identify through my analysis of the Haitian Revolution. Focusing in particular on Friedrich Nietzsche's development of this concept in his discourse on history and Martin Heidegger's ontological appropriation of it in *Being and Time*, I use this idea to frame the ontological concepts of homecoming and belonging that orient Arendt's notion of citizenship. I then turn to the work of Jacques Derrida, whose critique of the originality of the event of appropriation and the

homecoming it promises in his work, *Specters of Marx*, provides an important point of departure for understanding the implications of the paradox of remembrance in contemporary political life. Specifically, I will suggest by way of his notion of ghosts and specters that the concept of modern citizenship is self-effacing, as the very affirmation of one's citizenship keeps a part of the legacy that we are tasked with preserving from coming into appearance. This, in turn, I will argue necessitates the repetition of the immemorial violence and exclusion of the past in our political traditions, institutions, and values. I develop the effect of this with reference to the notion of "nonhistory," which Édouard Glissant introduces in his work *Caribbean Discourse* to describe the way history is experienced by colonized peoples, along with the immediate presence these "nonhistories" have in the lived reality of their everyday experience. I then argue that addressing political exclusion today depends on going a step further than Arendt does in her analysis of citizenship. Beyond citizenship, I maintain that overcoming the forms of exclusion that Arendt introduces in her analysis of statelessness and deepens through her discourse on loneliness depends on developing a new and more expansive frame for the concept of political belonging that emphasizes the responsibility citizens have not only to make one another visible in political life, but also to make visible the specters of the immemorial violence and exclusion of the past that are entailed by the implementation of Enlightenment citizenship. On the basis of this expanded notion of political belonging, I propose a framework for a post-Enlightenment politics that provides a platform for approaching the problem of exclusion not only in terms of citizenship, but also in terms of our need today to develop political practices of

historical memory that enable the transgressions of the past and the forms of exclusion they continue to perpetuate to enter into contemporary political discourse.

I.2. Two Approaches to Political Exclusion

The problem of political exclusion created a crisis in the twentieth century, calling into question the viability of our modern political structures for achieving the end of universal emancipation set forth by the Enlightenment project. While turning back from this end seems untenable, the problem of exclusion that Arendt identifies in her analysis of the phenomenon of statelessness suggests that the means we have for achieving this end are woefully inadequate. While philosophical considerations of the problem of political exclusion are as many as they are diverse, two interrelated lines of inquiry may be discerned in the milieu of major thinkers of exclusion in the twentieth century. The first concerns the extent to which the theoretical frameworks we have inherited for achieving universal emancipation can be rehabilitated in such a way as to overcome the problem of exclusion. The second concerns the extent to which the problem of exclusion is itself a product of the inadequacy of these frameworks.

From this, it is possible to distill two approaches that political philosophers have taken in order to address the question of exclusion. As I suggest in what follows, the difference between these two approaches turns on the relation that political exclusion is taken to have to the modern political sphere and the juridical structures that sustain it. Those who endorse the first approach locate exclusion outside our political communities, defining it as exterior to and set apart from its structures, which are themselves internally

unified and, if properly engaged, capable of grounding a perfectly just and inclusive political order. Hence, for these figures, overcoming exclusion depends on expanding our circles of inclusion such that those who have been cast out can be absorbed within the political community and granted the rights and liberties that it affords. I turn to Richard Rorty and Jürgen Habermas to illustrate this approach, both of whom attempt to resolve the problem of exclusion by developing frameworks for fostering inclusion, Rorty, through his notion of liberal solidarity and Habermas, through his theory of communicative action and discourse ethics.

In contrast to the first approach, those who endorse the second approach maintain that exclusion does not have an exterior relation to the structures that sustain the political sphere, but instead entailed by these structures. Therefore, rather than emphasizing inclusion and the expansion of our present political structures, these figures place exclusion at the center of their inquiry and, in so doing, suggest that universal emancipation is only possible through a critique of the violence and exclusion that is always implicated in these structures. In order to elucidate the second approach to the problem of exclusion, I turn to Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, along with Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, and Giorgio Agamben, each of whom develops a distinct method of critique for exposing the forms of exclusion that they believe are always already bound up with the political.

Recent scholarship has emphasized those aspects of Arendt's work that concern inclusion, focusing in particular on her significance for contemporary debates regarding liberalism, radical democracy, and human rights. Though Arendt undoubtedly has

decisive contributions to make to these discourses, a broader aim of this project is to consider the importance of her work for those who take exclusion to be the central category of political life in the modern age. By shifting the orientation of this discourse, my aim is to show that Arendt not only offers unique insights into this latter intellectual current in political philosophy, particularly through her analysis of statelessness, but also that those aspects of her work that address exclusion this way complicate and pose important challenges to her own conception of inclusion made manifest in her discussion of citizenship.

In his pragmatic defense of bourgeois liberalism, Rorty exemplifies the first of the two approaches to political exclusion, acknowledging the limitations of Enlightenment rationalism for justifying our present political structures, while nevertheless calling for the expansion of these structures in order to address the problem of political exclusion. Rorty believes that it is possible to overcome political exclusion by fostering the growth of economic justice in the private sphere and democratic freedom in the public sphere. In contrast to proponents of classical liberalism, however, he resists the idea that the legitimacy of these political structures has a basis in rationalistic foundations. On the contrary, Rorty maintains that the unresolved conflict between the private and public spheres suggests that ideas like liberal democracy have no rational ground, but are instead historically contingent and therefore incapable of being justified philosophically.[2] He believes that while this does not diminish the

[2] Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, Solidarity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), 189.

pragmatic value of such ideas, it does indicate that we can only succeed in expanding these structures by turning to something other than rationally determined foundations to provide an impetus for increasing human solidarity.

In *Contingency, Irony*, *and Solidarity*, Rorty says, "The vocabulary of Enlightenment rationalism, although it was essential to the beginnings of liberal democracy, has become an impediment to the preservation and progress of democratic societies."[3] The traditional notion of human solidarity, he explains, presupposes a core self or a human essence that both justifies and gives transcendental status to our responsibility for the human community at large. Rorty argues that in the face of moral and political upheaval, the kind brought about by an event like Auschwitz, we find ourselves searching for this core self or further justification for human solidarity. He maintains, however, that such upheavals only expose us to the fact that no such human essence or nature exist, meaning the concept of solidarity is "caused by nothing deeper than historically contingent circumstance."[4]

Rorty thus distinguishes himself from more traditional liberal theorists, suggesting that the solidarity we feel towards others does not arise from something we share with all of humanity; instead, our sense of "we" is a function of nothing other than a feeling of identification with a particular group. He therefore objects to grounding the notion of human solidarity in universal humanism and suggests instead that we can more easily achieve liberal solidarity through an appeal to sentiment, encouraging greater

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[3] Rorty, 44.

[4] Ibid., 189.

sensitivity to the suffering of others. He thus suggests that bourgeois liberalism can overcome political exclusion, so long as the notion of solidarity that accompanies it is reframed in pragmatic terms. Rorty conceives of the liberal notion of solidarity in the following way:

> Solidarity is not thought of as recognition of a core self, the human essence, in all human beings. Rather, it is thought of as the ability to see more and more traditional differences (of tribe, religion, race, customs, and the like) as unimportant when compared with similarities with respect to pain and humiliation – the ability to think of people widely different from ourselves as included in the range of 'us.'[5]

By cultivating this sentiment, Rorty argues that the idea of human solidarity can retain its regulative force even though it is no longer grounded in reason. That is, even though the claim "we have an obligation to human beings as such" is, on Rorty's view, a historically contingent slogan rather than a found principle, it nevertheless urges us to create more expansive circles of inclusion without needlessly wondering whether or not such solidarity is real.[6] In attempting to reformulate the ground of bourgeois liberalism this way, Rorty ultimately locates exclusion outside the structures of the modern political sphere. In his suggestion that the problem of exclusion can be solved by developing a conception of solidarity that encourages us to reach out to those who have been excluded from political life, Rorty takes the structures of modern liberalism to be internally sound

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[5] Ibid., 192.

[6] Ibid., 196.

and capable of delivering justice and freedom to those who enter into them. Hence, Rorty believes that the problem of political exclusion has yet to be resolved because we have failed to expand our circles of inclusion far enough.

Habermas also exemplifies the first approach to the question of exclusion, though, in contrast to Rorty, he does this by rehabilitating the guiding principles of the European Enlightenment, which he believes have been marginalized in western society as a result of its dependence on instrumental rationality. This derivative use of reason, Habermas argues, has kept us from achieving the emancipatory aims of the Enlightenment by suppressing heterogeneity and difference instead of creating a space for it. Habermas thus believes that our own failure to engage the tools of the European Enlightenment properly has led us in the twentieth century to succumb to dangerous political forces such as totalitarianism.

Habermas thus distinguishes himself from Rorty in his suggestion that there do exist universally valid criteria discernable through reason according to which it is possible to found a perfectly just and inclusive society. Such criteria, however, can only be justified through a process of deliberation in which all involved come to a consensus about which norms are in the best interest of everyone.[7] Reason is therefore of utmost practical value on Habermas' account, meaning our claims regarding ethics and politics should not, as Rorty suggests, be understood as historically contingent. Rather, Habermas believes that without reason we cannot hope to overcome violence and

[7] Jürgen Habermas, "Discourse Ethics," *Contemporary Continental Thought*, ed. Stephen Daniel (Upper Saddle River: Pearson Education Inc., 2005), 127.

injustice, as it is only because we are rational that we can understand and evaluate the validity of another's utterance, and, in so doing, arrive at just criteria for organizing society. That is, Habermas says:

> There is a sense in which any interpretation is a *rational* interpretation. In the act of understanding, which entails an evaluation of reasons as well, the interpreter cannot avoid appealing to standards of rationality and hence to standards that he himself considers binding on all parties, including the author and his contemporaries.[8]

In light of this, Habermas argues that it is possible to determine the validity of social norms on the basis of reason, but this cannot be achieved by simply testing whether or not a particular maxim is generalizable. To the extent that social norms embody an interest common to everyone, they cannot be justified abstractly, but instead require a process of rational discourse whereby those involved actively engage in moral argumentation concerning the validity of these norms. Without this kind of discursive practice, reason runs the risk of becoming instrumental. Accordingly, a just social order is possible to the extent that there exists a space for "universal discourse" where individuals within a community are able to engage in moral argumentation and come to a consensus by imagining themselves in the place of the other. In this, Habermas further distinguishes himself from figures like John Rawls by insisting that while common norms can be rationally justified, this justification cannot be achieved operationally or

[8] Jürgen Habermas, "Reconstruction and Interpretation in the Social Sciences," *Contemporary Continental Thought*, ed. Stephen Daniel (Upper Saddle River: Pearson Education Inc., 2005), 121.

monologically, but instead requires a cooperative effort whereby individuals come together to engage in a process of moral argumentation.[9]

For Habermas, then, ruptures within the political community can always be repaired through communicative action that aims at restoring consensus among its participants. In other words, he says, "Only an intersubjective process of reaching understanding can produce an agreement that is reflexive in nature; only it can give participants the knowledge that they have collectively become convinced of something."[10] In upholding this "transcendental-pragmatic" strategy of justification, Habermas thus maintains that normative claims are claims to truth, but such truth claims can only be justified through "real discourse."[11] From this, it follows for Habermas that the greater the number and diversity of voices that are included within this discursive process, the more just the principles, norms, and laws that guide society will be. He therefore suggests that this notion of rational discourse can provide a regulative ideal for fostering justice in society through the inclusion of those voices that have been excluded from the discursive practices that give rise to our principles, norms, and laws.

Though Rorty and Habermas undertake distinct projects, both nevertheless define exclusion as exterior to our present political and juridical structures. That is, for both, exclusion arises outside the boundaries we draw around our political communities. As it is in this space, exterior to and set apart from our political structures, that individuals are

[9] Habermas, "Discourse Ethics," 127.

[10] Ibid., 128.

[11] Ibid., 129.

denied rights and freedoms, both develop theoretical frameworks for expanding our circles of inclusion to overcome the problem of exclusion. As we have seen, this takes shape for Rorty in his call for human solidarity through his suggestion that we must expand our conception of "we" to include those we are inclined to call "they," so as to increase economic justice and democratic freedom throughout the world. For Rorty, our failure to eradicate exclusion results not from the inadequacy of bourgeois liberalism, but rather from the impracticable notion of universal humanism on which we have attempted to ground it. Inclusion also guides Habermas' political philosophy, as is made evident in his call for a rehabilitation of the model of deliberative democracy that we have inherited from the European Enlightenment. On his account, exclusion arises not from the tools that this tradition gave us and, in particular, it's concern for rationality, but rather from our misuse of these tools. Consequently, he believes that by including those voices that have been cast out within a discursive, democratic process, it is possible to arrive at a set of principles, norms, and, laws grounded in reason that are sufficient for forming a just society. This approach stands in opposition to the second approach that Adorno and Horkheimer, along with Foucault, Derrida, and Agamben take to addressing the problem of exclusion. In contrast to Rorty and Habermas, each of these figures attempts to show that political exclusion is internal to the structures of our present political communities and develop distinct critical approaches to exposing the exclusion and violence that they believe is inherent to these structures.

Adorno and Horkheimer offer a profound illustration of the second approach to the question of political exclusion through their critique of the Enlightenment. In

Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments, they argue that while the notion of freedom in society cannot be understood apart from the Enlightenment, further reflection on this emancipatory project reveals that Enlightenment thinking, as well as its concrete historical forms and social institutions, contains within it "the regression which is taking place everywhere today."[12] Hence, their aim throughout this work is to investigate the destructive side of Enlightenment progress made manifest above all in the willingness of so many to submit to fascism in the twentieth century. Adorno and Horkheimer maintain that western civilization's descent into irrationality and barbarism does not mark a departure from the project of the Enlightenment; rather, in the very attempt to secure a foundation for truth and freedom, Enlightenment rationality gave rise to the technologies that have increasingly served to nullify and enslave individuals, thereby producing its own decay with each progressive step it takes. In light of this, they argue that what is called for in the twentieth century is not the expansion of the political structures that we have inherited from the Enlightenment, but instead a critique of the Enlightenment project itself that can uncover the dialectical relation between the progressive rationalism that Enlightenment thinking champions and the regression of western civilization in the twentieth century.

According to Adorno and Horkheimer, a totalitarian impulse has been present in Enlightenment thinking since its birth. From the beginning, Enlightenment thinking has aimed at dispelling myth and fantasy, using calculative reason to provide a systematic account of the unity of the natural world in order to dominate nature and liberate

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[12] Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, trans. Edmund Jephcott, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), xvi.

humanity from its fear of the unknown. In so doing, however, it has made technology and its productive capacities the essence of knowledge, thereby reducing the world and everything in it to its instrumental value. In its disenchantment, Enlightenment thinking gives rise to the notion that "anything which does not conform to the standard of calculability and utility must be viewed with suspicion."[13] Therefore, Adorno and Horkheimer argue, Enlightenment rationality must be regarded as totalitarian, since only that which has been emptied of difference and singularity can be encompassed within the unity it seeks to establish.[14]

Adorno and Horkheimer challenge bourgeois liberalism on these grounds, suggesting that the notion of justice that arises from it is based on the same demythologizing calculation that drives scientific positivism. They say:

> The same equations govern bourgeois justice and commodity exchange. […] Bourgeois society is ruled by equivalence. It makes dissimilar things comparable by reducing them to abstract quantities. For the Enlightenment, anything which cannot be resolved into numbers, and ultimately into one, is illusion.[15]

In other words, despite our attempts to protect ourselves from the mythology of previous epochs through calculative reason, the unity that we presuppose in this endeavor is itself a myth. For this reason, Adorno and Horkheimer would likely say of Rorty and

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[13] Horkheimer and Adorno, 3.

[14] Ibid., 4.

[15] Ibid., 5.

Habermas that the inclusive aims they draw on to formulate their political frameworks are simply a repetition of the myth of Enlightenment unity.

This myth comes to appear in its fullest form in the social and political spheres, where we find that Enlightenment rationality, upon reducing people and things to commodities, leads to the blind domination of individuals rather than their emancipation. Thus, following Marx, Adorno and Horkheimer say, "With the spread of the bourgeois commodity economy the dark horizon of myth is illuminated by the sun of calculating reason, beneath those icy rays the seeds of the new barbarism are germinating."[16] This barbarism reveals itself in the immense thoughtlessness of the technically educated masses. Though reason produces machines, Adorno and Horkheimer argue that in western society's quest for efficiency, these machines produce automation in all walks of life, culminating above all in the automation of thought. Hence, while machines mark the progress of the Enlightenment's pursuit of knowledge, these machines simultaneously alienate us from reason and, in so doing, generate the thoughtlessness necessary for totalitarianism to take root.[17]

Exclusion can therefore be said to arise for Adorno and Horkheimer in the progressive unfolding of the political structures that we have inherited from the Enlightenment, to the extent that these structures are built on a concern for achieving unity and extinguishing difference and singularity by means of calculative reason. In light of this, Adorno and Horkheimer suggest that what is called for is not the expansion

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[16] Ibid., 25.

[17] Ibid., 29.

of our present political structures, but rather an immanent critique of the forms of exclusion that arise from the myth of Enlightenment unity.[18] In so doing, they argue that it is possible to illuminate the role that Enlightenment rationality has played in the barbarism and irrationality of the twentieth century, enabling us to wrest the truth of the Enlightenment from the ideology that is born out of instrumental reason, while freeing us from blind domination.[19] Adorno and Horkheimer therefore provide a framework for critically assessing the forms of exclusion that are contained within the political structures that we have inherited from the Enlightenment, so as to open up a new pathway for achieving universal emancipation.

Foucault, like Adorno and Horkheimer, locates exclusion within our present political structures, developing a critical approach to the problem of exclusion through his post-structuralist analysis of power. Rather than suggesting, as Rorty and Habermas do, that universal emancipation can be achieved by expanding our circles of inclusion, Foucault argues that we must critically engage the power relations that underlie these circles. On Foucault's account, there exist neither universal truths nor rational grounds for the laws that govern our social, political, and economic practices. Instead, these practices, along with the discourses and norms that justify them, are rooted in a set of historically contingent power relations that serve to maintain the dominance of some, while perpetuating the oppression of others. As he explains in his 1977 interview, "Truth and Power":

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[18] Ibid., 28.

[19] Ibid., 18.

> Truth isn't outside power, or lacking in power […]. Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true.[20]

Thus, on Foucault's account, truth and knowledge are not universal; instead, they are produced by a set of historically contingent power relations, which take on a particularly insidious form in the modern age.

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault turns to the exile of the leper and the arrest of the plague victim to illustrate two ways in which power has historically operated. Whereas the power mechanisms in the case of the leper once worked to demarcate and exclude those who are abnormal in order to establish a pure community, the punitive measures used to analyze and separate the healthy from the sick in the case of plague victims sought to establish a disciplined society.[21] Though these two forms of power were once distinct, Foucault explains that they came together in the nineteenth century, giving way to a perfectly efficient power mechanism. In his reflections on the power relations that underlie our existing social and political structures, he says:

> On the one hand, the lepers are treated as plague victims; the tactics of individualizing disciplines are imposed on the excluded; and, on the other hand,

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[20] Michel Foucault, "Truth and Power," *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), *131*.

[21] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan, (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), 553.

> the universality of disciplinary controls makes it possible to brand the leper and to bring into play against him the dualistic mechanism of exclusion.[22]

In attributing universal value to utility, Foucault suggests that the principles of the Enlightenment made this synthesis possible. He takes Bentham's panoptic prison and the perfect efficiency it achieves in rendering prisoners visible to their prison guards and guards invisible to their prisoners, to provide a blueprint of the structures of power that underlie the egalitarian norms of modern society. By rendering individuals perfectly visible, the techniques of modern power do not need to be enforced externally. Instead, through this method of surveillance, they not only guarantee our submission to them, but increase in strength and efficiency as they expand, and are thus able to contaminate every aspect of social existence at no cost to the apparatus itself. Therefore, as we expand our present social, political, and juridical structures for the sake of increasing justice and equality, we simultaneously increase the strength of the power relations and further the forms of exclusion that underlie these Enlightenment ideals. That is, he says:

> The general juridical form that guaranteed a system of rights that were egalitarian in principle was supported by these tiny, everyday physical mechanisms, by all those systems of micro-power that are essentially non-egalitarian and asymmetrical that we call disciplines. […] The real, corporal disciplines constituted the foundation of the formal, juridical liberties. […] The 'Enlightenment,' which discovered the liberties, also invented the disciplines.[23]

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[22] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 553–4.

[23] Ibid., 553–4.

In turning to power, Foucault intends to distance himself from the Marxist notion of ideology on which Adorno and Horkheimer rely in their dialectic of the Enlightenment. On Foucault's account, ideology alone is insufficient for explaining the phenomenon of oppression, as it presupposes a universal truth that stands apart from any power relation.[24] Nevertheless, Foucault follows Adorno and Horkheimer in attempting to expose the forms of exclusion that persist in spite of our enlightened social and political aspirations through his own call for critique. With this, Foucault argues that critique must become the intellectual's primary concern. He says:

> It seems to me that what must now be taken into account in the intellectual is not the 'bearer of universal values'. […] It's not a matter of emancipating truth from every system of power (which would be a chimera, for truth is already power) but of detaching the power of truth from the forms of hegemony, social, economic and cultural, within which it operates at the present time.[25]

By engaging in a perpetual critique of the power relations that underlie the truths we ascribe to, Foucault argues that the intellectual can work to challenge the forms of exclusion that are always at work in our modern political structures, rather than perpetuating them. He thus explains in his essay, "What is Enlightenment?" that we are in fact indebted to and have much to learn from the Enlightenment. On Foucault's account, however, appropriating this heritage depends not on endorsing it as doctrine,

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[24] Foucault, "Truth and Power," 123.

[25] Ibid., 132–3.

but rather on recognizing and engaging the philosophical ethos we have inherited from the Enlightenment, an ethos that Foucault suggests consists in permanent critique.

Derrida, in much the same way as Adorno, Horkheimer, and Foucault, takes the second approach to political exclusion, placing fragmentation and exclusion, rather than unity and inclusion, at the center of his political reflections. Yet, he gives further contour to this approach by turning to the method of deconstruction to expose the illusory ground on which our traditional notions of justice and law are based. In "The Force of Law: The Mythical Foundation of Authority," Derrida explains that deconstructive inquiry seeks to complicate traditional oppositions that provide the foundation for our conventions, norms, and prescriptions by exposing the ways in which these oppositions always exceed themselves and, in so doing, undermine the unshakable ground that they purport to provide. With this in mind, Derrida explains that it may appear as if deconstruction has no role to play in debates concerning justice, since, in its attempt to destabilize foundations, it also undoes the law or ground that forms the basis of our justificatory discourses. Through his deconstructive analysis of the law, however, Derrida insists here that it is precisely in its ability to expose the mythical foundation of the law's authority that "deconstruction is justice."[26]

Derrida develops this claim by arguing that the law is inherently violent, and, therefore, justice cannot be understood as synonymous with law or right, but must instead be reconceived in terms of the infinite demand to expose and critically engage

[26] Derrida, "The Force of Law: The 'Mystical Foundation of Authority,'" *Cardozo Law Review* 11 (1989): 945.

the enduring violence of the law. Taking his point of departure from Walter Benjamin's "Critique of Violence," Derrida explains that force is always implied in the notion of law or right that provides the foundation for justice. In other words, the law itself can only be established through an originary act of violence and, upon being established, always requires enforcement. The distinction between the force of the law and the violence that is deemed unjust and punishable by law is thus obscured by the law itself, revealing that the essence of law or right cannot be thought apart from injustice. As such, Derrida says, "The very emergence of justice and law, the founding and justifying moment that institutes law implies a performative force, which is always an interpretive force."[27] In this, Derrida does not merely wish to show that some laws operate in the service of force or violence, but rather attempts to make the more provocative claim that force is internal to the law. In other words, insofar as the law exists, so too does unjust violence, and, because of this, no amount of rational discourse can produce a perfectly just political order.

In contrast to figures like Habermas, then, Derrida maintains that the discursive act of justifying one's right according to the law not only stops short of achieving such justification but, in the communicative act itself, also repeats the unjustifiable violence that is always bound up with the enforcement of the law. Consequently, Derrida says, "One cannot speak *directly* about justice, thematize or objectivize justice, say 'this is just' and even less 'I am just,' without immediately betraying justice, if not law

[27] Derrida, "Force of Law," 941.

(*droit*)."[28] Discourse reaches its limit precisely in this moment, when, in the attempt to provide justification for the law, violence is not only enacted, but the foundation of the law itself is disclosed as "a violence without ground."[29] Derrida therefore argues that the founding moment on which the authority of the law is predicated reveals itself as something that exceeds the opposition between being founded or unfounded. That is, in the effort to justify the law through rational discourse, the law reveals itself as lawless, thereby illustrating that even it, the most foundational of foundations, is subject to deconstruction.

With this, Derrida argues that the notion of justice must be understood and approached in terms of its aporias, or the experience of the impossibility of justice, rather than its achievement through the justification of the law in rational discourse. He considers three aporias of justice, the first of which consists in the impossibility of satisfying the demand to perform a just act. While the principles of justice are always expressed as universal laws, the just act must be addressed to a singular and irreplaceable other. To efface the singularity of the other is to do violence or injustice to her. Justice therefore always addresses itself to the singular, though upon applying the universal principles of justice, one necessarily violates the uniqueness of the context to which the rule is applied in the performance of the just act.[30] Consequently, it is impossible to act justly. That is, we can never completely fulfill our responsibility to the

[28] Ibid., 935.

[29] Ibid., 945.

[30] Ibid., 955.

singular other, as we always do violence to her by treating her according to the universal principles of justice.

The second aporia arises in the context of the just decision. In order for one to make a decision that is just, it must both be made freely and according to the rule of law. Yet, freedom and responsibility only emerge in the undecidable, or the moment before a decision is made which is "foreign to the order of the calculable and the rule."[31] Once a decision is made, a rule has been applied and the verdict becomes a product of mere calculation.

The third aporia follows closely from the second and arises from the fact that justice cannot wait; it always requires an immediate decision even though we lack the unlimited knowledge of the conditions and rules necessary in order to guarantee that a decision is just. As Derrida explains:

> Even if [the just decision] did have all that at its disposal […] the moment of *decision*, *as such*, always remains a finite moment of urgency and precipitation, since it must not be the consequence or the effect of this theoretical or historical knowledge, of this reflection or this deliberation, since it always marks the interruption of the juridico- or ethico- or politico-cognitive deliberation that precedes it, that must precede it.[32]

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[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid., 967.

In its urgency, the just decision must therefore be regarded as a kind of madness, insofar as it can only ever be made in "the night of non-knowledge and non-rule."[33] Moreover, in each decision, there remains a ghost of the undecidable and, with this, a ghost of the unjustifiable. For this reason, Derrida says, "Justice is never exercised without a decision that cuts, that divides."[34] Upon deciding in accordance with the law, one affirms anew the unjustified violence that is always bound up with it, thereby fracturing rather than unifying the political community.

In its very performance, then, justice ceases to respond to the demands of theoretical rationality and thus "never proceeds without a certain dissymmetry and some quality of violence."[35] He therefore believes that it is both inadequate and dangerous to uncritically expand our circles of inclusion, as such an approach to addressing injustice both repeats and covers over the unjust violence that is bound up with every performance of justice.

In contrast to figures like Rorty and Habermas, Derrida maintains that it is only in virtue of the aporetic character of justice that we find ourselves limitlessly responsible to the other and certain of the infinite obligation we have to be just.[36] He suggests too that in its urgency and inability to be completed, justice reveals itself as something that is always yet to come, an irreducible possibility of the future that remains open only

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[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid., 963.

[35] Ibid., 969.

[36] Ibid., 953, 965.

insofar as it is never completed.[37] Derrida therefore wishes to challenge the mainstream discourse concerning justice, which he believes uncritically reaffirms the injustice that is always bound up with the law. He does this by demonstrating that deconstruction does not stand in opposition to justice. Instead, by exposing the fractures in the foundation on which our norms, conventions, and laws are based, it responds to the infinite demand of justice to remain sensitive to "a sort of essential disproportion that must inscribe excess and inadequation in itself and that strives to denounce not only the theoretical limits but also concrete injustices."[38] For Derrida, then, the political community is always fractured from within, as the very performance of justice, in the form of the just decision, can only ever repeat the violence that it seeks to contravene.

While Agamben also takes the second approach to addressing political exclusion, he distinguishes himself from the figures considered to this point by offering perhaps the most explicit account of the relationship between exclusion and the structures of western politics. Agamben, like Derrida, challenges the notion that politics in the west can be understood in terms of its internal unity, arguing that the democratic and egalitarian principles of modern politics are inadequate for creating an inclusive political community, capable of overcoming exclusion in its entirety. Agamben turns to the figure of bare life to illustrate that the structures of western politics were originally constituted through an act of exclusion. In so doing, he maintains that this originary exclusion did not dissipate in the wake of the formation of these structures; on the contrary, Agamben

[37] Ibid., 969

[38] Ibid., 955.

suggests that the political space itself is sustained through this original exclusion, meaning that a space is always preserved within it in which political exclusion is possible.

In his work *Homo Sacer,* Agamben elucidates this by turning first to the Greek distinction between *zoe*, that is, bare life, or life that is common to all living beings and *bios*, or life conceived as a way of living, as in the good life, the contemplative life, or the political life.[39] Framed from the outset in terms of *bios*, Agamben explains that the Greek *polis* served to overcome bare life, providing a space in which one was able to achieve a certain kind of life that exceeded mere natural existence. In this, he argues that the *polis* was first understood as a space constituted through the exclusion of *zoe* or bare life. In having as its original concern the cultivation of a certain kind of *bios*, the very activity of political life was predicated on the simultaneous exclusion of life as such. In other words, to be included in the *polis* meant to act in such a way as to exclude this aspect of one's existence. Hence, the Greek *polis* was constituted through the inclusion of that which it originally sought to exclude, namely, bare life.

For this reason, Agamben says, "The fundamental categorical pair of Western politics is not that of friend/enemy, but that of bare life/political existence, *zoe/bios*, exclusion/inclusion."[40] Though internal to the western concept of politics, Agamben argues that this originary act of exclusion has been covered over in the attempt to

[39] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 1.

[40] Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 9.

politicize *zoe* in the modern age through the universal recognition of rights and liberties. Modern politics, he explains, attempts to vindicate and liberate *zoe*, "Constantly trying to transform its own bare life into a way of life and to find, so to speak, the *bios* of *zoe*."[41] Agamben suggests, however, that with the rise of totalitarianism, we find that a space was nevertheless preserved for the exclusion of bare life despite our attempts to eradicate this space through enlightenment politics. In light of this, he argues that it is necessary to redirect our political inquiry towards the exclusion that he suggests is always already included within the structures of political life in the west.

Agamben develops the modern manifestation of this inclusive exclusion, which he takes to be internal to the structures of western politics, through two interrelated forms of exclusion, the first of which consists in the sovereign power to grant a state of exception, and the second in *homo sacer*, that is, sacred man or one "who may be killed but not sacrificed."[42] Agamben argues that the condition for the possibility of juridical rule rests on the sovereign power to suspend the law through a state of exception.[43] In having the power to suspend the rule of law, the sovereign places himself both inside and outside the law, thereby generating a paradox with respect to the law's authority. On the one hand, the legitimacy of the law depends on the sovereign power to make an absolute decision unfettered by a pre-established juridical order. On the other hand, this order can only exist insofar as it lacks a lawful ground, as the sovereign must make

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[41] Ibid., 9.

[42] Ibid., 8.

[43] Ibid., 16.

himself an exception to the rule in order to lend authority to it. Hence, the paradox of the structure of sovereignty arises from the fact that the legitimacy of the rule of law can only be established through an illegitimate sovereign decision. Furthermore, Agamben explains, the law only retains its authority in relation to the sovereign exception and can only sustain itself insofar as a space is held open within the political order in which the sovereign decision, or the suspension of the validity of the political order, can be enacted.

Agamben explains that this originary exception on which the juridico-political order is based is as at the same time an act of exclusion, specifically of the individual case in favor of the rule.[44] In being excluded, the individual's relation to the law does not simply dissolve; rather, insofar as this exclusion takes place in the sphere of the sovereign decision, that which is excluded by it is persevered within the political order. Hence, the excluded individual does not simply become indifferent to the law through the sovereign decision but instead, in being trapped within the sphere of the exception, is held in a necessary relation to the law as that which has been abandoned by it.[45]

Agamben brings the subject of this abandonment into focus through his discussion of *homo sacer*, the second figure of exclusion according to which he suggests the western juridico-political order takes shape. Broadly speaking, the notion of *homo sacer* or sacred man refers to the inclusion of bare life within the juridico-political order. In offering this analysis of sacred man, Agamben wishes to draw attention to the origin

[44] Ibid., 17.

[45] Ibid., 25.

of the notion of the sacredness of life and its relation to the modern attempt to overcome the exclusion of bare life within the political sphere by deeming all life, regardless of its political status, sacred. While this belief in the sacredness of life in the modern era is taken to provide the ground for universal rights, Agamben insists that the possibility of exclusion always remains open, even when one is brought within fold of the political community.

To illustrate this, Agamben turns to the Roman law, *sacer mons*, where sacredness is tied for the first time to human life as such in the figure of *homo sacer*.[46] This law defines *homo sacer* as one who has been judged by the people on account of a crime to be bad or impure. In being deemed impure, the law stipulates that *homo sacer* may not be sacrificed; yet, this mark of impurity also makes it the case that anyone may kill *homo sacer* and such killing cannot be condemned as homicide.[47] When attached to life as such, Agamben explains that the sacred no longer demarcates the holy, as it does in the case of sacred things, but instead becomes a curse, whereby "*homo sacer* on whom this curse falls is an outcast, a banned man, tabooed, dangerous."[48] The significance of *homo sacer* thus consists in the originary juridico-political phenomenon that is presented in the sacredness that is ascribed to him by law. *Homo sacer* is at once set apart from divine law, in the ban against his sacrifice, as well as from human

[46] Ibid., 71.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid., 79.

jurisdiction to the extent that he cannot be murdered.[49] In standing apart from both the religious and the juridical rule, Agamben explains that *homo sacer* finds himself subject to a kind of double exclusion, which is at the same time a double capture, insofar as he is included within the political community as one who may be killed.[50] Consequently, Agamben says, "What defines *homo sacer* is […] the peculiar character of the double exclusion into which he is taken and the violence to which he finds himself exposed."[51] Such unsanctionable violence, in its inability to be classified either as sacrilege or homicide, opens up a limit sphere of human action. This sphere, which stands apart from the law, can only be sustained in relation to an exception and therefore constitutes the same sphere of action in which the sovereign decision takes place. As such, Agamben explains, "*Homo sacer* presents the originary figure of life taken into the sovereign ban and preserves the memory of the originary exclusion through which the political dimension was constituted."[52] The sovereign and *homo sacer* are conjoined insofar as sacred life is the original victim of the sovereign ban, constituting "the originary exception in which human life is included in the political order in being exposed to the unconditional capacity to be killed."[53]

With this, Agamben explains that the modern political sphere cannot be understood in terms of the boundaries we draw to demarcate a space of inclusion that is

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[49] Ibid., 83.

[50] Ibid., 81.

[51] Ibid., 82.

[52] Ibid., 83.

[53] Ibid., 84.

distinguished from that which is excluded; if this were the case, then expanding our circles of inclusion would indeed be a sufficient for overcoming problem of exclusion. We find through the figure of *homo sacer*, however, that inclusion within the political sphere is inadequate for overcoming political exclusion, as this sphere can only hold itself open by remaining tethered to that which has been excluded from it. Therefore, Agamben says, "The sacredness of life, which is invoked today as an absolutely fundamental right in opposition to sovereign power, in fact originally expresses precisely both life's subjection to a power over death and life's irreparable exposure in the relation of abandonment."[54] In other words, in our efforts in the modern era to politicize bare life by extending rights and liberties to all life, including that which has been stripped of its political status, Agamben suggests we have overlooked the figure of *homo sacer*, which contains within it the original exclusion on which the political sphere was founded and sustains itself.

Agamben therefore follows Adorno and Horkheimer, along with Foucault and Derrida, in his analysis of bare life, locating the problem of exclusion within our present political structures, rather than outside of them, as Rorty and Habermas do. In so doing, he, like the former set of thinkers, is led to develop a critical method for exposing the illusory and fragmented nature of the originary foundation to which we appeal in our call for justice in political life. Taken together, the two approaches I have outlined give some contour to the landscape for understanding this complex but central problematic in recent political philosophy. Given the expansiveness of Arendt's thought, as well as the

[54] Ibid., 83.

ambiguity she often expresses in regard to the possibility of meaningfully undertaking the task of politics, she does not fit easily within any part of this landscape. Nevertheless, I will suggest in the following section that despite the emphasis placed in recent scholarship on her contribution to discourses concerning the expansion of our liberal political structures, her critical relation to the liberal tradition must be brought into focus, as her insights into the dangers and limits of this tradition are crucial for understanding political exclusion today.

I.3. The Place of Exclusion in Arendt's Thought

Recent scholars including Seyla Benhabib, Dana Villa, and Peg Birmingham have emphasized those aspects of Arendt's work that concern inclusion, focusing in particular on her significance for contemporary debates regarding liberalism, radical democracy, and human rights. These scholars, of course, do not overlook Arendt's career long refusal to be labeled or categorized and her tendency to leave largely unanswered the question of whether exclusion is something that can be overcome through the political or is instead contained within its structures. Even so, there is a tendency among these scholars to set aside those moments in which Arendt's optimism regarding the legitimacy of the political sphere wanes, taking this to be a hindrance to her ability to contribute to mainstream debates in liberal political theory, rather than revelatory of her larger political project.

Benhabib, in her work, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*, develops the complexity of Arendt's relationship to the modern tradition, which she argues has been oversimplified as a result of a preoccupation in the scholarship with Arendt's work

in *The Human Condition*. Benhabib rereads Arendt's approach to understanding modernity, turning in particular to the influence of Martin Heidegger's *Existenz* philosophy, along with her experience as a German Jewish woman in the age of totalitarianism to outline the intricacies and tensions that arise in the analysis she offers of the modern political sphere. In light of this, Benhabib says:

> The great tensions in Arendt's systematic reflections on politics and society, and the unresolved contradictions in some of her formulations, can be traced back to this twofold spiritual-intellectual legacy. Expressed in a somewhat stylized form: although Hannah Arendt, the stateless and persecuted Jew, is the philosophical and political modernist, Arendt, the student of Martin Heidegger, is the antimodernist Grecophile theorist of the *polis* and of its lost glory.[55]

Benhabib thus gives a great deal of attention to the ambiguous relation that Arendt seems to have to modern politics and the Enlightenment tradition. For Arendt, Benhabib says, "Modernity was not a seamless historical development but a process rich in contradictions."[56] On Benhabib's view, Arendt was a brilliant thinker of these contradictions, identifying them in the bourgeois revolutions of the previous centuries, the declaration of the rights of man and citizen, and, perhaps above all, in the unfilled promise of universal emancipation made by the Enlightenment tradition. Yet, upon

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[55] Seyla Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000), xxxix.

[56] Benhabib, xl.

developing this analysis of Arendt, Benhabib ultimately deems her political framework inadequate for furthering the project of liberal politics.[57]

Benhabib argues that Arendt's discovery of the banality of evil in her 1962 text *Eichmann in Jerusalem* marks a turning point for Arendt, leaving her in a melancholic state over the fragility of human rights and the possibility of discerning a ground for moral judgment.[58] Rather than tarrying on this, however, Benhabib attempts to defend Arendt against accusations that her political philosophy is "anti-foundationalist," turning to *The Human Condition* to show that Arendt retains an "anthropological universalism" in her suggestion that all human beings are conditioned by natality, plurality, labor, work, and action.[59] Benhabib argues that while this universal claim about the human condition provides an important starting point for grounding a liberal political theory, it alone is not enough to justify the call to respect others and therefore requires something more in order to legitimize our obligation to act morally towards one another in the realm of politics. Such normative force, Benhabib insists, is necessary if we want to anchor Arendt's thought in contemporary institutions. For this reason, she turns to Habermas to provide the supplement for what she takes to be Arendt's shortcomings. Therefore, while Benhabib is well aware of the gestures Arendt makes towards a critical approach to the problem of exclusion, she pushes them aside for the sake of upholding Arendt's contribution to more mainstream, inclusive approaches to this problem.

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[57] Ibid., xl.

[58] Ibid., 193.

[59] Ibid.,195.

Villa calls on Arendt's readers in his work *Arendt and Heidegger: The Fate of the Political* to consider the originating ways in which she understands political action in relation to the crisis in political life in the modern age. According to Villa, there has been a trend among scholars to view Arendt's conception of political action as a mere repetition of Aristotle's notion of *praxis* in order to bolster their own positions in mainline debates concerning participatory democracy, critical theory following Habermas, and communitarianism.[60] Villa, by contrast, believes that these readings of Arendt overlook how radical her conception of political action is. On his view, Arendt's concern for action is not simply a form of remembrance, but rather a form of invention that seeks to introduce meaning in an age, which, in lacking any tradition, has become worldless and vulnerable to the boundless instrumentality of totalitarian politics.[61] Like Benhabib, Villa suggests that understanding Arendt's conception of political action depends on understanding the formative role that Heidegger's critique of modernity played in the development of Arendt's thought. A center piece of Villa's discussion, he maintains that Arendt's appropriation of Heidegger gives rise to the unique political categories that she employs to address the deficiency of political life in the modern age, which she then uses to criticize Heidegger's own political failings.

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[60] Dana Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger: The Fate of the Political* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 8. Villa accuses Benhabib, in following so closely from Habermas, of doing just this. Specifically, he argues that the more contemporary school of critical theorists, or those who take their point of departure from Habermas rather than Adorno and Horkheimer, rely on an overly Aristotelian reading of Arendt's notion of political action in order to defend against the criticism that even Habermas' notion of rationality in the public sphere runs the risk of becoming instrumental.

[61] Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger*, 11.

Though at odds with Benhabib on the question of political action, Villa nevertheless attempts in much the same way as Benhabib does to articulate the ways that Arendt has been oversimplified in contemporary scholarship. In this, his work sheds important light on those aspects of Arendt's work in which she stands in a critical relation to politics in the modern age. Yet, he, like Benhabib, ultimately wishes to develop an account of Arendt's political theory that remains wedded to an inclusive approach to the question of exclusion through his discussion of agonistic democracy. For instance, in his essay, "Democratizing the Agon: Nietzsche, Arendt, and the Agonistic Tendency in Recent Political Theory," Villa urges us to consider the possibility of rethinking liberal democracy in terms of an agonistic politics and suggests that Arendt provides the necessary resources for doing just this. He argues that the liberal frameworks of figures like Rawls do not do enough to encourage active, critical thinking in political life.[62] By contrast, an agonistic politics, in promoting constant contestation in the political sphere, encourages the kind of active and independent thought necessary for authentic engagement in democratic discourse that standard versions of liberal democracy are unable to accomplish.[63] He turns to Arendt to develop a notion of democracy that is centered on conflict rather than consensus because he believes that she both sympathizes with the agonistic politics of figures like Nietzsche, while recognizing that for this to have relevance, it must be tempered by an impersonal ethos in political life. Villa therefore maintains that Arendt provides us with a much needed model of

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[62] Villa, *Politics, Philosophy*, *Terror: Essays on the Thought of Hannah Arendt* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999),108.

[63] Villa, *Politics, Philosophy*, *Terror,* 109.

democracy that both opens a space for independent thinking in political life, while securing this space in such a way that it does not fall into violence. While Villa undoubtedly calls for a more radical version of democratic politics than Benhabib does, he nevertheless follows her, first in noting the way in which Arendt engages the more critical approach to the question of exclusion, and second, in setting this aside to explain how we can use Arendt to enhance, rather than critique, our present political structures.

Peg Birmingham offers yet another decisive analysis of Arendt's political philosophy, though she too classifies Arendt in terms of the contributions she has to make to the inclusive approach to the question of exclusion, turning to Arendt's discussion of "the right to have rights" in order to do so. Birmingham argues in her work, *Hannah Arendt and Human Rights: The Predicament of Responsibility*, that Arendt provides us with a ground for asserting human rights through her conception of natality. She therefore wishes to challenge Benhabib, who believes that Arendt is ultimately unable to substantiate her belief in universal human rights, along with Villa, who is critical of Arendt for giving up a viable notion of rights in favor of political action.[64] Birmingham, by contrast, wishes to show that Arendt's primary concern from her work in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* onward is to provide "a theoretical foundation for a reformulation of the modern notion of human rights."[65] Birmingham thus considers the way Arendt goes about reformulating the ground we have for identifying with one another in our humanity upon witnessing the inadequacy of

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[64] Birmingham, *Hannah Arendt and Human Rights: The Predicament of Responsibility* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 1.

[65] Birmingham, 3.

Enlightenment humanism with the rise of totalitarianism. Birmingham suggests that for Arendt, providing a new ground for humanism after the holocaust depends on understanding humanity not simply in terms of its capacity for respect but also, and more importantly, in terms of its capacity for evil. On Birmingham's account, Arendt develops her notion of natality for the sake of providing a new conception of human solidarity that is able to provide a foundation for international responsibility. Arendt's notion of natality, she explains, is distinctive insofar as it acknowledges the boundlessness of human action. In this, it serves to undermine the metaphysical notion of human nature on which universal rights were originally founded, revealing instead that human beings are equal only insofar as they are radically distinct from one another and, with this, always capable of doing the unprecedented. Therefore, while Arendt recognizes the failure of the Enlightenment to provide a ground for human rights, she is not led to reject humanism altogether.[66] Instead, Birmingham insists that the event of natality provides the source of an ontological ground for humanity, insofar as it contains within it the right to appear in public.[67] That is, Birmingham says:

> The event of natality that carries within it the principle of publicness, when restated as the law of humanity (understood as the appearance of the actor among a plurality of actors in a public space of freedom), demands that the actor have the right to appear, or, as Arendt so succinctly puts it, the right to have rights. This right is not predicated on a metaphysical understanding of the human being

[66] Ibid., 8.

[67] Ibid., 16.

as having a nature; instead, it is predicated on the fundamental event of human existence—natality.[68]

Though Birmingham acknowledges the ways in which Arendt's understanding of the human condition are bound up with a critique of the Enlightenment notion of human rights and their failure to be guaranteed in the twentieth century, she nevertheless emphasizes the role Arendt has to play in rehabilitating these concepts such that they are able to guarantee human solidarity on a global scale. In this, Birmingham, like Benhabib and Villa, is led to emphasize those aspects of Arendt's thought that further liberal, inclusive approaches to the question of exclusion made manifest in the discourse concerning human rights.

The contribution of each of these scholars is, without question, integral for deepening Arendt's thought, particularly with regard to developing the relevance of her work for enhancing the structures that constitute political life today. Moreover, each rightly points to Arendt's concern for developing a political framework that furthers the end of universal emancipation despite the fact that the viability of this end was called into question so dramatically with the rise of totalitarianism. In turning so often to the inclusive side of Arendt's political thought, however, the contributions she has to the discourse that locates exclusion within the structures of modern political life has remained underdeveloped. This project will thus unfold along a different line of inquiry than figures like Benhabib, Villa, and Birmingham take, framing Arendt in terms of those aspects of her work in which she locates the problem of exclusion at the very heart

[68] Ibid., 57.

of the structures that organize modern political life rather than outside these structures. In so doing, my aim is to show that Arendt makes a decisive contribution to the second approach I outline to the problem of exclusion that has yet to be fully appreciated. Beyond this, I will suggest that by expanding her thought beyond the European nation-state to a more global set of concerns raised in post-colonial theory regarding the memory of slavery and colonization in the African diaspora, it is possible to intensify the importance of her critical insights for addressing the problem of exclusion in contemporary political life.

I.4. Dissertation Structure

I will develop this project in five chapters. In Chapter Two, I provide an account of Arendt's political ontology that brings her critical relation to the liberal tradition into focus as it unfolds in her analysis of the crisis in Enlightenment notions freedom that came into view with the emergence of stateless people in the period between the world wars. My aim in this chapter will be to show that Arendt's critique of the concept of liberty as she develops it in her analysis of statelessness provides the impetus for her to reformulate the concept of the political sphere in terms of the phenomenological notion of "the space of appearance." I elucidate this by drawing Arendt's discussion of statelessness together with her account of the development of the ideas of freedom and liberty in the western political tradition. In so doing, I argue that she is led to disavow the liberal political sentiment that freedom is an internal and pre-political property shared in common by all human beings, conceiving of it instead as a worldly political phenomenon that comes to appear when individuals enact their singularity and diversity

by speaking and acting with others in the space of politics in order to initiate something anew.

In Chapter Three, I consider the full implications of Arendt's critique of the liberal tradition, along with the prescient critical perspectives she offers on liberal approaches to the problem of exclusion by developing her notion of citizenship in relation to her account of the problem of loneliness in the modern age. By turning to loneliness, I will suggest that Arendt's understanding of citizenship guides a prescient critique of the basic assumptions that underlie notions of citizenship within liberal political theory. As we shall see, Arendt believes that these forms of citizenship do not secure liberty, but instead reproduce the very loneliness that has made modern individuals susceptible to totalitarian domination. I therefore argue in this chapter that Arendt poses her own notion of citizenship as an antidote to loneliness and, thus, to the vulnerability of our liberal political structures to totalitarianism.

In Chapter Four, I examine the scope and limits of Arendt's conception of citizenship. I argue that while Arendt's analysis of the problem of exclusion in modern political life offers a novel critical perspective on notions of citizenship inherited from the liberal tradition, an internal inconsistency arises in her account of the responsibility she believes citizens have to remember in political life. This, in turn, keeps her notion of citizenship from addressing the forms of exclusion that she believes have become definitive of modern political life. I develop this inconsistency in Arendt's thought by considering her discussion of the political significance of remembrance as it unfolds in her discourse on the role of tradition and history in political life. I then develop this in

light of her analysis of the hidden tradition of the pariah and her account of the tacit exclusion of African American's from the American political community in her essay "Civil Disobedience." By considering these two texts, I show that Arendt acknowledges that a history of violence and exclusion gets covered over through the implementation of Enlightenment citizenship. Yet, in spite of her concern for remembrance in political life, I argue that she provides no means for coming to terms with this history of violence and exclusion in the space of politics, assuming instead that the affirmation of one's citizenship in the space of politics is enough to ensure that they are forgotten and consigned to oblivion.

In Chapter Five, I consider Arendt in light of an analysis of the Haitian Revolution in order to challenge and deepen Arendt's notion of citizenship, particularly as it pertains to the responsibility she believes citizens have to remember in political life. The Haitian Revolution provides a decisive and early historical example of the way in which, citizenship, even after it is granted and affirmed, can fail to overcome those histories of violence and exclusion that preceded the implementation of Enlightenment citizenship. While citizenship should have been enough to ensure that the legacy of slavery and colonization that preceded the enfranchisement of the enslaved in Saint-Domingue was overcome in its entirety, we find through this example that it in fact continued to haunt the new French citizens in the form of the threat of a return to the violence and exclusion of the past. In turning to the Haitian Revolution, I wish to show that the inconsistency in Arendt's notion of citizenship reveals a deeper problem internal to the modern political tradition concerning historical memory, which I call the paradox

of remembrance, that keeps citizenship, even as she conceives of it, from overcoming the problem of exclusion today.

In Chapter Six, I provide an account of the echo of the original failure of Enlightenment citizenship that is epitomized by Haitian Revolution in the racialized violence and exclusion that continues to haunt diasporic peoples decades and centuries after becoming enfranchised. To this end, I turn to the philosophical concept of repetition to develop the implications of this paradox of remembrance for understanding political exclusion today. I turn to this idea to frame the ontological concepts of homecoming and belonging that orient Arendt's notion of citizenship. I then consider Arendt alongside Derrida, whose critique of the originality of the event of appropriation and the homecoming it promises in his work, *Specters of Marx*, provides an important point of departure for understanding the implications of the paradox of remembrance in contemporary political life. Specifically, I will suggest by way of his notion of ghosts and specters that the concept of modern citizenship is self-effacing, as the very affirmation of one's citizenship necessitates the covering over of those histories of violence and exclusion that are internal to the legacy of the modern revolutionary tradition. As such, I will argue that citizenship itself keeps a part of the legacy that we are tasked with preserving from coming into appearance, thereby necessitating the repetition of the immemorial violence and exclusion of the past in our political traditions, institutions, and values. I will develop this with reference to the notion of "nonhistory" that Glissant associates with the way history is experienced by colonized peoples and the immediate presence these "nonhistories" have in the lived reality of their

everyday experience. I then argue that addressing political exclusion today depends on going a step further than Arendt does in her analysis of citizenship. Beyond citizenship, I will suggest that overcoming the forms of exclusion that Arendt introduces in her respective analyses of statelessness and loneliness depends on developing a new and more expansive frame for the concept of homecoming in political ontology that makes room in the space of politics not only for citizens, but also for the specters of the immemorial violence and exclusion of the past that are necessitated by the implementation of Enlightenment citizenship. With this, I propose a theoretical framework for a post-enlightenment politics that goes beyond the Enlightenment concern for the universal expansion of citizenship, offering an even more inclusive model of political life that makes room in the public realm not just for the living present and the knowable, but also for the ghosts of the immemorial.

CHAPTER II

HANNAH ARENDT AND THE SPACE OF APPEARANCE: AN ONTOLOGICAL CRITIQUE OF CLASSICAL LIBERALISM

The aim of this chapter is to provide an account of Arendt's political theory that is keyed to the space of appearance and the central role it plays in her attempt to reformulate the task of politics in the twentieth century. On Arendt's view, the public realm cannot be thought apart from the space of appearance. That is, she explains, the purpose of the public realm is to throw light on human affairs by providing a space of appearance in which individuals can come together to "show in deed and word who they are and what they can do."[69] As I suggest here, the significance Arendt attributes to the space of appearance can be brought into focus by considering it in relation to her analysis of statelessness. Through this analysis, I argue that she diagnoses a crisis in the epoch of the Enlightenment that comes into view after World War I. Arendt's own analysis indicates that statelessness is a symptom of the contradictions internal to enlightened liberalism, revealing the inadequacy of the notion of private liberty for engendering universal emancipation. It is in virtue of this crisis, I argue, that Arendt comes to believe that freedom requires a space of appearance, leading her to disavow liberal notions of freedom rooted in the security of rights in the private sphere and turn instead to a concept of freedom oriented by our shared responsibility to make one another visible in the public realm. With this, she offers an account of political life that

[69] Hannah Arendt, *Men in Dark Times* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1968), viii.

is oriented by an ontological conception of freedom, where freedom is understood not as a pre-political property of the human being, but rather as an event that comes to appear in the world through the spontaneity of human action in the public sphere. Such phenomenological events of freedom, she argues, reveal that the constitution of the human must be understood not in terms of a fixed essence shared in common by all human beings, but rather in terms of the irreducible singularity and diversity that comes to appear in the world through the startling unexpectedness of human action. Moreover, as we will see, she suggests that the seeds of totalitarianism can be found in the modern impulse to reduce, through instrumental reason, the unpredictability of human action, thereby destroying human plurality and keeping the freedom inherent in action from making its appearance in the world.

I develop this chapter in three parts, beginning with an analysis of Arendt's critique of the idea of liberty. By considering her analysis of the concepts of liberty and freedom and their development throughout the history of western political thought alongside her discussion of statelessness in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, my aim in this section will be to reconstruct Arendt's critical relation to the modern political tradition in terms of the limitations that she believes are inherent in the concept of liberty. To this end, I argue that Arendt offers a robust, though largely underappreciated, critique of classical liberalism that grows out of her analysis of statelessness. Through this analysis, I suggest that Arendt comes to recognize that statelessness offers a stark illustration of the inadequacy of the idea of freedom that arises from the liberal tradition,

exposing the danger involved in divorcing the notion of freedom from the political sphere.

I then argue that the limitations Arendt identifies in the modern notion of liberty through her analysis of statelessness leads her to develop an ontological notion of freedom and, with this, a notion of the political realm understood as a space of appearance. As Arendt's understanding of the space of appearance has its origins in Martin Heidegger's notion of being-in-the-world, I elucidate the concept of freedom that she develops in texts such as "What is Freedom?" with reference to her analysis of the political ramifications of this Heideggerian idea. In so doing, I wish to show that Arendt ultimately formulates a concept of freedom that consists not in a retreat to the private sphere, but rather in an event of appropriation that can only be achieved when individuals are able to appear among one another through speech and action in the public sphere.

Upon providing an account of the distinctive notion of freedom that Arendt develops, I conclude this chapter by suggesting that for her, the task of politics consists in holding open a space of appearance, or a space in which this kind of appropriative event is possible. In order to illustrate this, I turn to Arendt's discussion in *The Human Condition*, emphasizing in particular her claim that human beings are conditioned most fundamentally by natality, or their irreducible uniqueness, and plurality, or the fact that they always find themselves in a world with others. In light of her discussion of natality and plurality, we find that for Arendt, human beings can only appear in the fullness of their humanity if they belong to a place in the world where they are able to actualize

these aspects of the human condition by speaking and acting in concert with others in the space of politics. By drawing this together with her analysis of the limits of the liberal notions of freedom and her concern for the problem of statelessness, I wish to show that Arendt constructs a political ontology that puts into relief the vulnerability of the structures of modern political life to totalitarianism. Whereas I will focus in this chapter on Arendt's diagnosis of the dangers and limits of the emphasis in modern political theory on liberty rather than political freedom, I will suggest in subsequent chapters that this leads Arendt to develop a novel conception of citizenship that forms the basis to critique notions of citizenship inherited from the liberal tradition. Drawing my discussion of Arendt's analysis of statelessness in this chapter together with her account of the political phenomenon of loneliness in the modern era in the following chapter, I will bring into focus the importance of her critical relation to the liberal tradition and the intervention it offers in contemporary political discourses that emphasize the global expansion of liberal citizenship as a method for addressing political exclusion today.

II.1. The Ascendance of Liberty in Modern Politics

In this section, I elucidate the critical concerns Arendt raises regarding classical liberalism and the central position that the concept of liberty has come to occupy in the modern political tradition. To illustrate this, I turn first to Arendt's account of the evolution of the concepts of liberty and freedom throughout the history of western political thought. Arendt explains that in antiquity, freedom was understood as a distinctly political phenomenon, making its appearance in the world through speech and action in the public sphere. In the modern age, by contrast, the idea of freedom loses its

political relevance, bringing about a fundamental shift in both our metaphysical understanding of freedom and the structure of the political itself. On Arendt's view, modern freedom is predicated on a Christian notion of free will. Conceived within this framework, freedom is achieved through a retreat from the world and the temptations contained therein, rather than something that is realized through one's active engagement with it. Hence, with the rise of Christianity, the world becomes an impediment to freedom rather than the stage for its appearance, as had been the case in antiquity. No longer understood politically, freedom in the modern age is thus transformed into an internal and fixed property of the human being rather than a worldly phenomenon. Yet, despite losing it's political relevance, Arendt suggests that it is precisely this non-political notion of freedom that is brought to bear on the sphere of politics in the modern age through the elevation of private liberty to the highest political ideal.

Arendt has a notoriously conflicted relation to the modern tradition, rarely taking a definitive stance on the question of whether the political structures we have inherited from it can be rehabilitated in the wake of the political catastrophes of the twentieth century.[70] Be that as it may, she nevertheless takes this transformation in the idea of freedom to have what she calls "fatal consequences" for political life in the modern age, leading her to develop a critique of enlightened liberalism that proves formative for her

[70] Seyla Benhabib offers an account of Arendt's conflicted relationship to the modern tradition in *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*, where she argues that the influence of Heidegger's anti-modernism coupled with her own experience as a persecuted Jew in the early twentieth century creates a tension that remains largely unresolved throughout her work. See Seyla Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000), xxxix.

broader theoretical framework.[71] As I shall demonstrate, these consequences can be seen by turning to her analysis of statelessness and the crisis in freedom it exposes at the beginning of the twentieth century. Statelessness reveals the inadequacy of enlightened liberalism for engendering universal emancipation, along with the modern sentiment that freedom begins where politics ends. Insofar as liberty proved meaningless for those who had been expelled from their political communities, Arendt believes we find through the phenomenon of statelessness that freedom is not an inalienable property of the human being that arises through a retreat form the world, but instead can only be enacted if a space exists in the world where individuals are able to appear among one another in their radical diversity. She identifies this space with the public realm or the sphere of politics, which gets covered over in the modern age through the imposition of a non-political concept of freedom on the political realm. Arendt's analysis of statelessness therefore reveals a contradiction internal to enlightened liberalism. While this tradition promises universal emancipation by upholding liberty as an inalienable property of the human being, the emergence of stateless people indicated that the structures we have inherited from this tradition are based on an idea of freedom that leaves individuals in the modern age without a space in the world where the inherent meaningfulness of their action can come to appear. On the basis of this, Arendt insists that if human beings are to renew the meaning and significance of the modern world, a place must exist where freedom can make its appearance, leading her to reformulate the task of politics in terms of political

[71] Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006),161. See also Dana Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger: The Fate of the Political* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 118.

community and the preservation of the public realm rather than the security of liberty in the private sphere.

Arendt explains that the idea of liberty has been central to the development of western political theory since antiquity. [72] From its inception, liberty has been defined in terms of the individual's liberation from unjustified restraint, consisting above all in the freedom of movement, or the freedom to undertake those activities that are necessary for living in general.[73] Hence, liberty is neither new nor distinctively modern, finding its original formulation in ancient Greece where the power of locomotion was taken to be the most important civil right, just as in the modern world.[74] Yet, while securing the basic necessities of life has been understood throughout the tradition of western political thought to form a necessary condition for freedom, liberty was neither taken to be identical with freedom nor sufficient for engendering it until the modern age.[75] Therefore, politics in the modern age distinguishes itself not so much in the significance it attributes liberty, but rather in the relationship it establishes between liberty and freedom.

Arendt explains that in the classical world, liberty and freedom, though intimately related, nevertheless pertained to two distinct realms of human affairs. Liberty concerned the freedom to satisfy the basic necessities of life through the maintenance of

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[72] Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Penguin Group, 2001), 29.

[73] Arendt, *On Revolution*, 29 and 32.

[74] Ibid., 32.

[75] Ibid., 29.

one's home (*oikia*) and thus pertained to the household or private realm. The life of the household realm stood in direct opposition to a second, higher form of life, the *bios politikos*, which came into existence with the Greek city-state and denoted the kind of life most proper to the human being.[76] As she says, "The distinctive trait of the household sphere was that in it men lived together because they were driven by their wants and needs."[77] While having the liberty to rule as one wished in the privacy of one's home was taken to be a basic condition for citizenship, liberty itself was not identified with freedom in antiquity, as it permitted nothing more than the fulfillment of those life processes that are governed by necessity. Freedom, by contrast, was believed to be an eruptive event that gave birth to something new to the world, thereby initiating a break from the necessary processes that characterizes life in general. As Arendt explains, "The realm of the *polis* […] was the sphere of freedom, and if there was a relationship between these two spheres, it was a matter of course that the mastering of the necessities of life in the household was the condition for freedom of the *polis*."[78] Whereas the effects of liberty remained hidden in the private realm of everyday life, freedom required a public realm where individuals, having already satisfied the necessities of life, could come together with their fellow citizens to engage in the task of politics.

In their capacity as citizens, individuals cast aside their concern for their particular existence in the household realm, joining together in the public realm for the

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[76] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 24

[77] Ibid., 30.

[78]Ibid., 31.

sake of preserving a common world.[79] No longer concerned with satisfying their basic wants and desires, individuals entered into the public realm in order to engage in a higher kind of life, namely, political life, which was distinctively human insofar as it created the conditions necessary for freedom to appear. By participating in political life individuals worked together to preserve a space of human meaning that transcended the necessity of ordinary life, reminding them that their existence was not futile because they belonged to and were responsible for preserving a world that had existed before them and would outlast their lives in it.[80]

In the ancient world, freedom was therefore believed to be a worldly phenomenon that made its appearance when individuals came together through speech and action in the public realm, initiating something anew for the sake of carrying a shared world from the past into the future. Accordingly, Arendt says, "Freedom needed, in addition to mere liberation, the company of other men who were in the same state, and it need of a common public space to meet them – a politically organized world, into which each of the free men could insert himself by word and deed."[81] Hence, in classical antiquity, liberty, in pertaining only to the necessities of life in the private realm, was not only distinct from freedom but formed an opposition to it. Whereas one's household life was taken to have little meaning beyond satisfying one's biological needs, *polis*-life promised transcendence, enabling human beings who had liberated themselves from the

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[79] Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 155.

[80] Arendt, *On Revolution*, 32. See also, Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 155.

[81] Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 147.

necessities of everyday life to actualize their freedom by working in concert with others to initiate something new in the world.

Whereas the Greeks and Romans believed that freedom was a political phenomenon, Arendt says that in the modern age, "It has become almost axiomatic even in political theory to understand freedom not as a political phenomenon, but on the contrary, as the more or less free range of non-political activities which a given body politic will permit and guarantee to those who constitute it."[82] The displacement of freedom from the political realm has transformed the structure of politics altogether, making liberty the chief political ideal in the modern era and the protection of the rights of individuals in private life, the paramount aim of politics. Yet, while this non-political notion of freedom has become the centerpiece of modern political theory, Arendt explains that its origins are pre-modern, finding its earliest formulations in late antiquity and early Christianity. Arendt turns to Epictetus and Augustine to illustrate this, both of whom attempt to elevate "inner freedom," or freedom of thought and the will to the highest kind of human freedom. In so doing, each reverses the predominant assumption in antiquity that "the experiences of inner freedom are derivative in that they always presuppose a retreat from the world."[83]

Epictetus conceives of freedom as something that is manifest neither in the accumulation of worldly possessions nor in one's mastery over other men, as these sorts of things reside in the exterior world over which men have no control; instead, it arises

[82] Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, 32.

[83] Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 146–7.

when we limit ourselves to what is within our control, namely, to our thoughts and dispositions towards the world in which we find ourselves.[84] Arendt says:

> According to ancient understanding, man could liberate himself from necessity only through power over other men, and he could be free only if he owned a place, a home in the world. Epictetus transposed these worldly relationships into relationships within man's own self, whereby he discovered that no power is so absolute as that which man yields over himself, and that inward space where man struggles and subdues himself is more entirely his own, namely, more securely shielded from outside interference, than any worldly home could ever be.[85]

Hence, Epictetus introduced a notion of freedom that can only be realized through a retreat from the world into the internal domain of thought where we are able to master our desires and judgments or those states that cannot be hindered by the exterior world. In much the same way as Epictetus, Augustine divorces freedom from the world, suggesting that human beings are powerless to influence their surrounding environment and powerful only insofar as they are the arbiters of their will.[86] Understood as free will, this Augustinian conception of freedom is even further removed from the world, arising only when one retreats into "the 'inner dwelling' of the soul and the dark 'chamber of the heart,'" permanently protected from the coercion of bodily desire.[87]

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[84] Ibid., 146.

[85] Ibid.,146.

[86] Ibid., 156.

[87] Ibid., 160.

In tying freedom to the will, the early Christian tradition places a barricade between freedom and the contingencies of the world, thereby transforming the idea of freedom in ways that prove decisive for the modern tradition. No longer a political concept, freedom becomes something "otherwordly," understood not in terms of an individuals ability to effect change in the world, but instead in terms of the ability to liberate oneself from it.[88] Beyond this, insofar as Christian freedom can arise only in solitude, it never appears in the phenomenal world, remaining hidden in the interior dwelling of the soul.[89] Finally, in identifying freedom with free will, the early Christian tradition simultaneously divorces freedom from action; in suggesting that the exercise of free will is possible only in solitude, freedom comes to be associated with the ability to prohibit oneself from giving into the temptations of the exterior world. Hence, Arendt maintains that the Christian notion of free will has a paralyzing effect, inhibiting action by creating a conflict between the willing and the performing self.[90]

While this way of conceiving of freedom is undoubtedly formative for the tradition of metaphysics in the modern age, providing the basis for Descartes's epistemology and the representational problematic it creates for thinkers from Kant to Husserl, it has its most dramatic consequences in the context of politics.[91] Arendt explains that neither Epictetus nor Augustine were especially concerned with applying

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[88] Ibid., 161.

[89] Ibid.,143.

[90] Ibid., 161.

[91] Dana Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger,* 121.

their respective formulations of freedom to the realm of politics. Rather, working against the backdrop of a decaying and hostile political realm, both wished to establish a new ground for human freedom in a world where political freedom was in decline.[92] For this reason, Arendt says, "Neither the philosophical conception of freedom as it first arose in late antiquity, when freedom became a phenomenon of thought by which man could, as it were, reason himself out of the world, nor the Christian and modern notion of free will has any ground in political experience."[93] And yet, it is precisely this notion of freedom that takes center stage in politics at the beginning of the seventeenth century, transforming freedom into self-liberation and the security of liberty into the highest political ideal.

In much the same way as their pre-modern counter-parts, political theorists in the modern age do carry on the tradition of distrusting the world around them. Yet, unlike Augustine and Epictetus, who take up the question of freedom without direct reference to the political, Arendt believes that these modern figures ultimately endeavor to reformulate politics in terms of this distrust. In so doing, they are led to suggest that the task of politics consists in guaranteeing freedom from political life, or freedom from the unjustified restraint of government.[94] A new political infrastructure thus emerges in the modern age that is predicated above all on the idea that "freedom begins where politics

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[92] Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 146.

[93] Ibid.,155.

[94] Ibid., 148.

ends."[95] With this transformation in the idea of freedom, the political ceases to constitute a space where freedom can appear and instead becomes a mechanism for ensuring the security of private liberties. "Security," she says, "made freedom possible, and the word 'freedom' designated a quintessence of activities which occurred outside the political realm."[96]

Arendt maintains that the work of Thomas Hobbes is most emblematic of this turn in the modern political tradition, introducing a framework for government organized according to the delegation of power rather than political rights. Insofar as the purpose of the political is to provide conditional protection from being killed in exchange for absolute obedience, Hobbes conceives of the law and government in terms of security rather than freedom. Moreover, despite championing absolutism and monarchical government, Arendt suggests that Hobbes lays the theoretical foundations for bourgeois liberalism, giving clearer articulation to the structures of liberalism than any other modern political theorist. This, she explains, is because Hobbes is the only political theorist who does not insist that the state of nature has its basis in divine law or natural law and, furthermore, dismisses the idea that it provides the ground for a social contract. Instead, he conceives of the state of nature in such a way that the law can only be understood in terms of individual interests themselves. For this reason, Arendt argues that Hobbes, even more so than figures like Locke or Smith, is "the only great

[95] Ibid.

[96] Ibid., 148.

philosopher to whom the bourgeoisie can rightly and exclusively lay claim."[97] In identifying the task of politics with security rather than action, Arendt explains that political theory in the modern age, taking its point of departure from Hobbes, transforms government into "the appointed protector not so much of freedom as of the life process, the interests of society and its individuals."[98] Therefore, by divorcing freedom from the political and rebuilding the political around this non-political notion of freedom, the realm of politics, which had once served to contravene the automatic processes that characterize life in general, becomes a vehicle for upholding and guaranteeing them.

II.2. Arendt's Critique of Liberty: Statelessness and the Right to Have Rights

Arendt gives concrete articulation to the way in which the internal, Christian notion of freedom becomes imbedded within politics in the modern age through her account of the political emancipation of the bourgeoisie beginning in the seventeenth century. She explains that in order for the bourgeoisie to obey the law of expansion inherent in capitalist production, it became necessary to impose this law on the structure of the political so as to foster economic growth beyond national borders.[99] For this reason, national governments began transforming in the seventeenth century such that expansion became the principal aim of all foreign policy.[100] As the capitalist interests of the bourgeoisie became increasingly intertwined with the affairs of national

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[97] Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Inc., 1973), 139.

[98] Arendt, *Between Past and Future,* 148–9.

[99] Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 126.

[100] Ibid., 126.

governments, Arendt explains that these governments became increasingly concerned with exporting mechanisms of power and violence abroad for the sake of dominating foreign peoples and resources so as to protect their stake in the wealth that these enterprises generated.

Arendt suggests that with the coalescence of business and politics, private life was raised to the "one publicly honored political principle."[101] Hence, the body politic that had once served to defend itself and its citizens against the recklessness that prevailed in the private sphere became a national government concerned with maintaining its imperial enterprises and protecting the private interests of those living outside its national boarders.[102] The logical outcome of this imperial enterprise was "the destruction of all living communities, those of the conquered people as well as of the people at home. […] Power became the essence of political action and the center of political thought when it was separated from the political community which it should serve."[103] Through imperial expansion, the interests of the bourgeoisie generated a new kind of government, one that promised security but not political rights, thereby preserving those automatic life processes associated with the private realm.[104] No longer guided by a concern for political freedom, the public realm where individuals "could show who they really and interchangeably were," became increasingly hidden, enabling

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[101] Ibid., 139.

[102] Ibid., 139.

[103] Ibid., 138.

[104] Ibid., 141

national governments guided by the interests of the bourgeoisie to demand obedience and blind conformism with regard to political affairs.[105] Arendt says:

> Deprived of political rights, the individual, to whom public and official life manifests itself in the guise of necessity, acquires a new and increased interest in private life and his personal fate. Excluded from participation in the management of public affairs that involve all citizens, the individual loses his rightful place in society and his natural connection with his fellow men.[106]

She explains that the over-accumulation of capital and power reached its height at the beginning of the twentieth century, once local political communities had been transformed into states governed by unprincipled power politics. As expansion became an automatic and seemingly unending process, these so called "national" governments simultaneously produced mobs whose actions were guided not by political principles such as freedom and equality, but rather by blind submission to the project of imperialism.[107] By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, these mobs were sustained by racist propaganda that served to justify expansion, which Arendt describes as "the main ideological weapon of imperialist politics."[108] She argues that the European nation-state was born under these conditions, leading her to suggest that the pretense of

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[105] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 141.

[106] Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 141.

[107] Ibid., 143.

[108] Ibid., 160.

universal humanism on which the nation-state is based in fact produced the conditions that gave rise to totalitarianism in the twentieth century.

While the liberal tradition grounds its promise of universal emancipation in liberty, elevating it to the highest political ideal, this ultimately produces a political structure that makes freeing oneself from the automation of the life processes impossible. Arendt does insist that a bright line must be drawn between the period of imperial expansion and the era of the concentration camps; nevertheless she suggests that the bureaucratic political infrastructure of European imperialism, one ultimately built on power, obedience, and necessity, sets the stage for the political catastrophes of the twentieth century.[109] I will return to Arendt's account of the relationship between bourgeois liberalism, the European imperial experience, and the rise of totalitarianism in subsequent chapters. For now, it is important to note that by considering Arendt's analysis of the transformation of the notion of freedom and liberty throughout the history of western political thought alongside her discourse on statelessness in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, we find that she discovers a contradiction internal to the tradition of enlightened liberalism that culminates in crisis after World War I.

Statelessness is symptomatic of the contradiction internal to the epoch of the Enlightenment, revealing the inadequacy of the structure of the nation-state in its ability to make good on the Enlightenment promise of universal emancipation.[110] This promise is manifest in the eighteenth century formulations of the Rights of Man, which were

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[109] Ibid., 123.

[110] Ibid., 277.

assumed to be inalienable because they required no special law to guarantee them. That is, rather than being guaranteed by God or a king, the Rights of Man were taken to be guaranteed by man himself, who, in his sacredness, was believed to be enough to provide an unshakable foundation for their legitimacy, promising to protect humanity as a whole rather than particular individuals or groups.[111] The Rights of Man presupposed that the individual did not need a place in the world in order for her fundamental human rights to be protected. More specifically, Arendt says, "The Rights of Man, after all, had been defined as 'inalienable' because they were supposed to be independent of all governments," presumed to be guaranteed by nothing more than the bare fact of man's existence.[112]

Yet, Arendt explains that in their original formulation, these rights were not meant to protect individuals, but served instead to justify the sovereignty of the people who belonged to a particular nation-state. Hence, the rights of the abstract human being envisioned by the eighteenth century framers of Declaration of the Rights of Man collapsed into the rights of particular groups who justified their membership in their political communities on the basis of nationality or ethnicity. In light of this, Arendt says:

> No paradox of contemporary politics is filled with a more poignant irony than the discrepancy between the efforts of well-meaning idealists who stubbornly insist on regarding as 'inalienable' those human rights, which are enjoyed only by

[111] Ibid., 297.

[112] Ibid.

citizens of the most prosperous and civilized countries, and the situation of the rightless themselves.[113]

In providing justification for the sovereignty of peoples, the Rights of Man provided the ground for the rise of European nation-states along with juridical orders that were oriented by the national identity of certain groups rather than the sacredness of man. Even those governments that derived their legitimacy directly from the Rights of Man discovered in the twentieth century that they had the grounds to justify denationalizing all those who were unfortunate enough "to be born into the wrong kind of race or the wrong kind of class or drafted by the wrong kind of government."[114] Upon being denationalized, stripped of the rights of citizenship and the protection of their own governments, stateless individuals found themselves living outside the pale of the law in a way that had not been seen before World War I. To the extent that neither their country of origin nor any other country would extend legal protection to them, Arendt explains that stateless people became increasingly subject to the arbitrary force of the police. Masses of stateless people who were no longer citizens of any sovereign state, thus emerged at the beginning of the twentieth century whose inalienable rights could not be enforced.[115]

The appearance of stateless people demonstrated that while one's fundamental freedoms were supposed to be guaranteed by the bare fact of being human alone, these

[113] Ibid., 279.

[114] Ibid., 295.

[115] Ibid., 291–2.

fundamental freedoms proved meaningless for those who had lost the rights of citizenship and no longer belonged to a political community willing and able to protect them. Arendt says:

> The calamity of the rightless is not that they are deprived of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, or of equality before the law and freedom of opinion – formulas which were designed to solve problems *within* given communities – but that they no longer belong to any community whatsoever. […] There is no question that those who exist have more freedom of movement than a lawfully imprisoned criminal or that they enjoy more freedom of opinion in the internment camps of democratic countries than they would in any ordinary despotism, not to mention in a totalitarian country. But neither physical safety […] nor freedom of opinion changes in the least their fundamental situation of rightlessness.[116]

In making visible this space of rightlessness, the appearance of stateless people called into question the inalienability of the right to life, liberty, and happiness, or the notion that such rights can be said to exist without being guaranteed by a political community.[117] As such, the worldless, internal Christian notion of freedom that becomes definitive of politics in the modern age proved inadequate for guaranteeing the rights of those who had been expelled from their communities. Moreover, the phenomenon of statelessness revealed the emptiness of the enlightened liberal notions of human freedom

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[116] Ibid., 296.

[117] Ibid., 299.

contained in the Declaration of the Rights of Man, suggesting instead that "the world found nothing sacred in the bare fact of being human."[118] Upon losing their rights to belong to a political community, stateless people found themselves abandoned entirely by all laws, exposed to a space of rightlessness that opened up the unforeseen possibility of their complete dehumanization. Therefore, while the epoch of the Enlightenment had been guided by the assumption that universal emancipation follows naturally from the structure of the nation-state, we find in the twentieth century that the nation-state itself produced stateless people, revealing a paradox internal to notions of universal human rights that have their basis in the concept of the Rights of Man inherited from the revolutionary Enlightenment. The appearance of stateless people in the period between the world wars thus clarified the inadequacy of the structure of the European nation-state for achieving the end of universal emancipation set forth by the Enlightenment.

Yet, Arendt's concern for statelessness goes beyond this, providing a critical commentary on the history of western political thought, of which the decline of the nation-state is merely a chapter. By considering her analysis of statelessness in light of the development of the idea of freedom throughout the tradition of western political thought, we find that statelessness is symptomatic of a broader crisis in freedom. The emergence of stateless people demonstrated not only that freedom in the modern age had become synonymous with self-liberation in the private sphere, but also that such a conception of freedom proved meaningless in the face of this unprecedented phenomenon. Understood as an attribute of the will rather than an event brought to bear

[118] Ibid.

on political life through speech and action, Arendt suggests that freedom has no way of appearing in the world. Statelessness offers a powerful illustration of the political danger involved in this, indicating that upon losing one's place in the world or the context of meaning that makes opinions significant and actions effective, one loses the ability to intervene in the futility and meaninglessness of the automatic life processes. Rather than rising above these necessary processes by enacting of one's freedom in the space of politics, human beings who have lost their place in a political community are instead left entirely exposed to them. As such, they become susceptible to being reduced in their unrepeatable uniqueness to interchangeable and expendable parts of the cyclical movements of nature and history.

Through her analysis of statelessness, Arendt thus diagnoses a contradiction internal to the fundamental assumption of the modern political tradition, namely, that freedom is an essential, internal, and inalienable property of the human being that arises through a retreat from the world into the inner domain of thought and the will. On Arendt's view, the emergence of stateless people revealed that the concept of freedom is meaningful only insofar as it can be actualized in a world with others. For this reason, she insists that freedom requires a space of appearance, calling on us to resist the modern emphasis on securing liberty in the private sphere and return instead to the political origins of the notion of freedom. Arendt's critical insights into enlightened liberal notions of freedom, when taken together with her analysis of statelessness, can therefore be seen to provide the basis for her broader concern for developing a renewed sense of

political community in order to reclaim the meaning and significance of the world in the face of the political catastrophes of the twentieth century.

II.3. Arendt and Heidegger on Being-in-the-World

Arendt's analysis of statelessness brings her critical concerns regarding the epoch of the Enlightenment into focus, which helps to elucidate the centrality of the space of appearance for her positive project. As I have tried to show, Arendt believes that the internal Christian notion of free will was brought to bear on the political realm in the modern age through the elevation of liberty and the protection of private rights to the highest political ideal. As a result, the infrastructure of the political underwent a fundamental shift in the modern age, no longer constituting a space in which individuals came together for the sake of rising above the necessities of private life through speech and action in the public realm, as had been the case in antiquity. Instead, government became a mechanism for ensuring the security of the private rights of individuals. The rise of stateless people at the beginning of the twentieth century exposes a crisis in this understanding of freedom, demonstrating that freedom loses its meaning when individuals are expelled from their political communities. We therefore find through statelessness that the political structures of enlightened liberalism, in having their basis in the contrary assumption that freedom begins where politics ends, leave no space for freedom to appear. Consequently, Arendt argues that in the modern age, automation overtakes the sphere of politics, which, as we will see in greater detail later on, provides a platform for totalitarian governments to come into existence in the twentieth century.

Through statelessness, Arendt discovers that freedom is a worldly phenomenon, leading her to reformulate the idea of freedom and the task of politics more generally in terms of the space of appearance.[119] In order to elucidate this notion of the space of appearance, however, it is necessary to consider the influence of Martin Heidegger's *Existenz*-philosophy on Arendt's work. As I shall demonstrate in this section, Arendt's notion of the space of appearance can perhaps best be understood as a political reinterpretation of the Heideggerian idea of being-in-the-world. In conceiving of the public sphere as a space that illuminates or shines light on human freedom, she draws on Heidegger's notion of authenticity, or the distinctly human capacity to transcend one's finitude by disclosing the meaningfulness of the world through one's authentic engagement with it. Heidegger's notion of authenticity gives orientation to Arendt's conception of freedom, which she believes consists not in a fixed and internal property of the human being, but rather in the ability to seize upon the possibilities that arise from the unique and unrepeatable existential conditions into which human beings are thrown. It is precisely this ontological notion of freedom as opposed to internal notions of freedom characteristic of the tradition of western metaphysics that Arendt imports into her political framework.[120] Likewise, in her analysis of the automatic processes that characterize life in general and the oppositional relation she believes these processes have to the event of freedom, she takes on board aspects of Heidegger's critique of

[119] In his discussion of Arendt's Heideggerian roots, Dana Villa uses the term "worldly phenomenon" to describe the kind of freedom that both figures prioritize in contrast to the more abstract notion of freedom conceived as an attribute of thought or the will that dominated the history of western metaphysics. See Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger*, 119.

[120] Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger*, 120.

modernity, as well as his notion of inauthenticity, or the average everydayness that levels Dasein's possibilities to be and the radical freedom that accompanies this.[121]

Yet, while Heidegger's existential analytic of Dasein and the idea of freedom that arises from it play a formative role in Arendt's thought, her appropriation of this Heideggerian idea is by no means a mere repetition of it. Rather, as Dana Villa says, through her evaluation of the political ramifications of being-in-the-world, she both challenges and expands Heidegger's project by "[transposing] the Heideggerian dynamics of transcendence and everydayness from an existential to a political context."[122] Upon developing Heidegger's notion of being-in-the-world, I consider the political ramifications that Arendt identifies in this way of understanding the existential constitution of the human being. In so doing, I argue that Arendt's reformulation of the political realm as the space of appearance, or that space in which freedom comes into appearance through the spontaneity of human action, creates an opening in the world for the event of freedom that Heidegger, in his disavowal of the public, fails to envision.

Heidegger's existential understanding of human freedom grows out of his claim that the principal existential structure of the human being is "being-in-the-world."[123] Before considering what Heidegger means by being-in-the-world, however, it is necessary to clarify the broader aim of his project and the departure he makes from his predecessors in undertaking it. On Heidegger's view, the history of western metaphysics,

[121] Ibid., 115.

[122] Ibid., 114.

[123] Ibid., 121.

beginning with Plato, has conceived of being in terms of essence. Though originally guided by the question of the meaning of being, the investigation of which provides the basis for all subsequent theoretical inquiry, this method, Heidegger thinks, has led philosophy astray in its pursuit of its own guiding question. He thus argues that in the modern age we have forgotten the meaning of being altogether, the effect of which is exemplified in the aimless instrumentalism of modern science and technology. Heidegger therefore argues that it is necessary to begin anew, calling for the destruction of the tradition of western metaphysics in order to recover its originary question and discern a new method for uncovering the meaning of being.[124]

Heidegger believes that it is necessary to begin his analysis by directing the question of the meaning of being towards ourselves, as we are the kind of beings that have our own being as our concern. That is to say, we already have a vague, pre-theoretical understanding of the kind beings that we are, and it is in virtue of having this sense of ourselves that we are led to pose the question of the meaning of being. Hence, he believes that our investigation into the question of being must begin with the human being, who he names Dasein or "there-being." In offering this analysis of Dasein, Heidegger wishes to reverse the traditional philosophical hierarchy first articulated by Plato and Aristotle, both of whom suggest that being is associated with the unchanging essences of things rather than the transitory character of existence. He insists that Dasein always already finds itself standing in relation to being, which is to say, Dasein

[124] See Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany: State University of New York Press), Introduction, I, esp. §3 and Introduction II, esp. §6.

understands itself in terms of its existence or its possibilities to be or not be itself.[125] Hence, what it means to be human does not consist in actualizing one's essence by fulfilling one's proper function. By contrast, the being of the human being lies in its potentiality, or the fact that in existing in lacks a pre-given essence. In other words, Heidegger says, "*The 'essence' ['wessen'] of Dasein lies in its existence [Existenz]*. The characteristics to be found in this being are thus not present 'attributes' of an objectively present being which has such and such an 'outward appearance,' but rather possible ways for it to be, and only this."[126] Therefore, he explains, living properly is "decided only by each Dasein itself in the manner of seizing upon or neglecting such possibilities."[127]

With this, Heidegger explains that the principal existential structure of Dasein is "being-in-the-world." In characterizing Dasein this way, Heidegger wishes to show that the human being is not merely an intending subject, and the world, a container filled with objects that stand in opposition to this subject; such a conception of one's surrounding environment, though pervasive throughout the tradition of western metaphysics, is derivative of our originary experience of the world and the ontological valence this experience has. Understood ontologically, the world constitutes the nexus of meaningful relations in which Dasein always already finds itself.[128] Dasein is

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[125] Heidegger, *Being and Time,* 11.

[126] Ibid., 41.

[127] Ibid., 11.

[128] See Heidegger, *Being and Time*, esp. Division I.II, §14.

fundamentally constituted by "being-in," which is to say, Dasein is already involved or absorbed in a context of meaning. As such, Dasein is not merely objectively present in the world, as in the case of a stone, but instead dwells in it, experiencing the world as familiar or near by.[129]

Heidegger explains that we dwell in the world insofar as we are familiar with it, a familiarity that is expressed above all in our ability to care for the beings with which we are involved. Heidegger uses the example of a hammer in a workshop to elucidate this notion of care. The hammer, he argues, comes to appear in the world as meaningful not in virtue of its essence or the properties it has as a hammer. On the contrary, its meaning emerges through my involvement with it and the usefulness it has for my projects.[130] In other words, the hammer comes to appear as a hammer through my appropriation of it in my everyday dealings with it. For this reason, Heidegger argues, the world, understood ontologically, is not a container filled with the totality of objectively present things, but is instead constituted by the originary context of meaningful relations within which Dasein is already involved.[131]

Yet, while we find ourselves already involved and familiar with the surrounding world, this familiarity simultaneously places us at a distance from it. Dasein does not choose this world, but instead inherits it. Therefore, in its involvement with things and others, Dasein finds itself burdened by something larger than its own making, immersed

[129] Ibid., Division I.II, §12.

[130] Ibid., Division I.III §15.

[131] Ibid., Division I.V, §22. See also Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger*, 120.

in a context of relations that are neither the product of its own will nor something it controls. For Heidegger, this aspect of Dasein's being-in constitutes its facticity, or the givenness of its existence.[132] It is only from out of this givenness, which is entirely other to Dasein, that Dasein reaches out towards the things, others, and the objects for which it cares and is concerned. Heidegger thus explains that we only ever pursue our concern for ourselves through something outside of ourselves. In caring, Dasein reaches out in an effort to de-distance, or bring being nearer to it through its involvement with the world.

The implications of this are two-fold. First, to the extent that we find ourselves always already involved in a world, being human cannot be thought apart from "being-in-the-world." In other words, to be human means to be in a world and, therefore, to conceive of the human being as a subject that stands over and against the world is to cover over the kind of being that Dasein is. Second, insofar as Dasein is ontologically constituted by this being-in, Dasein is only ever in the world in a concerned way. Dasein cares in its involvement with the world and, in so doing, "'clears' or opens a world, a space of significance, a 'there.'"[133] As "there-being," Dasein is not a self-contained substance, closed off to an external world. Instead, Dasein must be understood as an opening for the uncovering or disclosure of being.[134] That is to say, insofar as Dasein is being-in, Dasein illuminates being, bringing its significance to bear on the world by opening up new spaces of meaning.

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[132] Ibid., Division I.II, §12.

[133] Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger*, 123.

[134] Ibid.

To the extent that Dasein is constituted by being-in, it is the source of its meaningfulness, and it is in virtue of this ability to disclose meaning in the world that Heidegger believes human beings achieve transcendence as "being-free." The existential structures that enable Dasein to disclose being are attunement and understanding.[135] Attunement constitutes that mode of being-in where one finds oneself affected or moved by the world.[136] This structure of Dasein's existential constitution is revealed in its moods, which disclose Dasein as a being that is always already thrown into a world it neither chooses nor controls. Understanding, on the other hand, is that mode of being-in that is oriented by Dasein's possibilities to be; to the extent that Dasein has projects and is always involved in taking care of the world, Dasein understands itself in terms of its future possibilities.[137] Understanding thus discloses Dasein to itself as being-possible and in so doing "offers a phenomenal ground to see it all."[138]

While Dasein's freedom arises from its disclosedness through understanding, Heidegger is clear that the kind of freedom to which this gives birth is not "a free-floating potentiality of being in the sense of the 'liberty of indifference.'"[139] By contrast, insofar as Dasein is fundamentally attuned, Dasein is already immersed in a set of

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[135] Though I focus here on attunement and understanding, it is worth noting that Heidegger believes "attunement and understanding are equiprimordially determined by *discourse*." See Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 130. For Heidegger's discussion of discourse and the disclosedness of Dasein, see *Being and Time*, I.VI, §34.

[136] See Heidegger, *Being and Time*, Division I.V, §29.

[137] Ibid., See Division I.V, §31.

[138] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 139.

[139] Ibid.

definite possibilities given to it by the world in which it finds itself. Hence, we only ever project from out of our thrownness and are free to the extent that we can decide who we are from out of our existential constitution as being-in-the-world. In other words, Heidegger explains, we are free only insofar as we choose to seize upon our own most possibilities to be, or decide to be who we are from out of our existential constitution.

Understanding can therefore occur in one of two ways. On the one hand, Dasein can see itself, as well as the others and objects with which it is involved, in terms of their average everydayness. This way of understanding, Heidegger explains, is inauthentic, and Dasein "initially and for the most part" understands itself this way.[140] Absorbed in the familiarity and security of its daily routine, Dasein sees the world around it in its "handiness" or productive capacity. This way of seeing, Heidegger thinks, is dimmed down, leading everyday Dasein to "pass over not only the world, but 'itself.'"[141] In comporting itself towards the world solely in terms of its familiarity with it, Dasein's possibilities are leveled down or restricted to what is feasible, correct, or proper.[142] Heidegger says, "The leveling down of the possibilities of Dasein to what is initially available in an everyday way at the same time results in a phasing out of the possible as such. The average everydayness of taking care of things becomes blind to possibility and gets tranquilized with what is merely 'real.'"[143] When we understand ourselves

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[140] Ibid., 118.

[141] Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger*, 130.

[142] See Heidegger, *Being and Time*, Division I.VI, §41

[143] Ibid., 188.

inauthentically, we remain hidden from ourselves, closed off to our own most possibilities to be; we fall prey to a kind of understanding that is determined by others, which he calls the "they-self" and in this condition of fallenness are unable to open up new spaces of significance or disclose being in new ways.

Authentic Dasein, by contrast, has an understanding of itself that originates from its constitution as thrown projection. This way of being-in is authentically disclosive, arising first through attunement in the mood of anxiety, which enables Dasein to see itself as radically individuated despite being bound up with a world and free for its own most possibilities to be. Authentic understanding arises when Dasein no longer sees itself in terms of the "they-self" in its average everydayness, but instead as being-free for "choosing and grasping itself."[144] For Heidegger, then, freedom is an appropriative event, whereby authentic Dasein, upon discovering that it is determined by nothing other than its own most possibilities to be, seizes upon its possibilities from out of its thrownness. Therefore, being-free is always oriented by the world in which we find ourselves, and it is only because Dasein finds itself thrown into a world that it is able to open up new possibilities or new spaces of significance. In this way, freedom is not an internal disposition, but instead comes to appear in the world through Dasein's discovery or uncovering of being, an event that is brought about through Dasein's authentic engagement with its surrounding environment.

Arendt follows closely from Heidegger in his attempt to rethink the constitution of the human being, suggesting that its constitution lies not in a pre-given essence, but

[144] Ibid., 182.

rather in the possibilities that arise from out of its existence. In existing, Arendt, like Heidegger, believes that we always already find ourselves bound up in a world or context of meaning that is not our own. Yet, in having one's constitution in existence rather than a pre-given essence, one does not simply find oneself in this context of meaning as an indiscriminant being among many. Instead, for Arendt and Heidegger alike, "being-in" makes it the case that one is radically individuated. As we shall see, Arendt develops this differently and in many ways in opposition to Heidegger. For Heidegger, this individuation is disclosed to Dasein in the mood of anxiety through being-towards-death. For Arendt, by contrast, this individuation is given by the fact of our birth or the human condition of natality, which she believes gives rise to the distinctively human capacity for new beginnings that comes to appear in the world through the spontaneity of action in the public realm. Nevertheless, on the basis of this existential understanding of the human being, freedom takes shape for both as a worldly phenomenon, rather than an attribute of thought or the will. Whereas the latter conception of freedom presupposes that the human being is a self-contained worldless subject standing over and against the objects around it, both Heidegger and Arendt believe that insofar as we find ourselves in a world, our freedom arises through our appropriation of the world we have inherited. As Villa explains, "What matters, in short, is the *event* of authentic disclosedness, an event that, in both Arendt and Heidegger, signifies a wrenching free of everydayness and its illumination through the unpredictable

uncovering of the new. Through such disclosive spontaneity, the world is revealed in its worldliness."[145]

For Arendt, the political ramifications of Heidegger's notion of being-in-the-world arise in the idea of freedom that follows from it. Heidegger's characterization of the individual as thrown-projection provides a platform for Arendt's own reformulation of the idea of freedom as an event of authentic disclosedness, whereby something new comes to appear in the world. Not surprisingly, she believes that Heidegger lacked the political insight to appreciate this, holding onto "the old hostility of the philosophy towards the *polis* in Heidegger's analysis of average everyday life in terms of *das Man* (the 'they' or the rule of public opinion, as opposed to the 'self') in which the public realm has the function of hiding reality and preventing even the appearance of truth."[146] Heidegger unequivocally associates the inauthenticity of the "they-self" with the public, suggesting that in this mode, Dasein lets others decide who it is, dimming down its own most possibilities to be. For Heidegger, it is only through an experience of radical separation from the "they" manifest in a confrontation with one's mortality or the radically individuating experience of coming to terms with the fact that one's death is one's own, that the singularity of one's existence becomes manifest. With this, Heidegger insists that Dasein is most fundamentally constituted by the fact that it is always being-toward-death, and, in this, unrepeatable unique and free, able to decide

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[145] Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger*, 139.

[146] Arendt, "Concern with Politics in Recent European Thought," in *Essays in Understanding 1930-1954: Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism*, 432.

from out of its own existential constitution who to be, rather than allowing this to be determined for it by the leveled down average everydayness of public opinion.

While Arendt takes seriously the idea that freedom is predicated on individuals coming to see themselves as radically individuated, she nevertheless identifies what she takes to be a serious problem in Heidegger's account. If freedom is indeed a worldly phenomenon or event whereby something new comes to appear in the world, then being-free is only possible to the extent that a space exists in the world for freedom to make its appearance. Moreover, in order for freedom to appear, Dasein must be able to be seen by others in its authentic disclosedness and must be able to see others in their authentic disclosedness. Yet, Heidegger does not envision such a space in his account of Dasein's authentic disclosedness, suggesting instead that Dasein can only decide resolutely to act from out of its existential constitution if it does so while standing at a distance from the world and others. In doing otherwise, Heidegger thinks, we run the risk of interpreting ourselves through the dimmed down lens of public opinion. Dasein thus decides authentically only to return to a world of things and others that is covered over by the inauthenticity of the they. While Dasein may come to stand in a more authentic relation to others in the world, Heidegger's account makes it the case that Dasein's being-free for its own most possibilities seems to stand in opposition to the world of others.

Therefore, while Arendt agrees with Heidegger that freedom comes to appear in the world through an event of authentic disclosedness, she thinks that Heidegger fails to offer an account of the world that is differentiated enough to support his own existential reading of freedom. This, she argues, is an effect of Heidegger's repudiation of the

public, which she believes ultimately leads him to develop a worldless notion of authenticity that can only be realized in isolation from others.[147] To be sure, Heidegger's existential analytic of Dasein as being-in-the-world seeks to de-center the isolated modern subject and therefore cannot be thought apart from Dasein's relation to others. Moreover, because authenticity is a mode of being-in-the-world, Dasein's authentic disclosedness is always bound up with the possibility of authentically being-with.[148] Yet, Arendt and many others have suggested that in posing his notion of authenticity in direct opposition to Dasein in the mode of publicness, equating Dasein's publicly interpreted self with the "they-self" or the leveled down, average everydayness of inauthentic Dasein, Heidegger leaves the crucial political possibilities of authentic being-with unfulfilled.[149] Arendt, in particular, maintains that in his contempt for the public, Heidegger implicates himself in the philosophical prejudice against *praxis* central to the western metaphysical tradition since Plato. Hence, she argues that while Heidegger undertakes the destruction of this tradition by developing a "this-worldly philosophy," he ultimately deprives the world of its significance in his account of authentic Dasein,

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[147] See Villa, *Philosophy, Politics, Terror*, 67. Arendt offers this criticism of Heidegger in her essay, "What is Existential Philosophy?" in *Essays in Understanding 1930-1954: Formation, Exile and Totalitarianism* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1994): 176-81.

[148] Heidegger's discussion of being-with (*mitsein*) as a mode of being-in-the world, as well as his discussion of the inauthenticity of Dasein's publicly interpreted self appears in §25–7 of *Being and Time*.

[149] See Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger*, 212–3.

reifying the solitary life of thinking as the most genuine form of action and further contributing to the worldlessness that has become definitive of modern life.[150]

Arendt insists that if freedom is indeed a worldly phenomenon, a space must exist where individuals are able to appear to one another in their radical uniqueness. On her view, freedom requires a space of appearance, which she identifies with the public realm. Whereas the spheres of labor and work are governed by necessity, leaving individuals shrouded in average everydayness, the public realm provides a space where individuals can come together in their diversity and appropriate the world they have inherited anew through political action. Hence, on her account, the public sphere does not hide reality; on the contrary, it illuminates human affairs, enabling individuals to appear to one another in such a way that they can rise above the inauthenticity of everyday life. In contrast to Heidegger, Arendt therefore maintains that the public realm creates a space where freedom can appear and is therefore necessary for an event of authentic disclosedness.

II.4. The Political Realm as the Space of Appearance

Both Arendt's political appropriation of Heidegger's notion of being-in-the-world and her critical insights into his formulation of authenticity prove to be formative for the theoretical framework she develops in response to the political catastrophes of the twentieth century. Insofar as Arendt, like Heidegger, understands freedom as an event of authentic disclosedness, she believes that it is only through the enactment of freedom

[150] Ibid., 232. See also Hannah Arendt, "What is Existential Philosophy?" in *Essays in Understanding 1930–1954: Formation, Exile and Totalitarianism* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1994), 176–81.

that meaning comes to appear in the world in a way that contravenes those automatic processes that ordinarily govern human existence. In other words, freedom for both Arendt and Heidegger is neither an attribute of the will nor a immutable property of the human being. Instead insofar as we are constituted above all by our existential possibilities to be, freedom arises when we seize upon these possibilities, opening up new spaces of significance and ways of seeing from out of the world in which we find ourselves. For both, then, freedom is not an inner disposition of the human being that can be realized through a retreat from the world; instead, in being bound up with the existential conditions of the human being as being-in-the world, freedom comes to appear in the world through the authentic appropriation of one's thrownness.[151]

As we have seen, however, Arendt departs from Heidegger in his disavowal of the public, suggesting instead that a public realm must be held open if freedom is to make its appearance. The public realm, she explains, illuminates the affairs of men, enabling them to appear as they are through speech and action. In so doing, it creates a space for individuals to come together in order to appropriate the world anew or disclose new ways of seeing. Taking her point of departure from Heidegger's existential understanding of the human being, I wish to show in this section that Arendt rebuilds her notion of political life around the space of appearance. The public sphere thus comes to constitute the centerpiece of Arendt's reflections, not just on politics, but also on the existential constitution of the human being. As I shall demonstrate, the public realm, in creating a space for political action, provides the ground for human beings to come into

[151] Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 165.

appearance in the fullness of their humanity, allowing them to become visible to one another in their uniqueness in order to undertake projects that intervene in the necessity of the life processes. To illustrate this, it is necessary to consider Arendt's discussion of natality and plurality, both of which, she argues, are fundamental conditions of human existence. It is in virtue of these conditions that political life is possible and, thus, Arendt endeavors to reformulate the existential constitution of the human being in terms of the political.

The human condition of natality arises from the fact that we are each born into the world anew. To the extent that we find ourselves born into a world that is radically other to us, left without recourse to a pre-given essence, natality can be understood as Arendt's interpretation of Heidegger's conception of thrownness. While Arendt recognizes both birth and death, or natality and mortality, as ontological conditions of human existence, her openness to the political leads her to move away from Heidegger's emphasis on being-toward-death and turn instead towards the existential condition of birth.[152] In being born, Arendt argues, we are always already radically unique, appearing in the world as something entirely unexpected and, in this, natively capable of acting "against the overwhelming odds of statistical laws and their probability."[153] She thus argues that we are most fundamentally marked by the capacity for new beginnings, or the ability to introduce something to the world that has never before been seen. That is, Arendt says, "With the creation of man, the principle of beginning came into the world

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[152] See Jeffrey Andrew Barash, "Martin Heidegger, Hannah Arendt, and the Politics of Remembrance," *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 10.2 (2002): 171–182, 178.

[153] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 178.

itself, which, of course, is another way of saying that the principle of freedom was created when man was created but not before. "[154] For Arendt, then, freedom arises from the infinite improbability that accompanies the character of human existence insofar as we find ourselves conditioned by natality.

Natality comes to appear in the world through action, which Arendt identifies with the capacity to initiate something new in the world. She says, "To act, in the most general sense means to take 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*)."[155] It is therefore only in being conditioned by natality that one is able to bring something new into the world. Through action, individuals actualize their capacity to intervene in the necessary processes that ordinarily govern human existence, a capacity that arises from the fact of our birth. In other words, Arendt explains, "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."[156] The ability to introduce something new to the world is concomitant with the ability to be free, or the ability the to exceed the automatic processes of everyday life. For this reason, she argues that action is the political activity par excellence and conjectures that "natality, not mortality, may be the central category

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[154] Ibid., 177.

[155] Ibid.

[156] Ibid., 178.

of the political, as distinguished from metaphysical thought."[157] It is only in virtue of the singularity of our experience in the world, or the fact that every human being can introduce something new to it, that we can re-appropriate the world in such a way that it becomes meaningful. Therefore, in order for an event of authentic disclosedness to take place, Arendt argues that a space must exist where individuals can appear in their natality or radical uniqueness through action.

Arendt explains, however, that we are only radically unique to the extent that we stand in relation to others. She thus turns to the human condition of plurality, arguing that our singularity is granted to us by the fact that we find ourselves in an already existing set of meaningful relations. That is, we do not experience our natality in isolation, but instead only ever find ourselves in our uniqueness existing among others who are similarly conditioned by their uniqueness. As she explains, "Plurality is the condition of human action because we are all the same, that is, human, in such a way that nobody is every the same as anyone else who ever lived, lives, or will live."[158] Whereas natality makes action possible in giving us the ability to initiate something new in the world, the human condition of plurality makes its appearance through speech, or the ability to announce to others that in our radical singularity, we are the authors of our action.[159] She says, "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

[157] Ibid., 9.

[158] Ibid., 5.

[159] Ibid., 178.

distinctness and is the actualization of the human condition of plurality, that is, of living as a distinct and unique being among equals."[160] This ability to announce ourselves to one another in our diversity is a distinctly human capacity. For this reason, Arendt explains, action is only possible insofar as it is accompanied by speech. She says:

> Without the accompaniment of speech, at any rate, action would not only lose its revelatory character, but, and by the same token, it would lose its subject, as it were; not acting men but performing robots would achieve what, humanly speaking, would remain incomprehensible. Speechless action would no longer be action because there would no longer be an actor, and the actor, the doer of deeds, is possible only if he is at the same time the speaker of words.[161]

Therefore, in addition to action, speech, or the ability to announce that I am the author of my action, is required in order for me to appear fully in my uniqueness among others. Taken together, then, speech and action are disclosive of the human being, allowing individuals to become visible in their plurality and natality. That is, Arendt says:

> In acting and speaking, men show who they are, reveal actively their unique personal identities and thus make their appearance in the human world, while their physical identities appear without any activity of their own in the unique shape of the body and sound of the voice. The disclosure of 'who' in

[160] Ibid., 180.

[161] Ibid., 179.

contradistinction to 'what' somebody is […] is implicit in everything somebody says and does.[162]

By the same token, if one loses the ability to speak and act, the fullness of one's humanity remains hidden. In contrast to the life of labor and that of work, Arendt says, "A life without speech and without action […]—and this is the only way of life that in earnest has renounced all appearance and all vanity in the biblical sense of the word—is literally dead to the world; it has ceased to be a human life because it is no longer lived among men."[163] This, she explains, is because it is only by means of speech and action that we come to appear in the world in such a way that we are able to introduce something new to it and thereby enact our freedom. Whereas labor and work are ruled by necessity, Arendt explains that speech and action rise above such necessity, enabling individuals to initiate something new in the world in concert with others. That is, we insert ourselves into the world through word and deed and, in so doing, undergo a kind of second birth that is tantamount to the enactment of freedom.[164]

To the extent that speech and action are tied to the human capacity for freedom, she takes them to be distinctly political. It is only in the context of political life that individuals come together for the sake of initiating something new in the world and, in so doing, transcend the finitude of their particular existence. The sphere of politics or the public realm thus constitutes that space in which individuals can appear together in their

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[162] Ibid., 179.

[163] Ibid., 176.

[164] Ibid., 177.

diversity. Therefore, she says, the public realm constitutes "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."[165] The space of appearance does not always exist, but rather comes into existence through speaking and acting together. This means that no government or formal constitution is required for the space of appearance to come into existence and, likewise, the existence of such a space cannot be guaranteed by these mechanisms.[166] Arendt maintains that it is only through speech and action in the public realm that the reality of the world comes into full view.[167] Hence, while we ordinarily fail to live in this space, the public realm makes possible an event of appropriation, creating a space for individuals to open up new meaning in the world through political action. On Arendt's view, then, political life is both self- and world-disclosive, enabling human beings to come into appearance as who they are in their singularity, while bringing the meaningfulness of the world into appearance.[168]

II.5. Re-inscribing Freedom in the Realm of Politics

As we have seen, being free for Arendt is a distinctly human capacity that depends not simply on coming to understand oneself as a discrete individual in the world, but on announcing who one is to the world. This, in turn, enables one to act in

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[165] Ibid., 199.

[166] Ibid.

[167] Ibid.

[168] See Dana Villa, Arendt, Heidegger, and the Tradition, *Social Research: An International Quarterly* 74.4 (2007): 983–1002.

concert with others while remaining individuated in order to disclose new meaning in the world. Arendt therefore believes that any event of authentic disclosedness will depend a space existing in the world where individuals can appear together in their uniqueness. Insofar as it is only in the public realm, where individuals have the right to speak and act, that freedom can be enacted, she wishes to reformulate the task of politics in terms of holding open this space.

In elevating liberty in the private sphere to the highest political ideal, the public realm gets covered over in the modern age, making speech meaningless and action impossible, while leaving us in the twentieth century without a means for contravening those automatic life processes that stand in opposition to freedom. Statelessness signals a crisis in the epoch of the Enlightenment, revealing that by divorcing freedom from the world and restructuring the sphere of politics accordingly, liberalism gives way to a political realm that is sustained by the automation of the masses. In response to this crisis, Arendt suggests that it is necessary to restore the ancient concept of political freedom, which, in constituting a worldly phenomenon, provides a means for overcoming the inadequacy of our liberal political structures.[169] Yet, in making this appeal, she attempts at the same time to appropriate this notion of freedom in a way that is responsive to the Enlightenment call for universal emancipation. This creates an impetus for her to rethink the human being in light of the political, leading her to suggest

[169] Arendt explains in *Between Past and Future* that it is necessary to return to the Greeks not for the sake of erudition but instead because we have lost the ability in the modern age to think of freedom in terms of action, and such a concept of freedom has not been so clearly articulated since antiquity. Given the depravity of the notion of freedom that has become pervasive in modern politics, she suggests that while it is important to leave behind the elitism of the ancient politics, the worldly concept of freedom that arises there should be revisited in the present age. See *Between Past and Future*, 163–4.

that the fullness of one's humanity can only appear insofar as one belongs to a political community.

In what follows, I will turn to turn to Arendt's political interpretation of the phenomenon of loneliness in modern political life in order to clarify further the formative role her critical relation to the liberal political tradition plays in her analysis of exclusion and her concern for political belonging. We find through this concept that her account of statelessness is not exhaustive of the problem of exclusion in modern political life, but is instead symptomatic of a more endemic form of it expressed in the loneliness of the modern masses. By turning to her diagnosis of the problem of loneliness as it unfolds in her account of the susceptibility of the structures of modern political life to totalitarian domination, I will argue that Arendt poses her notion of citizenship as an antidote to this problem. As such, I wish to show that she makes a novel contribution to critical discourses concerning the dangers and limits of modern political life by developing a conception of citizenship that forms the basis to critique notions of citizenship inherited from the liberal tradition and approaches to exclusion that champion the expansion of our liberal political structures.

CHAPTER III

ANOTHER ORIGIN OF TOTALITARIANISM: ARENDT ON THE LONELINESS OF LIBERAL CITIZENS[170]

In the previous chapter, I argued that Arendt diagnoses a crisis in the epoch of the Enlightenment through her analysis of statelessness. On the basis of this analysis, she offers a critical intervention in the tradition of classical liberalism, suggesting that the retreat of freedom from the realm of politics in the modern era, while taken by liberal thinkers to be the ground for universal emancipation, produced the conditions for totalitarianism to emerge in the twentieth century. We find through Arendt's analysis of statelessness that freedom is meaningless for individuals who remain isolated and invisible to one another in their private lives. In order for freedom to become meaningful, it must be brought to bear on the world or the context of meaningful relations in which individuals find themselves. Conceived as an event of appropriation rather than a fixed property of the human being, Arendt thus maintains that freedom requires a space of appearance, or a public realm in which individuals are able to appear to one another in the fullness of their humanity through speech and action. By reformulating the concept of freedom in terms of the space of appearance, Arendt is led to develop a lived and embodied conception of citizenship that is oriented above all by

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[170] This chapter is derived, in part, with permission from an article published in the *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* on 28 October 2015 and is available online at http://www.tandfonline.com//10.1080/00071773.2015.1097405 © 2015 Taylor & Francis.

the active participation of individuals in the realm of politics. The purpose of this chapter is to elucidate Arendt's novel conception of citizenship in light of her critique of the concept of liberty and her concern for developing an ontological account of freedom that is keyed to the space of appearance.

Arendt's political philosophy has received renewed attention in recent years for the contribution it makes to current debate concerning the global possibilities for democratic citizenship. Yet, the emphasis scholars have placed on Arendt's notion of the right to have rights in order to advance these debates threatens to overshadow the scope and depth of her critical relation to the liberal tradition. My aim in what follows will be to show that Arendt's understanding of citizenship guides a prescient critique of the basic assumptions that underlie notions of citizenship inherited from the tradition of liberal political theory. My argument thereby aims to shift the orientation of current debate in order to bring into renewed focus the decisive role that her concerns regarding liberalism play in her insights into the failures and dangers of modern political life.

To this end, I will turn to a central but underappreciated dimension of her theoretical framework. Whereas Arendt's notion of citizenship and, with it, the right to have rights, are often cast in terms of her critique of the failings of the European nation-state that became evident with the rise of stateless people in the period between the world wars, I maintain that her approach to citizenship answers not only to this, but also—and even more fundamentally—to her broader concern for the problem of loneliness in modern life. Loneliness, Arendt argues, epitomizes the experience of living together in the modern age. Symptomatic of the feeling of no longer belonging to a

world, lonely individuals are unable to see themselves or others as who they are in their singularity. Loneliness thus leaves human beings dominated by a sense of worldlessness and superfluity, prepared to surrender their capacity for thinking to the compulsory force of logic that drives totalitarian terror.[171]

I argue that Arendt poses her notion of citizenship as an antidote to the problem of loneliness and, thus, to the vulnerability of modern political life to totalitarianism. In this, her conception of citizenship provides the basis to critique not only the problem of statelessness and the aporia of human rights, but also received ideas about citizenship that we have inherited from the liberal tradition. As I shall demonstrate, this dimension of Arendt's work puts into relief her view that the emphasis in liberal citizenship on the expansion of rights in the private sphere does not serve to remedy political exclusion, but, quite to the contrary, serves to reproduce the very loneliness that has made modern individuals susceptible to totalitarian domination. Arendt thus insists on a notion of citizenship that involves more than the protection of the right to pursue individual interests in the isolation of private life, aiming instead at returning individuals to the public realm where they can appear to one another in the fullness of their humanity as irreducibly unique and take shared responsibility for reclaiming the significance of the world. In turning to Arendt's discussion of loneliness, I wish to suggest that scholars who focus on Arendt's notion of rights at the price of her critical relation to the liberal tradition, not only put a decisive feature of Arendt's concerns in jeopardy of being

[171] Hannah Arendt, "On the Nature of Totalitarianism: An Essay in Understanding," *Essays in Understanding 1930–1954: Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1994): 328–360, 360.

overlooked. Beyond this, they also risk misrepresenting an important critical perspective on assumptions of the liberal tradition that may remain operative in their work and, moreover, in the political structures that organize modern life.

Arendt demonstrates through her account of loneliness that the resources of modern liberalism are inadequate for developing an account of citizenship that can overcome the problem of loneliness in the modern age. Because of this, I argue, she draws on a model of political life represented by the Greek *polis*, and the concern for tradition and foundation central to the Roman *res publica* to develop a notion of political belonging that she believes offers a remedy to the problem of loneliness in modern political life. Through her appropriation of these traditions, Arendt comes to understand citizenship not as a legal status that can be expanded indefinitely, but rather as political activity through which human beings become visible to one another by taking shared responsibility for carrying the world they have in common from the past into the future. In promising visibility, such a notion of citizenship, Arendt argues, creates the conditions for freedom's appearance, enabling individuals to act in concert with others in order to renew the meaning of the world through an event of appropriation. By drawing Arendt's concern for the problem of statelessness together with her discourse on loneliness, I therefore wish to show that Arendt takes this lived and embodied conception of citizenship to promise a solution to the alienation of modern individuals, ensuring that they are able to recognize themselves and others as belonging to a common world.

III.1. From Statelessness to Loneliness

Arendt's concern for citizenship grows out of her analysis of statelessness in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* and the danger she believes it reveals in denying individuals the right to belong to political community. As we have seen, Arendt maintains that the space of rightlessness to which stateless people were subjected at the beginning of the twentieth century revealed a paradox internal to the notion of human rights born out of the eighteenth century declarations of the Rights of Man. Whereas these rights, in their original eighteenth century formulations, were purported to be inalienable properties of every human individual, the emergence of stateless people demonstrated that such rights could be lost without a political community willing and able to guarantee them.[172] Hence, on the basis of her analysis of the phenomenon of statelessness, Arendt says:

> Not the loss of specific rights, then, but the loss of a community willing and able to guarantee any rights whatsoever, has been the calamity which has befallen ever-increasing numbers of people. Man, it turns out, can lose all so-called Rights of Man without losing his essential quality as a man, his human dignity. Only the loss of a polity itself expels him from humanity.[173]

In light of this, Arendt argues that rise of stateless people made the world aware of "the existence of the right to have rights (and that means to live in a framework where one is judged by one's actions and opinions) and a right to belong to some kind of organized

[172] Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 296.

[173] Ibid., 297.

community."[174] She thus offers what is perhaps her most emphatic statement concerning the importance of citizenship in this text, calling for a new conception of human rights rooted in the "the right to have rights" or the right to be a citizen of some sovereign state.[175]

In emphasizing the centrality of the right to have rights, recent scholars have focused on whether it is possible to provide rational or normative justification for her suggestion that the right to belong to political community is a universal human right. Arendt, for her part, remains unresolved in her assessment of the viability of the global institution of human rights, leading scholars to disagree about the extent to which her own political categories are adequate for grounding the universal right to citizenship.[176] Even so, many continue to draw on her notion of the right to have rights as part of their efforts to advance debate concerning the global possibilities for democratic citizenship, interpreting Arendt in the service of expanding the structures of liberal democracy that guide political practice today. Those who approach Arendt this way thus assume that the forms of exclusion epitomized by statelessness are external to our liberal political

[174] Ibid.

[175] Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 296–7.

[176] In identifying a paradox at the heart of modern formulations of human rights Arendt seems at once to undermine the concept of human rights, while at the same time invoking this concept in her call for the universal right to citizenship. Her discourse on the right to have rights has thus left many to wonder whether this is merely a lacuna in her thought, or if she in fact views the very structure of the political institution of human rights to be aporetic. For more on Arendt's account of the paradox of human rights, see Jacques Rancière's critique of Arendt in "Who is the Subject of the Rights of Man?", *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 103.2/3 (2004): 297–310, Ayten Gündogdu, "'The Perplexities of the Rights of Man': Arendt on the Aporias of Human Rights," *European Journal of Political Theory*, 11.1 (2011): 4–24, and Christoph Menke, "The 'Aporias of Human Rights' and the 'One Human Right': Regarding the Coherence of Arendt's Argument," *Social Research*, 74.3 (2007): 739–763.

structures and, in this, risk overlooking the critique she develops in her discourse on citizenship regarding the basic assumptions that underlie the liberal tradition.

Seyla Benhabib, for instance, argues that Arendt's account of the right to have rights provides a vital starting point for critically engaging the conception of universal rights that is attached to liberal political practice. She insists, however, that in refusing to embrace a unified concept of human nature, Arendt leaves us without a normative foundation for transforming the right to citizenship into a universal human right.[177] Moreover, Arendt's concern regarding the decline of the public space in the modern era leads her to formulate a conception of politics based on the Greek notions of action and visibility, failing, in turn, to conceive of political life in ways that admit of a more enlightened theory of democratic legitimacy.[178] Benhabib thus argues that significant as Arendt's critical insights are, they must be supplemented by the work of liberal theorists if we are to find an anchor for them in present day politics. To this end, she considers Arendt alongside figures such as Habermas and Rawls who develop methods for rehabilitating the political categories of the Enlightenment in order to morally and rationally justify the expansion of our liberal political structures.[179]

In contrast to Benhabib, both Peg Birmingham and Serena Parekh believe that it is possible to derive a universal ground for the right to have rights from Arendt's own theoretical framework. While these scholars thereby do much to demonstrate the internal

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[177] Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*, 185.

[178] Ibid., 200.

[179] Ibid.,193–200. See also, Seyla Benhabib, *Dignity in Adversity: Human Rights in Troubled Times* (Hoboken: Wiley Press, 2011), 57–76.

consistency of Arendt's political categories, their emphasis on the question of rights keeps Arendt's critical relation to the liberal tradition from coming into full view. Birmingham insists that while Arendt offers a profound indictment of the Rights of Man in drawing attention to their failure to protect stateless people from the death camps, she nevertheless remains a humanist, searching throughout her career for a new principle of humanity to guarantee the right to have rights.[180] Rather than grounding this guarantee in a fixed and pre-political conception of human nature, however, Birmingham argues that Arendt locates it in the human condition of natality.[181] Birmingham explains that Arendt conceives of natality as the fundamental condition of human existence, marking the singularity of each human being that is given by the fact that we are born into the world anew. In capturing the boundlessness of human action, Birmingham maintains that Arendt's notion of natality provides an ontological foundation for human rights that takes seriously the questions raised by the political disasters of the twentieth century.[182] In this, Birmingham clarifies the importance of Arendt's work for renewing a notion of human rights that is based not on the presumed sacredness of the human being, but rather on the global political responsibility we now have to come to terms with the human capacity for evil.[183]

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[180] Birmingham, *Hannah Arendt and Human Rights*, 5.

[181] Peg Birmingham, "The An-Archic Event of Natality and the Right to Have Rights," *Social Research*, 74.3 (2007): 763–777, 766.

[182] Ibid.

[183] Birmingham, *Hannah Arendt and Human Rights*, 7.

Though Parekh differs from Birmingham in her angle of approach, she too argues that it is possible to derive a foundation for the right to have rights from Arendt's own political categories. Parekh explains, for instance, that when taken together with her understanding of political action as "love of the world," Arendt's conception of human rights offers a novel means of universally grounding our responsibility to address global injustices such as world poverty.[184] According to Parekh, Arendt achieves this by taking seriously the ethical demands of non-citizens without diminishing the importance of community as a human good, mediating between these seemingly contradictory ends through her account of judgment.[185] By drawing attention to the intervention Arendt makes in the debate between communitarian and cosmopolitan visions of international politics, Parekh, like Birmingham, demonstrates the importance of Arendt's work for rehabilitating a conception of rights that guarantees human solidarity on a global scale.[186]

Whereas these scholars stress the contribution Arendt makes to debates concerning the global expansion of the right to democratic citizenship, more may nevertheless be done to clarify the role that Arendt believes liberal theory and practice play in producing political exclusion. To be sure, their formulations of Arendt do recognize the ways in which her critique of the nation-state and her analysis of the aporia of human rights can serve to challenge and reshape liberal political practice. Less

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[184] Serena Parekh, "Arendt, Judgment, and Responsibility to the Global Poor," *Philosophical Topics*, 39.2 (2011): 145–163, 147.

[185] Ibid.

[186] Birmingham, *Hannah Arendt and Human Rights,* 57.

appreciated, however, is Arendt's discourse on loneliness, which brings into focus the full depth of her critique of the structures of modern liberalism and the forms of citizenship that accompany it. This critique is only tacitly expressed in her analysis of the plight of stateless people. Moreover, Arendt's notion of loneliness and her analysis of statelessness have only been developed in parallel in Arendt studies, and have yet to be considered as interconnected and interdependent concepts in Arendt's thought. In emphasizing the right to have rights and treating it as a standalone issue unrelated to the theme of loneliness, I maintain that scholars like Benhabib, Birmingham, and Parekh effectively mistreat Arendt as a left-liberal figure, failing, in turn, to do justice to the radical implications of her work. Hence, by shifting the focus of this discourse to loneliness, my aim is to put into relief a dimension of Arendt's political philosophy that has been overshadowed in recent scholarship, but that is nevertheless central for capturing the prescience of her insights concerning the dangers of modern political life.

While loneliness is a persistent and orienting theme in Arendt's work, it rarely receives the kind of systematic treatment that is given to her discussion of the right to have rights, often taken instead to be an intriguing but incidental dimension of her broader theoretical framework.[187] I maintain, by contrast, that her account of loneliness

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[187] Several scholars including Villa, Martin Shuster, and Roger Berkowitz have acknowledged the centrality of the theme of loneliness for Arendt's broader philosophical project. Villa develops this in relation to Arendt's concern for political action. Shuster considers the importance of loneliness for understanding Arendt's conception of language. Berkowitz turns to loneliness in Arendt in order to contrast it with solitude and its importance for thinking in the political sphere. Arendt's conception of loneliness, however, has yet to be given systematic treatment in relation to her notion of citizenship. See Dana Villa *Politics, Philosophy, Terror: Essays on the Thought of Hannah Arendt* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 198–203, Martin Shuster, "Language and Loneliness: Arendt, Cavell, and Modernity," *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 20.4 (2012): 473–497, and Roger Berkowitz, "Solitude and the Activity of Thinking," in *Thinking in Dark Times: Hannah Arendt on Ethics and Politics*, ed. Richard Bernstein (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009), 237–248.

is integral for clarifying the stakes involved in the concern for citizenship and political belonging that she expresses in her analysis of statelessness. Arendt's concern for political belonging turns on her view that it is only by working with others in the space of politics to enact our freedom that we renew the meaningfulness of the world, initiating something anew in order to save it from "its normal 'natural' ruin," or the necessity that ordinarily governs human existence.[188] Political life thus engenders an authentic sense of human belonging; it opens a space in which human beings become visible to one another in their irreducible uniqueness and brings the meaningful reality of a common world into appearance.

Loneliness forms the other side of political belonging, arising when human beings discover that they no longer belong to a world with others who can bring the fullness of their humanity into relief. In this, loneliness can be understood as a symptom of what Arendt describes as worldlessness or world-alienation, which emerges when human beings have been deprived of their political existence and severed from the meaningful nexus of relations that constitute the common world. As I shall demonstrate in what follows, Arendt believes this displacement from the world is dangerous, as it prepares human beings to submit to totalitarian domination. In separating individuals from themselves and the truth of their experience, loneliness shields human beings from the reality of their deeds, enabling them, in turn, to step blindly into the mechanism of terror.

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[188] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 246.

By turning to this aspect of Arendt's work, we find that statelessness is not exhaustive of Arendt's diagnosis of the problem of exclusion as those who emphasize the right to have rights suggest; on the contrary, it is symptomatic of a broader and more endemic form of exclusion expressed in the loneliness of modern individuals. Through her account of loneliness, Arendt demonstrates that totalitarianism cannot be thought apart from the structures of modern political life, but must instead be understood as an effect of the worldlessness that modernity itself has produced. This worldlessness has its basis in the destruction of the public realm in the modern era, a consequence, she thinks, of the tendency to elevate the protection of liberty in the private sphere to the highest aim of politics.[189] To the extent that freedom has come to be understood within this tradition as an inner state of the human being rather than a worldly, political phenomenon, the structures of modern liberalism have kept the meaningfulness inherent in human action from coming into appearance and bringing a common world into view. For this reason, Arendt says, "World-alienation, and not self-alienation as Marx thought, has been the hallmark of the modern age."[190] Hence, rather than augmenting liberal political theory, I maintain that Arendt's notion of citizenship serves as the basis to critique and, in turn, to remedy the loneliness that has been generated by some of the very principles that animate this tradition.

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[189] See Hannah Arendt, "What is Freedom?" in *Between Past and Future* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 142–69. See also Arendt's discussion of world-alienation in *The Human Condition*, esp. 248–257.

[190] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 254.

III.2. Solitude, Isolation, and Loneliness

Arendt's understanding of loneliness echoes the work of her mentors, Martin Heidegger and Karl Jaspers. Like Heidegger, Arendt intends to show through her account of loneliness that contemporary man is afflicted with a sense of homelessness and uprootedness, having been set adrift by the technical automation of the world. Yet, as we have already seen, she is critical of Heidegger's disavowal of the public, which she believes leads him to develop a worldless notion of authenticity that can only be realized in isolation from others and thereby further contributes to the world-alienation that has become definitive of modern life.[191] In this divergence from Heidegger, her account of loneliness also has roots in Jaspers's concern for communication and his critical insights regarding the central position that solitude has come to occupy in western metaphysics. As she says in *Men in Dark Times*, "Jaspers is, as far as I know, the first and the only philosopher who has ever protested against solitude, to whom solitude has appeared 'pernicious.'"[192] Like Jaspers, Arendt remains critical throughout her career of the tendency in philosophy to elevate the contemplative life above practical life, suggesting that this tendency has kept thinking from entering into the public realm and intervening in the mechanization of the modern world.[193] Even so, she believes that solitude has an important role to play in political life, enabling individuals who belong to a world to cultivate their capacity for thinking. Hence, in her discussion of loneliness,

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[191] See Villa, *Philosophy, Politics, Terror*, 67. See also Arendt, "What is Existential Philosophy?" 176–81.

[192] Hannah Arendt, "Karl Jaspers: Citizen of the World?" in *Men in Dark Times* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World Inc., 1968), 81–94, 86.

[193] Ibid., 87.

Arendt distinguishes herself from both of her mentors, deepening these aspects of their thought in ways that are responsive to the specific character of totalitarian domination in the twentieth century.

Arendt, for her part, then, maintains that the seeds of loneliness can be found in two different but interrelated concepts, namely, solitude and isolation.[194] For Arendt, the principle according to which solitude, isolation, and loneliness are related is the human condition of natality, which marks our inherent capacity for new beginnings and constitutes the source of our freedom.[195] As we have seen, Arendt wishes to show through her notion of natality that the distinguishing feature of our humanity resides not in our sameness, but rather in the irreducible uniqueness that is bestowed upon us by the fact of our birth.[196] She says, "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."[197] While Arendt has biological birth in mind, she interprets this in its existential significance as the appearance of the incalculable possibilities that are opened up by the uniqueness of each human being.

This uniqueness can only be fully realized through action, or the native human capacity to bring something into the world that has never before been seen and could never have been predicted. While natality is a condition for the possibility of all human

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[194] Arendt, "On the Nature of Totalitarianism," 358.

[195] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 9.

[196] Ibid., 178.

[197] Ibid.

activity, it comes to appear most fully through speech and action in the realm of politics where human beings disclose who they are in their radical singularity to the world. Arendt develops the relation between action and the realization of the human condition of natality through her discussion of the *vita activa*, or the fundamental activities of human life, which she designates as labor, work, and action.[198] Whereas labor and work are fundamental to human existence, only action, which is free, is definitive of it. Labor, Arendt explains, is the endless cycle of production and consumption that human beings undertake to satisfy their biological needs.[199] As *animal laborans*, she explains, we never rise above the necessity of the life processes. [200] For this reason, Arendt says, "When considered in their worldliness, [the products of labor] are the least worldly and at the same time the most natural of all things. Although they are man-made, they come and go, are produced and consumed, in accordance with the ever-recurrent cyclical movement of nature."[201] Labor, though necessary for human existence, it is devoid of meaning, generating things that go in an out of existence according to the particular needs of human beings.[202] To the extent that labor is governed entirely by these natural processes, human beings in their capacity as *animal laborans* are indistinguishable from

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[198] Ibid., 7.

[199] Ibid., 82.

[200] Ibid., 96.

[201] Ibid., 96.

[202] Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger*, 28.

other living things. Hence, in being bound up with necessity, Arendt explains that labor corresponds to the human condition of life in general.[203]

In contrast to labor, which is driven entirely by the necessary movements of nature, work is that process by which we violently assert ourselves over nature in order to produce artifacts that can outlast it.[204] To the extent that fabrication brings things into the world that can endure the cyclical movement of nature, work, rather than labor, is world building. In other words, Arendt says, "The work of our hands, as distinguished from the labor of our bodies—*homo faber* who makes and literally 'works upon,' as distinguished from the *animal laborans* which labors and 'mixes with'—constitutes the human artifice."[205] The artifacts we fabricate are relatively independent of those who produce and use them, giving them a permanence that distinguishes them from nature. Insofar as work produces artifacts that can endure these processes, the products of work, unlike labor, are able to stand between men and be shared in common.[206] In other words, human beings are able to create a home for themselves through work that can withstand the necessary movements of nature. For this reason, Arendt explains, work corresponds to the human condition to worldliness, insofar as it is the condition for the possibility of shared meaning and significance.

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[203] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 7.

[204] Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger*, 28.

[205] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 136.

[206] Ibid., 137.

Work does distinguish human beings from other animals, giving the surrounding environment a permanence that exists nowhere in nature. Yet, work is not the definitive form of human action because it is driven by utility rather than spontaneity. Drawing on Aristotle's conception of *poïesis*, Arendt maintains that the process of fabrication is purposive, guided by a fixed end that is external to the activity itself. While man in his capacity as *homo faber* does exercise his will over nature, violently dominating it for the sake of producing a world, he does so only through means-end schematization. Hence, following both Plato and Aristotle, Arendt argues that the process of fabrication, in being "determined by the constant use of yardsticks, measurements, rules, and standards," is too predictable to be the activity that is most proper to human life.[207]

In contrast to labor and work, action, Arendt argues, is free and therefore definitive of human life. She says, "Action is not forced upon us by necessity, like labor, and it is not prompted by utility, like work."[208] Instead, action is the spontaneous enactment of one's inherent capacity for new beginnings. Whereas labor corresponds to the human condition of life, and work to the human condition of worldliness, action corresponds to the human condition of natality, or the fact that all human beings, simply in virtue of being born, come into the world as irreducibly unique and, as such, able to begin anew.

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[207] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 166. See also, Jacques Taminiaux, "Athens and Rome," in *The Cambridge Companion to Hannah Arendt*, ed. Dana Villa (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 166.

[208] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 177.

As we shall see, the experience of *solitude* does not diminish our irreducible uniqueness and, indeed, can even foster the complete realization of it by preparing us to engage thoughtfully in political life. When, by contrast, the political sphere of our lives has been destroyed and we find ourselves living in *isolation*, the condition of natality can no longer be fully realized but instead remains only partially developed in the context of work. Human natality is diminished even further in the context of *loneliness*, which develops when human beings have been reduced even in their productive capacities to laboring animals and are precluded entirely from realizing themselves in their radical uniqueness.

The extent to which our natality can be realized in these respective states of solitude, isolation, and loneliness depends on the relation we retain in each to the world and others. Arendt defines solitude as a temporary retreat from the world, but a retreat that is nevertheless indispensable for political life. As Roger Berkowitz explains, solitude nurtures our capacity for thoughtfulness, bringing us into relation with ourselves so that we are prepared to engage authentically with others.[209] Conceived as the cradle for thinking, solitude offers a sanctuary from what he describes as the "contagion of conformity" that threatens our capacity to realize our radical singularity in the context of

[209] See Roger Berkowitz, "Solitude and the Activity of Thinking," in *Thinking in Dark Times: Hannah Arendt on Ethics and Politics*, ed. Richard Bernstein (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009), 239.

political life.[210] In this, Berkowitz argues, solitude provides a vital safeguard against "the delusional fellowship promised by ideological and totalitarian fantasies."[211]

Yet, solitude, though a necessary aspect or moment of human existence, can only ever play a preparatory role in the full flourishing of human life and is never itself adequate for achieving this end. Because we are relational creatures, we find that while we may be together with ourselves in solitude, our wholeness and singularity as individuals remains unresolved when we are separated from others.[212] Solitude, Arendt explains, gives rise to the feeling of being "two-in-one," deflected from our individuality by the dual nature that arises when we have only our conscience to consult.[213] Hence, while solitude provides the foundation for the activity of thinking, enabling us to stand in an authentic relation to ourselves and those around us, one is always plagued by duality and doubt in the dialogue of thought. To be sure, this duality does not diminish the importance of solitude for cultivating our capacity for thought; on the contrary, Arendt insists that the fragmentation we find in ourselves forms the basis for the reflection we undertake in solitude, enabling us to ask timeless metaphysical questions about "God, freedom, and immortality (as in Kant), or about man and world, being and nothingness, life and death."[214] Even so, the feeling of being "two-in-one" that arises in solitude prevents us from authentically appropriating ourselves in our singular and irreducible

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[210] Ibid., 240.

[211] Ibid., 237.

[212] Arendt, "On the Nature of Totalitarianism," 358.

[213] Ibid.

[214] Ibid., 359.

uniqueness. For Arendt, it is only after our singularity has been illuminated by those around us that we can decide to be ourselves, a decision that is brought to completion when we announce who we are to the world. As she explains:

> We become one whole individual, in the richness as well as the limitations of definite characteristics, through and only through the company of others. For our individuality, insofar as it is one—unchangeable and unmistakable—we depend entirely on other people. […] The great grace of companionship is that it redeems the two-in-one by making it individual.[215]

Solitude thus has the two-fold effect of bringing us into relation with ourselves, while at the same time revealing that we are always outside of ourselves when we are alone. It is therefore necessary for the full flourishing of human life because we are reminded in this confrontation with ourselves of our irrevocable interdependence, or the fact that we always remain incomplete in solitude and must therefore return to the world and the company of others in order to restore our individuality.

If we no longer belong to a world with others who can bring our singularity into relief, solitude becomes vulnerable to a dangerous extreme or limit experience of "complete solitude," or what Arendt describes as loneliness.[216] Solitude is experienced at this limit, she says, "When man does not find companionship to save him from the dual nature of his solitude, or when man, as an individual, in constant need of others for his

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[215] Ibid., 358–9.

[216] Ibid., 357.

individuality, is deserted or separated from others."[217] Hence, while solitude may be necessary for the full flourishing of human life, it can also become dangerous when an individual is severed from a world, or community of others, who are able to bring that individual into relief in his or her singularity. As we shall see, individuals become susceptible to the dangers of solitude when they find themselves living in isolation and increasingly more so as they drift towards loneliness.

Human beings become isolated, Arendt explains, "When the political sphere of their lives, where they act together in the pursuit of a common concern, is destroyed."[218] Having lost the space that is most proper to human action, isolation keeps individuals from fully realizing themselves in their natality. She develops her account of isolation with reference to the distinction she finds in Montesquieu between the principles of action in republican and tyrannical governments. [219] On this view, as Arendt argues, republican law springs from the joy of belonging to a group of individuals who, though radically different by birth, nevertheless recognize one another as equally valuable and powerful. [220] The experience of belonging to a group of distinct but equally powerful individuals gives rise to a love of equality and, with this, the principle of virtue that motivates individuals to act in concert with others in the public sphere. Thus, the principle of action in republican government rests on the two-fold assumption that

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[217] Ibid., 359.

[218] Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 474.

[219] Arendt, "On the Nature of Totalitarianism," 335.

[220] Ibid., 336.

human beings are both irreducibly singular and interdependent, only capable of realizing their singularity, along with their power and freedom, with others in the full illumination of the public realm.[221]

The lawlessness of tyrannical government, as Arendt reads Montesquieu, depends by contrast on the impotence of radically isolated individuals.[222] Rather than virtue, the motivating principle of tyrannical government is fear, which springs from the feeling of despair one has over the impossibility of acting in concert with others. Because human beings are both singular and interdependent, their power and freedom as individuals can only be realized with others in the public realm, or that space in which human beings are able to appear in their singular uniqueness. Hence, the destruction of the public realm gives rise to isolation, preventing individuals from recognizing one another as equally powerful in their singularity.

Arendt thus defines isolation in reference to her interpretation of Montesquieu as the experience of living together "without sharing some visible, tangible realm of the world."[223] Through the destruction of the political sphere, isolation renders human beings incapable of fully realizing themselves through action, robbing them of the ability to be together in such a way that they are able to endow the world they have in common with meaning. Capable of seeing themselves and those around them only in their productive capacities, isolation thus makes human beings impotent, leading to a sense of

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[221] Ibid.

[222] Ibid., 337–8.

[223] Ibid., 357.

despair over the feeling of powerlessness that develops when one is unable to act in concert with others.[224] No longer fully illuminated by the public realm, the human condition of natality is thus diminished in isolation, remaining only dimly lit in the human capacity for work.

Loneliness is a further and more radical iteration of the feeling of despair that sets in when human beings are no longer able to take collective action in the sphere of politics. Whereas isolated individuals may still be able to contribute something of their own to the world through their work, Arendt argues that loneliness arises once human beings have been reduced even in their productive capacities to "*animal laborans*, whose necessary 'metabolism with nature' is of concern to no one."[225] Loneliness thus develops when human natality has been altogether snuffed out, and human beings have been leveled in their intrinsic uniqueness to indistinct parts of the necessary movement of nature. This experience, Arendt explains, is unbearable as it involves not only the loss of companionship, but also "the loss of one's own self which can be realized in solitude but confirmed in its identity only by the trusting and trustworthy company of my equals."[226] Because we are always outside of ourselves in solitude, we can easily lose ourselves in it if we no longer belong to a world with others who can bring our singularity into focus. Arendt thus describes loneliness as the anxiety we have over the loss of self that occurs upon being severed from a common world that can confirm the truth of our

[224] Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 475.

[225] Ibid.

[226] Ibid., 477.

experience.[227] She explains that this anxiety causes individuals to lose trust in who they are and "the elementary confidence in the world which is necessary to make experiences at all. Self and world, the capacity for thought and experience are lost at the same time."[228] Upon falling into despair over this loss of self and the surrounding world, we become disoriented; loneliness overwhelms us with doubt and uncertainty regarding the truth of our experience in the world, leaving us without a tangible reality in which to ground ourselves. For this reason, Arendt says, the feeling of loneliness is "among the most radical and desperate experiences of man."[229]

Arendt insists that the hallmarks of the modern epoch—namely, European imperialism, capital exploitation, the rise of the modern sciences and technology, and industrialization—have created a breeding ground for loneliness. The increasing decay of our political institutions and traditions in the modern era have caused the world to collapse, leaving behind rootless individuals who are only capable of seeing themselves and others in terms of their utility and functionality. This, in turn, has generated a widespread feeling of loneliness, or the overwhelming sense of not belonging to any world at all.[230] Loneliness has thus come to epitomize the basic experience of living together in the modern world, such that individuals find themselves dominated not just

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[227] Arendt, "On the Nature of Totalitarianism," 336.

[228] Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 477.

[229] Ibid., 475.

[230] Ibid.

by isolation and powerlessness, but also by worldlessness and superfluity.[231] For this reason, Arendt describes loneliness as "the very disease of our time," a fact laid bare by the submission of the masses to totalitarian domination at the beginning of the twentieth century.[232]

III.3. Loneliness and Totalitarianism

Arendt suggests through her discourse on loneliness that losing one's place in the world involves more than mere physical displacement; beyond this, it entails a deeper existential displacement, leaving individuals in exile from themselves and the radical singularity that is definitive of being human. The phenomenon of loneliness reveals, too, that such experiences of exile are not specific to the stateless, refugees, or otherwise marginalized individuals, but are instead widespread even among those who have secured a place within the borders of our modern political communities. In this, Arendt's concern for loneliness indicates that the problem of exclusion epitomized in her discussion of statelessness is not external to the structures of modern political life, as those who emphasize the right to have rights suggest. On the contrary, her discussion of loneliness suggests that this problem is internal to our modern political structures, which can be seen above all in the vulnerability of modern life to totalitarian domination.

Much has already been said of Arendt's approach to totalitarianism; our purpose here will be to synthesize her principal concerns and elucidate her claim that we become increasingly susceptible to totalitarianism as the prevalence of loneliness within society

[231] Arendt, "On the Nature of Totalitarianism," 360.

[232] Ibid., 358.

increases.[233] While the sense of community promised by totalitarian movements such as National Socialism has been attributed to their ascendancy, Arendt's analysis offers an important critical perspective on this heightened sense of togetherness, clarifying that in order for it to take hold, the masses must have already been atomized and isolated to the point of loneliness. Totalitarianism, Arendt maintains, is an unprecedented form of government, depending for its existence on widespread loneliness rather than fear and isolation alone. Unlike tyrannical rule, totalitarian government is not arbitrary and lawless but instead purports to be lawful in the purest sense, executing the law of nature or history without translating this law into the standards of right and wrong for individual behavior.[234] In this, it defies positive law, which derives its legitimacy from a natural or divine authority external to human beings, erecting boundaries between a plurality of individuals such that they are able to retain and enact their native capacity for spontaneous free action. Totalitarianism, by contrast, destroys human plurality, pressing men together in order to create "one man" in whom the law of history or nature can be realized.[235]

Totalitarianism accomplishes this through terror, which, Arendt says, "[Provides] the forces of nature or history with an incomparable instrument to accelerate their

[233] For a classic study of Arendt's analysis of totalitarianism, evil, and anti-Semitism, see Richard J. Bernstein, *Hannah Arendt and the Jewish Question* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996). For more recent accounts of the importance of Arendt's analysis of totalitarianism for advancing global political theory, see Patrick Hayden, *Political Evil in a Global Age: Hannah Arendt and International Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2009) and Lars Rensmann, "Grounding Cosmopolitics: Rethinking Crimes Against Humanity and Global Political Theory with Arendt and Adorno," in *Arendt & Adorno: Political and Philosophical Investigations*, ed. Lars Rensmann and Samir Gandesha (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012).

[234] Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism,* 462.

[235] Ibid.

movement."[236] By pressing isolated individuals together, terror ensures that the masses, no longer able to recognize themselves or others in their radical singularity, come to believe that their particular existence is meaningful only insofar as it advances the species as a whole. In so doing, Arendt explains, totalitarian terror destroys the very source of human freedom, "which is given with the fact of the birth of man and resides in his capacity to make a new beginning."[237] By effectively outlawing human plurality, totalitarian terror ensures that the stream of necessity governed by natural or historical processes remains uninterrupted by any unforeseeable or spontaneous human act. In forcing individuals to see themselves and others as superfluous and interchangeable parts of a larger mechanism, terror guarantees that the subjects of totalitarian rule exist only to propel the death sentences that nature or history have supposedly pronounced for certain human beings. Hence, Arendt says, "The inhabitants of a totalitarian country are thrown into and caught in the process of nature or history for the sake of accelerating its movement; as such, they can only be executioners or victims of its inherent law."[238] This two-sided preparation, she explains, is the basis of totalitarian ideology.

Like its nineteenth century predecessors, totalitarian ideology seeks total explanation, subordinating the reality of experience to some truer reality that is proclaimed to be concealed behind all perceptible things.[239] In striving to explain all

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[236] Ibid., 466.

[237] Ibid.

[238] Ibid., 470.

[239] Ibid.

historical happenings, the very structure of ideological thinking precludes the possibility of experiencing anything new, as the tangible reality of an event is never understood on its own terms but only with reference to a greater ideological truth. That is, Arendt says, "Once it has established its premise, its point of departure, experience no longer interferes with ideological thinking, nor can it be taught by reality."[240] Ideology thus emancipates thought from experience such that it is able to proceed with logical consistency that has no basis in reality.[241]

Totalitarian ideology distinguishes itself, however, in that it is driven not by an idea, such as dialectical materialism or racism, but instead by the coercive force of the logical process itself.[242] That is, in addition to emancipating thought from experience by subordinating all perceptible reality to an ideological truth, totalitarian ideology transforms the stringent logicality inherent in all ideology into the principle of action that drives human behavior. As Arendt explains:

> The stringent logicality as an inspiration of action permeates the whole structure of totalitarian movements and totalitarian governments. The most pervasive argument, of which Hitler and Stalin were equally fond, is to insist that whoever says A must necessarily also say B and C and finally end with the last letter of the alphabet. Everything which stands in the way of this kind of reasoning—reality, experience, and the daily network of human relationships and

[240] Ibid., 471.

[241] Ibid., 470–1.

[242] Arendt, "On the Nature of Totalitarianism," 355.

> interdependence—is overruled. […] It is no longer race […] that is the 'ideal' which appeals, nor class or the establishment of a classless society, but the murderous network of pure logical operations in which one is caught up once one accepts either of them.[243]

Logical reasoning is the one capacity of the human mind that does not need the self, others, or the world to function properly. Hence, loneliness, as the experience of having been severed from all three, prepares men to submit to the coercive force of logic or, as Hitler put it, the "ice-cold reasoning," that accelerates totalitarian terror.[244] That is, she says, "Logicality is what appeals to isolated human beings, for man—in complete solitude, without any contact with his fellow men and therefore without any real possibility of experience—has nothing else he can fall back on but the most abstract rules of reasoning."[245] For this reason, totalitarianism can only rule over lonely individuals who, in their permanent solitude, have lost trust in their experience as an originating source of truth and cling instead to the automated processes of logical deduction to supply their thoughts.

Mere logic, or reasoning without regard for facts or experience, is the inherent vice of solitude, a vice that "grows out of the despair of loneliness."[246] Upon being severed from the world and others, it is only possible to appease the despair of loneliness

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[243] Ibid., 355–6.

[244] Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 471, 477.

[245] Arendt, "On the Nature of Totalitarianism," 358.

[246] Ibid.

by remaining consistent in one's reasoning, which provides "the only reliable 'truth' human beings can fall back upon once they have lost the mutual guarantee, the common sense, men need in order to experience and live and know their way in a common world."[247] Totalitarianism rescues men from their loneliness, preying on the fear lonely individuals have of contradicting themselves.[248] Upon accepting the first premise of the movement's ideology, lonely individuals must follow through with the deduction it prescribes, or else risk rendering their lives meaningless.[249]

For this reason, Arendt argues, totalitarianism can perhaps best be understood as "organized loneliness."[250] In order to transform human beings into executioners and victims of the inherent law of history or nature, it is not enough to destroy the external reality of freedom in the political sphere through isolation and fear. Beyond this, individuals must also be willing to surrender their inner freedom, or their capacity for thinking, which Arendt describes as "the freest and purest of all human activities […] the very opposite of the compulsory process of deduction."[251] Therefore, in addition to external coercion, totalitarianism depends on self-coercion, whereby lonely individuals who have become content to submit their capacity for thought to the on going process of deduction, compel themselves to step into the movement of terror.[252]

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[247] Arendt, *On the Origins of Totalitarianism*, 477.

[248] Ibid., 478.

[249] Ibid., 473.

[250] Ibid.

[251] Ibid.

[252] Ibid.

Arendt explains that the destruction of the public realm over the last two centuries has given rise to a society of atomized and isolated human beings who live together without sharing anything in common.[253] In this, she is clear that the structures of modernity itself laid the foundation for totalitarian rulers to organize society as they did at the beginning of the twentieth century and, thus, she says, "Hitler was able to build his organization on the firm ground of an already atomized society, which he then artificially atomized even further."[254] The all-consuming concern with instrumentality and individualism in modern life has not only isolated human beings, but also left them desperately lonely, a fact made evident by the willing submission of so many to the logic of totalitarian terror.

Through her account of loneliness we thus find that the danger involved in losing one's place in the world runs deeper than her analysis of statelessness initially suggests. In addition to characterizing the experience of being physically displaced, it also encompasses the broader experience of modern individuals, who, despite living together, nevertheless find themselves homeless and uprooted in having lost a common world. Arendt's articulation of the dehumanizing effect of statelessness may therefore be generalized to include the lonely masses in the modern era. Loneliness strips individuals of the singularity and interrelatedness that is definitive of the human condition. Therefore, in much the same way as statelessness, loneliness expels human beings from

[253] Arendt, "On the Nature of Totalitarianism," 356.

[254] Ibid.

humanity, reducing them in their unrepeatable uniqueness to interchangeable parts of a worldless society.

III.4. Loneliness and Liberal Citizenship

When considered in light of her account of loneliness, Arendt's conception of citizenship poses an important challenge to notions of citizenship that grow out of the liberal tradition. Political membership, according to Arendt, is characteristically conceived within this tradition as an indefinitely expandable legal status that promises liberty in exchange for obedience to the law; in this, it purports to have found in the social contract a steadfast foundation for just society.[255] Yet, in guaranteeing the right to pursue one's private interests as far as possible so long as this does not preclude others from doing the same, the liberal tradition endorses notions of citizenship that lawfully promote the separation of human beings. That is, the terms of the contract itself presuppose a society of lonely individuals, providing rational justification for the atomization and isolation that has made modern individuals susceptible to totalitarian domination.

Given this, we may wonder whether those discourses that emphasize the right to have rights do enough to capture the stakes involved in Arendt's concern for citizenship. Those who focus on Arendt's discussion of rights for the sake of developing methods for expanding democratic citizenship on a global scale imply in their approach to her work

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[255] Arendt offers a critical interpretation of these assumptions of the liberal tradition in her discussion of European imperialism and the political emancipation of the bourgeoisie in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, esp. pp. 124–141, as well as in her account of the difference between liberty and political freedom in her essay, "What is Freedom?" in *Between Past and Future*, (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 146–9.

that the forms of exclusion epitomized by statelessness stand outside the structures of liberal democracy. Yet, Arendt's account of loneliness suggests that the experience of no longer belonging to a world may be endemic for those who live within political structures of liberal provenance. If political exclusion is understood as the loss of one's place in the world, then overcoming this loss involves more than simply extending the rights of citizenship to those who exist outside our circles of inclusion; beyond this, what is called for is a critique of these structures and the very notion of citizenship on which they are based. In turning to loneliness, we therefore find that Arendt's notion of citizenship forms the basis for a deeper critique of the liberal tradition that remains underdeveloped in her discussion of the right to have rights, but that is nevertheless integral to her broader insights concerning the failures and dangers of politics in the modern age. Arendt scholars who emphasize the right to have rights to the detriment of her critical relation to the liberal tradition, not only risk missing this decisive feature of her concerns, but also, and more importantly, threaten to overshadow an important critical perspective on assumptions of the liberal tradition. These are assumptions that may not only remain at work in their efforts to develop new ways of justifying the expansion of democratic citizenship but, moreover, in the structures of liberal democracy that organize political life today. Returning now to Arendt's conception of citizenship, we can see how her discourse on loneliness shifts our understanding of the origins of her critique of liberalism.

In light of her critical insights regarding the liberal tradition, Arendt's concern for political belonging and her call for the right to have rights take on new significance.

Her notion of citizenship not only offers a response to the loss of rights stateless people suffered, but also constitutes a means of contravening the broader problem of loneliness, which she describes as "an everyday experience of the ever growing masses of our century."[256] Arendt's account of loneliness clarifies that her own call for the right to citizenship cannot be reduced to a call for the expansion of our present political structures; on the contrary, it serves as the basis for an entirely new conception of citizenship that is able to return lonely individuals to themselves, the world, and others.

It therefore comes as no surprise that she derives her own conception of citizenship from the Greek and Roman sentiment that freedom is a political phenomenon, rather than from presuppositions found in the liberal tradition. As we have already seen, Arendt seeks to reverse the basic assumption in western metaphysics that freedom arises in the solitary life of contemplation by re-inscribing freedom within the political realm.[257] In contrast to liberal theorists, who would suggest that freedom takes shape as a retreat from politics, Arendt insists that "men *are* free—as distinguished from their possessing the gift for freedom—as long as they act, neither before nor after; for to *be* free and to act are the same."[258] In this, Arendt understands freedom not as a pre-political attribute of the human being, but instead as an event that must be enacted through speech and action with others in the public realm. As we shall see in what follows, Arendt's notion of citizenship can be understood as a further iteration of her

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[256] Arendt, "On the Nature of Totalitarianism," 356.

[257] See Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger,* 17.

[258] Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 151.

effort to re-establish the relationship between freedom and politics that has been severed in the modern era, leading her, in turn, to develop her account of citizenship, not in terms of the liberal political tradition, but instead in terms of the concept of action in the Greek political tradition and the notion of foundation in the Roman political tradition.[259] She thus returns to antiquity to develop a conception of citizenship oriented not by a liberal concern for the security of rights in the private sphere, but rather by an ontological conception of the human being that promises to return individuals to themselves, the world, and others, and, in so doing, provide an antidote to the problem of loneliness in the modern era.

III.5. Finding an Antidote to Loneliness in Antiquity: Arendt's Notion of Citizenship

In returning to antiquity to develop her conception of citizenship, Arendt is one of many in a long heritage of German thinkers who have turned to the ancient world in order to critically engage and overcome the narrow rationalism of the modern era.[260] For Arendt, as well as for those who came before her, this celebration of the ancient world should not be misconstrued as nostalgia. Jacques Taminiaux explains that while figures such as Lessing, Herder, and Goethe revered the ancient world, they neither believed that they lived in an age of exile, nor did they long for a return to the bygone age of

[259] See Ayten Gündogdu, "Statelessness and the Right to Have Rights," in *Hannah Arendt: Key Concepts*, ed. Patrick Hayden (Durham: Acumen Publishing, Ltd., 2014), 114.

[260] Jacques Taminiaux, *Poetics, Speculation, and Judgment: The Shadow of the Work of Art from Kant to Phenomenology* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1993), 74.

ancient Greece.[261] Rather, they took Greek life to be continuous with modern life, providing modern individuals with a model to which they could aspire in order to live well. Taminiaux argues that while Schiller and Hölderlin were perhaps more nostalgic, suggesting through their work that modern man lives in irrevocable exile, they were not melancholic about the rupture between modernity and antiquity. Instead, both suggest that it is possible to overcome the nostalgia for Greece by embracing the beauty and freedom of human finitude to which this rupture has given birth. Arendt furthers this tradition through her own appropriation of the Greek and Roman political traditions, turning to them not out of hopeless longing, but rather for the sake of beginning anew in the face of the unprecedented political disasters of the twentieth century.

The influence of the Greek political tradition on Arendt's broader political theory can be seen, above all, in her account of the relationship between action and freedom, through which she challenges the prejudice against action that is definitive of the tradition of western metaphysics.[262] While the relationship between freedom and action has been severed in the modern age, Arendt argues that it was well understood by the Greeks, turning, in particular, to Aristotle, who develops this in his account of the *bios politikos*. Arendt explains that Aristotle uses the term *bioi* to demarcate the most authentic and autonomous ways of life that men can choose in full independence of the necessities that ordinarily govern existence, which include the life of pleasure, the life of

[261] Taminiaux, *Poetics, Speculation, and Judgment*, 77.

[262] Dana Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger: The Fate of the Political*, 17.

the *polis*, and the life of contemplation.[263] On the basis of this, Arendt maintains that neither labor nor work qualify as *bios* because they produce only what is necessary and useful, serving to satisfy the needs and wants of human beings. *Bioi* are elevated above such activity, constituting the kinds of activities that are most proper to human life and that can only be achieved after one has secured the necessities of life.

Of the three types of *bioi*, the *bios politikos*, constitutes the life of action or *praxis*. According to Aristotle, Arendt explains, "The *bios politikos* denoted explicitly only the realm of human affairs, stressing the action, *praxis*, needed to establish and sustain it."[264] *Praxis* is superior to the productive activity of *poeïsis*, or fabrication, which is always done for the sake of an external end. *Praxis,* by contrast, is an activity specific to political or ethical life, through which human beings cultivate their capacity for virtue. Unlike *theoria*, or contemplation, *praxis* is only possible with others. The *polis* was thus necessary for *praxis*, insofar as it constituted the arena where citizens, in having liberated themselves from the necessities of life in the privacy of the household realm, could deliberate with others about issues that were not governed by necessity or utility.[265] That is, Arendt says:

> The 'good life,' as Aristotle called the life of the citizen, therefore was not merely better, more carefree or nobler than ordinary life, but of an altogether different quality. It was 'good' to the extent that by having mastered the

[263] Ibid., 13.

[264] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 13.

[265] Villa*, Arendt and Heidegger*, 20.

> necessities of sheer life, by being freed from labor and work, and by overcoming the innate urge of all living creatures for their own survival, it was no longer bound to the biological life process.[266]

The *polis* thus made the good life possible, providing a space in which men could cultivate their intellectual and moral virtues through free engagement with their equals.

Insofar as the *polis* is necessary for the cultivation of virtue, or a life in harmony with the ends that are most proper to human existence, Aristotle is clear that man is, by nature, a political animal. Arendt explains, however, that this definition of man cannot be thought apart from Aristotle's alternative definition of man as a living being capable of speech.[267] Arendt explains that Aristotle's understanding of *logos* is political. For Aristotle, being deprived of the *logos*, as in the case of slaves and barbarians, did not mean being deprived of 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."[268] In other words, what it means to be deprived of the *logos*, is to lack access to the space in which one can speak with others about the world they have in common and actualize oneself as a human being. Following Aristotle, Arendt thus maintains that speech, or deliberation with others about public matters, is free of the necessities of the life processes.[269] In the context of political life, then, speech is not

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[266] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 27

[267] Ibid.

[268] Ibid.

[269] Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger*, 31.

merely the expression of one's aversions or appetites, but is instead an activity of judgment, which consists in the capacity to deliberate about matters that transcend necessity and utility. As Villa explains, Arendt, like Aristotle, believes that "only human beings can articulate and share a perception of what is good and what is bad, what is honorable and what is blameworthy, and they can do so through speech."[270] Moreover, as the deliberative mode of political action, Arendt resists the notion that speech constitutes a means of achieving consensus, as this would imply that speech is merely instrumentally valuable. Rather, in drawing on an Aristotelian framework, she maintains that the very performance of deliberation is meaningful in itself, the inherent value of which is embodied by those who achieve practical wisdom, or the ability to deliberate well with regard to political or ethical matters.[271]

On the basis of her reading of Aristotle, Arendt arrives at a conception of action that is meant to reverse the assumption in western metaphysics that freedom arises in the solitary life of contemplation. Political action, which requires both speech and action, is not only the political activity *par excellence*, on Arendt's view, but also the vehicle by which we enact our freedom. The freedom inherent in action thus arises from the fact that when we act in concert with others in the space of politics we bring our inherent capacity for new beginnings into appearance. This enactment of our capacity for new beginnings in the space of politics depends on speech, which enables us to announce that we are the authors of our action and, in so doing, bring our radical singularity into

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[270] Ibid., 31.

[271] Ibid., 32.

appearance. Unless action is attached to a name or a "who," Arendt argues, it becomes meaningless, losing both its revelatory character and its specifically human quality.[272] Action thus requires speech and, for this reason, the freedom inherent in action can only be actualized when we are with others in the public realm. As Arendt explains:

> This revelatory quality of speech and action comes to the fore where people are *with* others and neither for nor against them—that is, in sheer human togetherness. Although nobody knows whom he reveals when he discloses himself in deed or word, he must be willing to risk the disclosure […]. 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.[273]

On Arendt's view, the Greeks recognized that freedom was not a naturally occurring thing, but instead required an artificial space where men could stand together as equals and disclose who they were to one another in their radical singularity through speech and action. In light of this, Arendt argues that the *polis* served a two-fold purpose. First, it functioned to multiply the occasions for men to distinguish themselves through speech and action, which would otherwise be an extraordinary event. Second, given the frailty of human affairs, it provided a space in which word and deed, which are the most

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[272] Ibid., 180.

[273] Ibid.

ephemeral of man-made things, could become imperishable and be remembered by future generations.[274]

Arendt's account of the *polis* provides the basis for her own conception of the space of appearance. As she explains:

> 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 speaking and acting together […]. 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.[275]

Without this space of appearance, or a space in which men can come together and distinguish themselves through speech and action, Arendt says that human beings have no way of feeling assured of the reality of their experience. "To be deprived of it," she says, "means to be deprived of reality, which, humanly and politically speaking, is the same as appearance. To men, the reality of the world is guaranteed by the presence of others, by its appearing to all."[276] As I will explain in more detail later on, whatever fails to appear in this space passes in and out of existence, and while such things may be intimately our own, they nevertheless have no reality. Therefore, in turning to the Greek *polis*, Arendt illustrates that both freedom and reality require a space of appearance or a

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[274] Ibid., 199.

[275] Ibid.

[276] Ibid., 198.

public realm where human beings can show who they are in the fullness of their humanity through word and deed.

Arendt thus draws heavily on the Greeks to develop her own conception of action and the political ontology that follows from it. Yet, she is also influenced by the Roman political tradition, turning to it to resolve the failure of the Greeks to adequately address the limitlessness and unpredictably that is inherent in the freedom of human action. Arendt explains that freedom for both the Greeks and Romans was a political concept, embodied by the city-state and citizenship.[277] The difference between them, Arendt argues, turns on the question of establishing a legitimate authority or rule that can command obedience without compromising the integrity of political life through coercive violence. While Plato and Aristotle recognized the importance of authority for preserving the *polis* and safeguarding its ruler, both believed that authority depended on a kind of coercion that was driven by necessity.[278] Therefore, they could only conceive of authority as pre-political, something that had to be fabricated in advance of political action but that was not itself be born of political experience.[279] Law in the Greek world thus held the secondary rank of fabrication, serving to limit the space within which action takes place.[280]

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[277] Arend, *Between Past and Future*, 156.

[278] Ibid., 117.

[279] Ibid., 119.

[280] Taminiaux, "Athens and Rome," 172.

The genius of the Romans, Arendt argues, was to retain the relationship between freedom and politics, while responding to the frailty of human affairs by conceiving of authority, not in terms of fabrication, but rather as a free political activity. Rather than creating walls between men, as in the case of the Greek *polis*, Roman authority established relationships between them.[281] This was achieved through foundation and tradition, which enabled the words and deeds of past generations to be preserved for future generations without undermining the spontaneity and freedom inherent in human action. She says:

> In spite of the grandeur of Greek political philosophy, it may be doubted that it would have lost its inherent utopian character if the Romans, in the indefatigable search for tradition and authority, had not decided to take over and acknowledge as their highest authority in all matters of theory and thought. But they were able to accomplish this integration only because both authority and tradition had closely played a decisive role in the political life of the Roman republic.[282]

Authority in the Roman political tradition was rooted in the notion of foundation, which makes an originating political action, and the spontaneity contained therein, binding for all future generations.[283] One's involvement in Roman politics could not be thought apart from the task of preserving the unrepeatable beginning of the founding of the Roman city. For this reason, Arendt says, "The most deeply Roman divinities were

[281] Ibid., 172.

[282] Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 120.

[283] Ibid.

Janus, the god of beginning, with whom, as it were, we still begin our year, and Minerva, the goddess of remembrance."[284] Whereas the founding of a new *polis* in Greece was an ordinary and repeatable occurrence, the founding of Rome was a unique event, marking the beginning of the Romans' entire history and tying all Roman citizens, even in the imperial era, to a single, originating moment and locality.[285] For the Romans, the authority with which Romulus was endowed to found the city of Rome had a binding force. Arendt explains that all authority derived from this moment of foundation "binding every act back to the sacred beginning of Roman history, adding, as it were, to every single moment the whole weight of the past. *Gravitas*, the ability to bear this weight, became the outstanding trait of the Roman character."[286] Therefore, political life for the Romans involved more than the spontaneous performance of speech and action; in addition to this, it meant to be tied to the past, obligated to the founders of the city, who, though no longer living, still constituted the source of Roman authority.

The binding authority of foundation depended on tradition, which transformed the words and deeds of the city's ancestors into precedents, or authoritative models for ethical and political behavior.[287] "Tradition," Arendt says, "preserved the past by handing down from one generation to the next the testimony of the ancestors, who first had witnessed and created the sacred founding and then augmented it by their own

[284] Ibid., 121.

[285] Ibid., 120.

[286] Ibid., 123.

[287] Ibid.

authority throughout the centuries."[288] For this reason, the Romans believed that old age was the height of human life, not because one acquired wisdom, but because one had grown closer to the ancestors and the original source of authority. Growth, for the Romans, was thus directed towards the past rather than the future, a fact of Roman life that was embodied in the concern for tradition.[289] So long as tradition remained uninterrupted, the authority of foundation could be preserved. For the Romans, action without reference to tradition or the authority of the founders, was meaningless.[290] Hence, through foundation and tradition, the Romans made the intangibility of speech and action tangible, so that despite its frailty, it could be carried forward by its citizens from the past into the future. Arendt's appropriation of this notion of tradition will be central to my argument in subsequent chapters. For now, it is only worth noting that while the Romans retained an exclusively political conception of freedom, they achieved a continuity between past and future through foundation and tradition that was never accomplished by the Greeks.

Taken together with the Greek *polis* and the conception of action on which it was based, these aspects of the Roman political tradition provide the basis for Arendt's political ontology and her own account of citizenship. As Arendt explains, action in the modern era has been relegated to the realm of necessity, leading to a conception of politics that is entirely divorced from freedom. In this, it has left us without a space of

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[288] Ibid., 124.

[289] Ibid., 123.

[290] Ibid., 124.

appearance where we can enact our freedom with others in the context of politics. Likewise, the loss of tradition in the modern era and the subsequent disavowal of all authority has left us without recourse to a past that can meaningfully guide us toward the future. The loss of a space of appearance along with the broken thread of tradition has led to widespread disorientation, which Arendt describes as loneliness or the feeling of no longer belonging to a world. This experience prepares men for totalitarian domination and, thus, Arendt suggests, what is called for in the wake of the political catastrophes of the twentieth century is a more robust sense of political belonging that can save us from our loneliness. She thus draws on a model of political life represented by the Greek *polis* and the Roman *res publica* to develop her own lived and embodied notion of citizenship that forms the basis to critique notions of citizenship inherited from the liberal tradition in offering an antidote to the problem of loneliness. Through her appropriation of these traditions, Arendt develops a conception of citizenship that does not consist in the ability to pursue one's individual interests in the isolation of private life; by contrast, what it means to be a citizen for Arendt is to actualize one's inherent capacity for freedom through political action, which enables individuals to appear among one another and act in concert for the sake of carrying the world they have in common from the past into the future.

III.6. Citizenship, Freedom, and the Event of Appropriation

While a trace of freedom is inherent in all human activity, Arendt explains that it can only develop fully when "action has created its own worldly space where it can

come out of hiding, as it were, and make its appearance."[291] For this reason, her conception of citizenship consists in having the right to be seen by others in the space of appearance. Drawing on the model of the Greek *polis*, Arendt argues that it is only through speech and action in the realm of politics that individuals reveal themselves to one another as human beings rather than mere physical objects.[292] Through action, we express our native capacity for new beginnings, which is given to us by the human condition of natality. Through speech, we announce that we are the authors of our action, confirming our radical singularity in the presence of others and realizing the human condition of plurality. Speech and action are only possible in a world with others; hence, rather than a collection of private rights and liberties, Arendtian citizenship consists in belonging to a space of appearance, which enables individuals to see themselves and those around them in the fullness of their humanity. Understood this way, Arendt's concern for political belonging culminates in a conception of citizenship that works against the isolation and atomization of modern society insofar as it is oriented by the illuminative power of the public realm.[293]

This, alone, however is not enough for a conception of citizenship that can overcome the worldlessness of the modern era. Drawing on Heidegger's conception of thrownness, Arendt maintains that we find ourselves born into a world or set of relations

[291] Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 167.

[292] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 176.

[293] Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 152.

that we have inherited but that are not our own.[294] Because of this, we can never fully liberate ourselves from the conditions of our existence, meaning that our freedom will always be a matter of appropriating these conditions. In order to develop this in the context of modern political life, Arendt turns to the Roman concept of foundation, along with the belief within this tradition that political agency involves, in addition to freedom, the preservation of its legacy, which was granted to the Roman people by the city's founders.[295] Following this, Arendt maintains that freedom must be understood as an event of appropriation, whereby citizens work in concert with one another for the sake of carrying the world they share from the past into the future. Arendt suggests as much in the following passage concerning the political virtue of courage. She says:

> For this world of ours, because it existed before us and is meant to outlast our lives in it, simply cannot afford to give primary concern to individual lives and the interests connected with them […]. It requires courage to leave the protective security of our four walls and enter into the public realm, not because of the particular dangers which may lie in wait for us, but because we have arrived in a realm where the concern for life has lost its validity. Courage liberates men from their worry about life for the freedom of the world. Courage is indispensable because in politics, not life but the world is at stake."[296]

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[294] See Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger*, 120–3.

[295] Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 165.

[296] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 155.

In light of this, we find that what it means to be a citizen for Arendt is to have the courage to take responsibility for preserving and renewing the world in which one finds oneself. As such, Arendt's conception of citizenship does not simply grant individuals the right to the protection of the law; beyond this, it requires of them that they work to reclaim the significance of the world they share. That is, citizenship, for Arendt, promises political belonging only insofar as it demands of us that we act in concert for the sake of holding open the realm of politics, or that space in which freedom can appear. Citizenship, understood in terms of our responsibility for carrying a common world from the past into the future, thus offers a powerful antidote to loneliness; in returning us to ourselves by bringing us into relation with others, it provides a means of reclaiming the significance of a world that has been overtaken by worldlessness and superfluity.

By drawing Arendt's analysis of statelessness together with her conception of loneliness, it is therefore possible to see that her conception of citizenship forms the basis to critique notions of citizenship inherited from the liberal tradition. My aim in the following chapter will be to give further contour to the importance of Arendt's lived and embodied conception citizenship, as well as her reformulation of the idea of freedom as a worldly political phenomenon, for challenging liberal approaches to political exclusion. With this, however, I will suggest that as crucial as her critical insights are, the notion of citizenship that she ultimately develops in light of this does not go far enough. Upon further developing the prescience of her critical insights into the dangers and limits of modern political life, I will argue in what follows that an internal conflict

emerges in her notion of citizenship that turns on her account of the responsibility she believes citizens have to remember in political life. As I will suggest, this conflict reveals a deeper problem with the modern concept of citizenship that keeps it from adequately addressing the problem of loneliness that Arendt diagnoses. This will, in turn, set the stage for a discussion in subsequent chapters of the need today to go beyond the concept of citizenship in order to begin addressing the forms of exclusion that Arendt believes have become endemic in modern political life.

CHAPTER IV

THE LIMITS OF ARENDTIAN CITIZENSHIP: HISTORICAL MEMORY AND THE HIDDENNESS OF THE PARIAH TRADITION

To this point, my aim has been to demonstrate the importance of Arendt's thought for exposing the dangers and limits of liberal notions of citizenship for addressing political exclusion today. In the previous chapter, I considered Arendt's critical relation to the liberal tradition as it unfolds in her discourse on loneliness and her account of the vulnerability of the structures of modern political life to totalitarianism. In so doing, I argued that Arendt poses her own notion citizenship as an antidote to the widespread loneliness that she believes has been produced by our modern political structures. On the basis of this critique, Arendt is led to develop a notion of citizenship that is oriented not by the liberal expansion of rights in the private sphere, but rather by our shared responsibility to make one another visible in the public sphere. With this, I maintained that her notion of citizenship provides a novel means of critically engaging the invisibility and worldlessness that is re-enforced by notions of citizenship that have their basis in the liberal tradition and that we continue to rely on to address political exclusion today.

While Arendt develops a prescient account of the forms of exclusion that are characteristic of political life today, the purpose of this chapter will be to consider the scope and limits of her notion of citizenship for coming to terms with the forms of exclusion that she diagnoses. I begin by demonstrating that Arendt conceives of

citizenship, in contrast to liberal political theorists, as a lived and embodied activity that involves the shared responsibility to care for the world in order to ensure its continuation from generation to generation. Such a conception of citizenship, I argue, forms the basis for a decisive critique of the notions of citizenship that we have inherited from the liberal tradition and the world-alienation they perpetuate.

In addition to this, however, I will also argue that while Arendt clarifies the inadequacy of liberal forms of citizenship for addressing political exclusion today, there is an inconsistency internal to her own account of citizenship that keeps it from fully addressing the forms of exclusion that have come to epitomize the experience of living together in the modern world. This inconsistency turns on a tension that arises in her analysis of the role of remembrance in political life. By considering Arendt's discussion of the transformation of the concept of history in the modern era, I will show that she believes remembrance has an integral role to play in rebuilding the modern world and contravening the loneliness that has made modern individuals susceptible to totalitarian domination. On Arendt's view, citizenship involves taking responsibility for preserving in our collective memory the legacy of human freedom that provides the foundation for political communities and reminds us of the world that we have inherited. Hence, for Arendt, what it means to be a citizen is to take shared responsibility for appropriating the traditions, institutions, and values of the past such that they can be appropriated and carried forward from generation to generation. Realizing one's freedom depends, for Arendt, on participating in this event of appropriation. Therefore, she suggests that the freedom promised by one's inclusion in political community can only be enacted insofar

as citizens are able to recall the shared legacy of the world they have inherited so that it can come into appearance in the space of politics and be appropriated anew. As we shall see, remembrance is thus central to Arendt's conception of political belonging, fortifying the shared reality of a common world, while simultaneously creating the conditions for the possibility of the event of appropriation that she associates with the enactment of human freedom.

Yet, Arendt's concern for the responsibility citizens have to reconcile themselves to the past comes into conflict with her account of those traditions and histories that get covered over in the very effort to construct the narrative of the modern political community. Upon developing Arendt's concern for remembrance in political life, I will consider her discussion of the limited political freedom of the Jewish people in Europe in her 1944 essay, "The Jew as Pariah: A Hidden Tradition," along with her account of the tacit exclusion of the black population from the American political community in her 1970 essay, "Civil Disobedience." My aim in turning to these essays is to show that Arendt believes a history of violence and exclusion is bound up with the legacy of the modern political tradition. While this history of violence and exclusion forms a central thread of the modern political tradition, Arendt indicates in these essays that it invariably gets covered over when Enlightenment citizenship is expanded and those who were once cast out become enfranchised. Yet, despite her own concern for remembrance in political life, Arendt does not develop the political stakes involved in our inability to recall in the space of politics the history of violence and exclusion that is entailed by the expansion of Enlightenment citizenship. On the contrary, Arendt suggests that so long as those who

were once excluded reaffirm their citizenship by working in concert to preserve the traditions, values, and institutions of their political communities, they will be recognized in the fullness of their humanity, able to overcome their previous exclusion and fully enact themselves by taking shared responsibility for appropriating anew the legacy of the world they have inherited.

In light of this, I wish to show that an internal contradiction arises in Arendt's conception of citizenship that keeps it from addressing the forms of exclusion that she diagnoses in modern political life. On the one hand, Arendt insists that in order for citizens to fully enact their freedom by participating in an event of appropriation, the legacy of the world they have inherited must be able to come into view in the space of politics. On her view, it is precisely in virtue of the loss of tradition in the modern era, or the inability on the part of modern individuals to recall the legacy of the world they have inherited, that they have found themselves untethered, worldless, and alone. On the other hand, her account of the hidden tradition of the pariah suggests that the implementation of Enlightenment citizenship itself necessitates the covering over of those histories of violence and exclusion that cannot be held together with the Enlightenment narrative of universal inclusion. While these immemorial histories of violence and exclusion may escape our collective memory, I will argue that they do not fall into oblivion when citizenship is granted, as Arendt suggests; on the contrary, because they are bound up with the legacy of the modern political tradition, they merely remain unappropriated, leaving their trace our political institutions, values, and traditions, repeating themselves in the violence and exclusion that continues to haunt those who were once cast out.

My aim in what follows will be to suggest that while Arendt develops a novel conception of citizenship that puts into relief the limits of notions of citizenship inherited from the liberal tradition, even it does not go far enough in addressing the forms of exclusion that she diagnoses. To the extent that these histories of violence and exclusion are bound up with the legacy of the modern political tradition, I wish to show that Arendt leaves unresolved in her own account of citizenship the question of how we take responsibility for the legacy of the modern political tradition if a part of it will always remain covered over. If citizenship, in the strongest sense, means participating in an event of appropriation, we find by turning to this inconsistency in Arendt's thought that her notion of citizenship remains too reductive. In failing to address the political significance of the immemorial violence and exclusion of the past for present political life, it only allows for what might be described in psychoanalytic terms as a melancholic relation to these histories of violence and exclusion.[297] As such, Arendt stops short of developing a notion of citizenship that promises the kind of political belonging that she believes is necessary for bringing a common world into appearance and contravening the loneliness that has become definitive of modern political life.

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[297] In later chapters, I will be using Nietzsche's concept of repetition and Heidegger's ontological appropriation of this concept to describe the relation of the immemorial violence and exclusion of the past to present forms of exclusion in political life. Yet, the political phenomenon I wish to capture could also be developed in a psychoanalytic register through Freud's language of trauma, mourning, and melancholia. That is, it may understood as a melancholic repetition of those histories of violence and exclusion that are too traumatic to be remembered, but that nevertheless continue to inform political practice because they are internal to the legacy of the world we have inherited. Because the concept of repetition is more closely related to the heritage of thought on which Arendt's political ontology is based, I will rely primarily on it throughout. When necessary, however, I will occasionally use psychoanalytic terms to describe this phenomenon in order to ensure that the political problematic I want to capture comes into view as clearly as possible.

By developing a preliminary account of this inconsistency in Arendt's thought, my aim in this chapter is to provide a platform for a broader critique of the concept of modern citizenship in subsequent chapters. Ultimately, I wish to show that the inconsistency in Arendt's analysis of citizenship puts into relief a broader contradiction internal to modern notions of citizenship that turns on a problem specific to the legacy of the revolutionary Enlightenment, which I will call the paradox of remembrance. Bringing this paradox and its political ramifications into focus, however, will depend on expanding Arendt's analysis beyond the European nation-state to a global set of political concerns regarding the lasting impact of the legacy of slavery and colonization on contemporary political practice. These issues are crucial for understanding not only the distinctive character of political exclusion today, but also the limits of citizenship for addressing it. Therefore, by developing this inconsistency in Arendt's conception of citizenship in this chapter, my aim in subsequent chapters will be to expand the horizon of our considerations of exclusion to this global context for the sake of challenging and deepening Arendt's political categories in light of it. In so doing, I wish to open paths to resolving this inconsistency in Arendt's thought, while suggesting that addressing the problem of political exclusion today depends not only on citizenship, but also on mechanisms in political life for coming to terms with the repetitions of the immemorial violence and exclusion of the past that I will suggest are necessitated by the legacy of the enlightened political tradition that we are tasked with preserving.

IV.1. The Scope of Arendtian Citizenship

My aim in this section will be to draw together Arendt's analysis of the limits of enlightened liberal notions of freedom and her discourse on loneliness to give further contour to the importance of her notion of citizenship for critiquing approaches to exclusion that emphasize the expansion of the structures of liberal democracy. In the last chapter, we saw that Arendt's own conception of citizenship forms the basis to critique notions of citizenship that we have inherited from the liberal tradition, posing an important challenge to the liberal approaches often taken by mainstream political theorists to the problem of exclusion. I will now show that Arendt's concerns for the dangers of loneliness are directly tied to her call for a conception of citizenship that emphasizes the importance of history and remembrance for preserving a common world.

As we have seen, Arendt maintains that freedom in the modern era has come to be understood not as a worldly phenomenon that comes to appear in the realm of human affairs, but instead as a fixed and pre-political property of the human being that is least hindered when individuals are able to pursue their interests in the isolation of the private sphere. Whereas this notion of freedom has its basis in a metaphysics of substance, Arendt attempts to rethink freedom ontologically, conceiving of it as an event of appropriation that arises in the context of political life when citizens work in concert to renew the meaningfulness of the world.[298] As we saw in Chapter One, this inner notion of freedom, or "the theory that 'the appropriate region of human liberty is the 'inward domain of consciousness,'" was discovered in late antiquity, when freedom became, for

[298] Arendt, "What is Freedom?", *Between Past and Future*, 144.

the first time, a philosophical problem of the first order.[299] Arendt explains that in Greek and Roman antiquity, freedom never took shape as a philosophical question precisely because it was a political concept, constituting the essence of the city-state and the highest end of the political activity of citizen. It was only in late antiquity and especially with the rise of Christianity, that "freedom became one of the chief problems of philosophy when it was experienced in the intercourse between me and myself, and outside of the intercourse between men."[300] Epitomized by the work of Epictetus and Augustine, this shift in the idea of freedom from an effect of political action to an attribute of thought or the will occurred against the backdrop of the decaying political sphere of the Roman Empire. Under these conditions, freedom was driven from the space of politics into the inner domain of the self that remains sheltered from the world. Hence, Arendt argues, the notion of freedom that ultimately guided the philosophical and political traditions of the modern era took shape in response to the experience of the decline of political life and, with this, the loss of a world that began in late antiquity.[301]

Arendt thus maintains that the transformation of freedom into a metaphysical question was "preceded by the conscious attempt to divorce the notion of freedom from politics, to arrive at a formulation through which one may be a slave in the world and still be free."[302] In response to this loss of a world, Arendt explains, both Epictetus and

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[299] Ibid., 145.

[300] Ibid., 156.

[301] Ibid., 145.

[302] Ibid., 146.

Augustine discovered that “no power is so absolute as that which man yields over himself, and that the inward space where man struggles and subdues himself is more entirely his own, namely, more securely shielded from outside interference, than any worldly home could ever be.”[303] Freedom thus came to be associated with solitude, where, in the words of Augustine, Arendt says, “‘No man might hinder the hot contention wherein I had engaged with myself” in the deadly conflict which took place in ‘the inner dwelling’ of the soul and the dark ‘chamber of the heart.’”[304] With this, Arendt argues, freedom was transformed into something that was believed to be experienced not in association with others, but rather through a retreat from the world.[305]

While this experience of freedom was taken to be absolute insofar as it is shielded from the vices of the human world, Arendt explains that such notions of freedom are always derivative of the freedom that is experienced with and through others in the context of political life.[306] She says:

> Neither freedom nor its opposite is experienced in the dialogue between me and myself in the course of which the great philosophic and metaphysical questions arise and that the philosophical tradition […] has distorted, instead of clarifying the very idea of freedom such as it is given in human experience by transposing it

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[303] Ibid., 146.

[304] Ibid., 156.

[305] Ibid., 155.

[306] Ibid., 156.

> from its original field, the realm of politics and human affairs in general to an inward domain, the will, where it would be open to self-inspection.[307]

As I argued in Chapter Two, the experience of being together with oneself in the context of solitude is necessary for thinking, constituting a preparatory stage in the full flourishing of human life. Yet, we remain at odds with ourselves in the dialogue of thought, plagued by a duality or conflict within ourselves that cannot be resolved until we return to the world. Arendt explains that the experience we have of being two-in-one in solitude was well understood in classical antiquity, taken to be necessary for setting thought in motion and enabling individuals to realize their freedom through action with others in the realm of politics. With the rise of Christianity, however, Arendt argues that "free will and freedom became synonymous notions, the presence of freedom was experienced in complete solitude."[308] Because human beings always experience themselves as divided in solitude, the appropriation of oneself as a unique and free individual is impossible in this space. Hence, Arendt maintains that the removal of freedom from the political sphere culminated in a philosophical tradition that denies freedom, insofar as it is unable to come into appearance in the world. This, in turn, has given rise to a political tradition in which freedom remains hidden from sight, taken to be a fixed property internal to the human being that can only be realized in the isolation of private life.

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[307] Ibid., 144.

[308] Ibid., 156.

By banishing freedom from the realm of politics, Arendt argues that the fundamental tenets of the liberal tradition have radically altered the relation of freedom to political life.[309] Whereas the political sphere in antiquity provided a space where human beings could rise above the necessities of the life processes in order to realize their freedom by acting concert with others, the aim of politics in the modern era concerns, above all, the security and maintenance of these life processes. Consequently, Arendt argues, politics in the modern age no longer bears any relation to human freedom and is guided instead by "the sway of necessity."[310] This, she thinks, has had the effect of isolating modern individuals, rendering them powerless to realize themselves in their humanity through their engagement with others. As Arendt explains, "A state […] in which there is no communication between the citizens and where each man thinks only his own thoughts is by definition a tyranny."[311] Hence, rather than promising universal emancipation, Arendt argues that the notion of freedom that we have inherited from the liberal tradition has given rise to a society of powerless individuals, who, in being severed from the world, have lost the ability to recognize themselves and those around them in their humanity. This, in turn, has made modern individuals lonely. As we have seen, loneliness leaves human beings dominated by a sense of worldlessness and superfluity, willing to surrender their capacity for thought to the compulsory force of logic that drives totalitarianism. The susceptibility of modern individuals to totalitarian

[309] Ibid., 154.

[310] Ibid.

[311] Ibid., 162.

domination can thus be attributed, at least in part, to the worldless notion of freedom that we have inherited from the liberal tradition and the forms of citizenship that accompany it.

On the basis of her critique of the liberal notion of freedom, Arendt attempts to reverse the basic assumption of the modern political tradition, insisting that freedom is not a fixed property of the human being, but is instead an effect of the performing act.[312] By reestablishing the relationship between freedom and action, Arendt intends to show that freedom is not internal to the human being, but instead comes to appear in the space between men through an event of appropriation. In so doing, she insists that freedom is achieved not by retreating from the world, but instead by authentically embracing it. On her view, the freedom inherent in all action only comes to appear when human beings seize upon the opportunities given to them by the world. This, she thinks, is perhaps best illustrated by Machiavelli's notion of *virtù*, or "the excellence with which man answers the opportunities the world opens up before him in the guise of *fortuna*."[313] Drawing on this notion of *virtù*, Arendt thus suggests that what it means to be free is to act, which consists in actualizing the possibilities that the world presents such that they become a part of the meaningful reality that constitutes the space between men.

It is only through action that human freedom makes itself felt in world. Arendt argues that for the Greeks, action meant to set something in motion or begin something

[312] Ibid., 151.

[313] Ibid.

anew.[314] The notion of action in the Greek political tradition coincided with the idea of leading or ruling in political life. As she explains, "Beginning, leading, ruling, that is, the outstanding qualities of the free man, bears witness to an experience in which being free and the capacity to begin something anew coincided."[315] Having liberated themselves from the necessities of life, Arendt explains that those who entered into *polis* had freed themselves to engage in enterprises that were bigger than their own particular existence. Moreover, the Greeks understood that carrying an act through is only possible with the help of one's equals. Hence, citizens of the Greek *polis* did not rule, but were "rulers among rulers, moving among their peers, whose help they enlisted as leaders in order to begin something new […] for only with the help of others could the […] ruler, beginner and leader, really act […], carry through whatever he had started to do."[316] On Arendt's view, then, freedom, conceived in terms of action, consists in bringing something new into the world, which is only possible with and through others in the context of political life.

As we have seen, however, this is only the first stage of action. Arendt turns to the Roman notion of freedom to show that action involves, in addition to bringing something new into the world, "The enduring and supporting continuation of past acts whose results are the *res gestae,* the deeds and events we call historical."[317] For the

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[314] Ibid., 164.

[315] Ibid.

[316] Ibid.

[317] Ibid.

Romans, action consisted not only in an event of initiation, but also in an event of appropriation, whereby the decedents of the forefathers of the Roman republic took responsibility for the legacy of their political community, "whose consequence they had to bear, and whose foundations they had to 'augment.'"[318] Roman freedom, then, consisted not just in an originary act, but also in the commemoration of its foundation, which enabled the legacy of freedom granted to the Roman people by the city's founders to be guaranteed and carried forward from generation to generation.

Drawing on these models of political life, Arendt thus argues that the human capacity for freedom that is inherent in all human activity comes to appear most fully in the public realm, where the affairs of human beings are not only fully illuminated, but can also be remembered through the concerted effort of citizens to preserve the values, institutions, and traditions that constitute the world they have inherited. With this, she insists that freedom is not a pre-political property of the human being that can be realized in the isolation of the private sphere, but instead comes to appear when citizens act by appropriating the legacy of the world they have inherited in order to endow it with new meaning. Understood as an event of appropriation, freedom is thus dependent upon remembrance, which enables individuals to manage and augment the traditions, values, and institutions that constitute the space between men for the sake of holding the world together. Our memory of the original spirit or motivating principle that forms the impetus for political action is thus crucial for freedom, providing an anchor in the world

[318] Ibid., 165.

that enables us to find new openings that can be seized upon in order to carry the world from the past into the future.

By working in concert with others in the space of politics to endow the world with new meaning, Arendt argues that human beings can transcend their finitude and realize their freedom. Hence, in her divergence from the liberal tradition, Arendt insists that the human capacity for transcendence cannot be realized by denying the world; on the contrary, it involves coming to terms with the world by allowing its legacy to appear in the full illumination of the public realm. It is only by remaining open to the world in this way, she argues, that we can appropriate it and realize our capacity for freedom. For Arendt, then, citizenship involves having the courage to take shared responsibility for renewing the meaningfulness of the world in which we find ourselves.[319] Citizenship only promises freedom insofar as individuals who belong to a political community act or seize upon the opportunities presented to them by the world. Arendt thus conceives of citizenship as a necessary condition for freedom insofar as freedom is understood as an event of appropriation that is brought into appearance through political action in the public sphere. The possibility of such an event of appropriation, she argues, depends on remembrance in political life, which can be seen by turning to Arendt's account of history.

IV.2 Arendt on the Role of Remembrance in Political Life

Arendt believes that history and remembrance, understood in terms of the preservation of the legacy of the world we have inherited, has a crucial role to play in

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[319] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 155.

contravening the modern problem of loneliness, providing the mechanism by which political communities ensure that their world survives the emergence and eventual passing away of each new generation. Whereas history in the modern era has come to be understood in terms of process, or the progressive unfolding of mankind towards a fixed end, Arendt believes that history only has the ability to preserve a common world if it is understood as a story that glorifies the spontaneous and unpredictable events of human freedom. The purpose of history, Arendt argues, is to remind human beings of the world they have inherited. So long as we retain an authentic relation to the past, we are able to understand ourselves as belonging to a world that is bigger and more permanent than our particular finite existence. By taking responsibility for carrying this world from the past into the future, human beings are thus able to transcend their limited perspective and endow the world with meaning that can be shared in common. The possibility for such transcendence, however, depends on allowing the past to appear in the context of politics in such a way that it can be appropriated by the community as a whole and carried forward for future generations.

In "The Concept of History," Arendt argues that if we are to understand the political significance of remembrance, it is necessary to return to the concept of history that grows out of the Greek political tradition.[320] For the Greeks, the purpose of history was to praise and assure the remembrance of the words and deeds of great men so that their accomplishments could continue to shine centuries after their own deaths.[321]

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[320] Arendt, "The Concept of History," *Between Past and Future*, 41.

[321] Ibid., 41.

Words, deeds, and events owe their existence exclusively to human beings. In this, they are distinct from all other man-made objects, coming into the world not as a part of the cyclical processes of biological life, but rather as a spontaneous and unpredictable interruption of these processes. Yet, while words, deeds, and events owe their existence exclusively to the human being, born out of the distinctive human capacity to bring something new into the world, they are also the least permanent of all man-made objects. That is, Arendt explains, words, deeds, and events "can never outlast the moment of their realization, would never leave any trace without the help of remembrance."[322] The Greeks thus recognized in their concept of history that it is only through remembrance that human beings can preserve that which is most their own and achieve the kind of immortality that is otherwise reserved for the gods and nature.

Such singular events and occurrences become history, Arendt explains, when they are drawn out of the actor by the historian or poet and transformed into an object for all to witness. According to Arendt, the earliest manifestation of this process by which the singular word and deed were transformed into history occurred when Ulysses first heard the story of his life. She says:

> History as a category of human existence is of course older than the written word, older than Herodotus, older even than Homer. Not historically, but poetically speaking its beginning lies rather in the moment when Ulysses, at the court of the king of the Phaeacians, listened to the story of his own deeds and

[322] Ibid., 44.

> sufferings, to the story of his life, now a thing outside himself, an 'object' for all to see and to hear. What had been sheer occurrence now became 'history.'[323]

Through storytelling, then, the words and deeds of the actor acquire objectivity, coming to constitute an aspect of the reality of the common world that can outlast the finite existence of the actor.[324] Such objectivity, however, cannot be achieved by the actor alone, but instead requires a storyteller who can externalize the actor's words and deeds such that they can be seen and heard by the community as a whole. Arendt thus explains that Greek historiography relied on a distinctive notion of objectivity whereby the singular occurrence was confirmed in its reality insofar as it could be seen from a multitude of perspectives. She says:

> The Greeks discovered that the world we have in common is usually regarded from an infinite number of different standpoints to which correspond the most diverse points of view. […] The Greeks learned to understand—not to

[323] Ibid., 45.

[324] It is reasonable to assume that Arendt's use of the term "objectivity" is informed by the German word *Gegenständlichkeit*, which signifies the character of objects as they confront us, demanding our attention as matters of concern. In this, Arendt's use of this term should not be confused with notions of objectivity in modern epistemology or the natural sciences where objects become intelligible through predetermined methods of inquiry. Rather, when she describes the permanence given to words and deeds through storytelling she is referring to the inherent meaning of these man-made objects as they come to appear through our openness and responsiveness to them. Such objects are insistent in their appearance, but never give themselves over fully as what they are through the actor alone and are therefore always in need of a storyteller who brings these words and deeds into appearance for all to see. The insistence of these objects is conditioned by the fact that upon being withdrawn from the actor by the storyteller they can be seen and talked about from a diversity of perspectives and, in this, confirmed in their reality. Hence, Arendt takes storytelling or interpretation to be the vehicle by which a shared and objective reality comes into view. Objectivity, understood as *Gegenständlichkeit*, it is thus central to her claim that tradition, history, and remembrance always involve the novel interpretation or appropriation of the legacy of human freedom, which gives permanence to the world and ensures its continuation from generation to generation. For a discussion of the philosophical importance of the term *Gegenständlichkeit* in the German tradition of hermeneutics and phenomenology see Theodore D. George, "Translator's Introduction," in *Objectivity* by Günter Figal (Albany: State University of New York, 2010), xii.

> 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.[325]

Greek historiography was based on the assumption that the objectivity of the common world comes into view not when its historical narrative is created in isolation from this diversity of perspectives, but instead when the story is told in such a way that its reality can be confirmed by them. In upholding human plurality, the Greeks thus believed that their stories could be shared by all and carried forward insofar as the objective reality of these stories was confirmed, rather than hindered by, the inevitable fact of human plurality.

Though history played an important role in the preservation of the world as it comes to appear in the space of politics, Arendt explains that for the Greeks, history was not itself a form of political action, but rather only the "imitation of action" in the spoken or written word of the storyteller.[326] By transforming the singular and unrepeatable event into a permanent feature of the common world, the historian could neither return to the original event, nor bring the author of the action back to life. Hence, in addition to glorifying the words and deeds of those who proved worthy of such praise, history, for the Greeks, served also to remind the community of the loss and suffering that is always bound up with our relation to the past and, with this, our responsibility to reconcile

[325] Ibid., 51.

[326] Ibid., 45.

ourselves to the reality of human finitude through the unending task of remembrance. As Arendt explains:

> The scene where Ulysses listens to the story of his own life is paradigmatic for both history and poetry; the 'reconciliation with reality,' the catharsis, which, according to Aristotle, was the essence of tragedy, and, according to Hegel, was the ultimate purpose of history, came about through the tears of remembrance.[327]

Because human beings are mortal, they are fundamentally unrepeatable, and, thus, Arendt explains, they will ultimately be forgotten and condemned to oblivion if their memory is not preserved by those who survive them. For this reason, she says, "History receives into remembrance those mortals who through deed and word have proved themselves worthy of nature, and their everlasting fame means that they, despite their mortality, may remain in the company of things that last forever."[328] The Greeks thus took history to promise immortality which, Arendt says, "is what the mortals must […] try to achieve if they want to live up to the world into which they are born, to live up to the things which surround them."[329] By giving permanence to the words and deeds of the past, history thus told the story of the unique and unrepeatable events of human freedom that came to appear in the world through political action so as to remind citizens of their responsibility for the world they had inherited.[330]

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[327] Ibid., 45.

[328] Ibid., 48.

[329] Ibid., 48.

[330] Ibid., 65-6.

Arendt maintains that in the modern era, by contrast, the concept of history has been transformed in accordance with a more general loss of trust in the reality of things as they appear. Arendt maintains that this transformation began with Christianity, when the immortality that had previously been associated with everlasting cyclical movements of nature was reversed, making human beings immortal and nature ephemeral. Christianity thus inaugurated a philosophical tradition that covered over the unrepeatable singularity of the human being. In denying the permanence of the world of appearances, it simultaneously laid the foundation for a metaphysics of suspicion that formed the ideological basis for the modern sciences.[331] On Arendt's view, the modern sciences deny altogether the inherent unpredictability of the human being, explaining away the spontaneity of the event by assigning it a place in the determinate pattern of the necessary processes that govern biological life.[332] In much the same way, she argues, history in the modern era has come to be understood as a process or progressive development of humanity that will ultimately culminate in the realization of a determinate end. The intersection between the modern concept of history and nature, Arendt says, "Lies in the concept of process: both imply that we think and consider everything in terms of process and are not concerned with single entities or individual occurrences and their special separate causes."[333] Whereas the Greeks believed that the

[331] Ibid., 54.

[332] Ibid., 60.

[333] Ibid., 61. Arendt's notion of the "singular and individual occurrence" may be understood in terms of what many following from the tradition of phenomenology now treat under the auspices of "the event." Arendt can thus be said to draw a sharp distinction between process and event, emphasizing the centrality of the latter in order to develop a political ontology that is able to contravene the worldlessness

lesson of each event was revealed in and through the event itself as it appeared in the world, modern individuals no longer trust the world of appearances. Hence, modern historiography tends to engulf the event in a process, deriving its significance not from its appearance, but rather from the end towards which the event is believed to be directed. She says:

> To our modern way of thinking nothing is meaningful in and by itself, not even history or nature taken each as a whole, and certainly not particular occurrences in the physical order or specific historical events. […] What the concept of process implies is that the concrete and the general, the single thing or event and the universal meaning, have parted company. The process, which alone makes meaningful whatever it happens to carry along has thus acquired a monopoly of universality and significance. Certainly nothing more sharply distinguishes the modern concept of history from that of antiquity.[334]

That is, the modern concept of history, following the method of the modern sciences and coalescing in the development of modern technology, presupposes that nothing that comes to appear in the world is significant in itself, but only acquires significance insofar as it is thought to be a part of a larger, invisible process that lies behind the perceptible world.

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of the modern era. For more on the treatment of the event in contemporary philosophy see Gert-Jan Van der Heiden, *Ontology after Ontotheology: Plurality, Event, and Contingency in Contemporary Philosophy*. For a discussion of Arendt's political ontology and her interpretation of the event, see Peg Birmingham, "The An-Archic Event of Natality and the Right to Have Rights," *Social Research*: *An International Quarterly*, 74.3 (2007): 764–773. See also Peg Birmingham, *Hannah Arendt and Human Rights: The Predicament of Common Responsibility* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006).

[334] Ibid., 64–5.

In order to understand the political significance of history for Arendt, it is necessary to consider the relationship between the notion of history and the concept of freedom in the modern era. The world, as Arendt conceives of it, only receives its objective reality through the concerted effort of a community to preserve in its collective memory the unique events of freedom that come to appear in it through political action. In seeking to overcome all unpredictability, this emphasis on the notion process in the modern era has effectively covered over human freedom. The effort to explain away the spontaneity of human action by carrying it into the realm of inexorable law has led to a denial of the human conditions of natality and plurality, or the spontaneity and diversity that forms the existential constitution of the human being. As such, the event of freedom that is born out of these conditions can never make its appearance in the world, as the event itself is always believed to be devoid of truth.[335] This, Arendt argues, can be seen in the efforts of nineteenth century thinkers, especially Hegel and Marx, to develop a notion of freedom on the basis of the modern concern for process. By conceiving of history as the progressive unfolding of humanity toward the actualization freedom, both transform the freedom into a product of fabrication or labor. Arendt insists, however, that freedom only comes to appear in the world as an entirely unique and spontaneous event that can never be predicted or engineered. Moreover, the attempt to subsume freedom under a process of means-ends schematization degrades the inherent meaningfulness of the event as it comes to appear in the world. Therefore, this concept of history cannot tell the story of human freedom because the events no longer have any

[335] Ibid., 62.

inherent meaning. Instead, history now serves to guide us towards a determinate end and, in so doing, "cancels out and makes unimportant whatever went before."[336]

In the ancient world, history was crucial for political life, not because it provided a map for achieving the end of freedom, but rather because it enabled human beings to preserve the meaning and significance of the common world. Arendt is clear that meaning only comes to appear in the world through political action, or those words and deeds that interrupt the necessary processes of nature. Yet, as she explains, "Human deeds, unless they are remembered, are the most futile and perishable things on earth."[337] Therefore, Arendt argues that it is only by preserving these moments in history that a worldly space between men, or a meaningful reality that is shared in common by all, can be created and sustained. History, conceived as the story of human freedom, thus makes possible the continuity of the common world, allowing for the preservation of a space of appearance from generation to generation. Such a notion of history is missing from the modern world, which, on Arendt's view, is why modern man suffers from world-alienation.

Arendt contends that the emphasis on instrumental reason in the modern era, or the belief that meaning can consistently be deduced, predicted, and explained has left no space for the spontaneity that is inherent in all human action to appear in the world. The effect of this has been two-fold. First, it has emptied out the inherent meaningfulness of human action, which comes to appear only insofar as it erupts on the scene, intervening

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[336] Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 80.

[337] Ibid., 84.

in unpredictable ways in necessary processes that govern ordinary life. Second, the suppression of the inherent spontaneity of human action has led to the destruction of the world, or the nexus of meaning that grants access to a single reality that can be shared in common by a plurality of human beings. As a result, Arendt says, "The modern age, with its growing world-alienation, has led to a situation where man, wherever he goes, encounters only himself."[338] Having lost this shared nexus of meaning, Arendt argues that modern individuals have become alienated from themselves, the world, and others. Moreover, she explains that this loss of a world in the modern era "has left behind it a society of men who, without a common world which would at once relate and separate them, either live in desperate lonely separation or are pressed together into a mass."[339] As we have seen, this experience is dangerous as it produces a society of individuals who move among one another automatically and thoughtlessly, unable to recognize themselves or others as belonging to a common world. For Arendt, then, remembrance has an integral role to play in rebuilding the modern world. Renewing the meaningfulness of the world depends on holding open a space in which freedom can appear. As these events are, in their very unpredictability, the most perishable of all man-made things, the continuation of the world or the nexus of meaning that reminds us that we belong depends on preserving in our memory the history of these moments.

In failing to tell the story of human freedom, modern notions of history have had the paradoxical effect of producing a kind of amnesia among modern individuals who no

[338] Ibid., 89.

[339] Ibid., 90.

longer see themselves as belonging to a world for which they are responsible. Arendt thus insists that overcoming what she describes as "the predicament of meaningless" in the modern era and the experience of world-alienation that accompanies it depends on a new notion of history that intervenes in the tendency to engulf human freedom within the necessity of process.[340] In light of this, she suggests that it is necessary to participate in the shared commemoration of those words and deeds that constitute the collective identity of a political community. [341] As Irene McMullin explains:

> Without such a shared history—and the normative stance embodied in the community's decisions about what counts as memorable—the permanence of world necessary to shelter us from the elemental flux of nature is impossible. Exemplary acts serve to anchor a community around a vision of excellence; they provide a public model of what it means to be fully human. By choosing what words and deeds are worthy of remembrance, then, the community defines its identity.[342]

In this, history, for Arendt, is crucial for political life, providing a means of reconciling ourselves to the past, so that we can anchor ourselves in the present for the sake of carrying the world we have in common into the future. Moreover, by bringing into presence the meaningfulness of the words and deeds of those who have come before, such a conception of history makes possible the sense that there exists a common world,

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[340] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 236.

[341] Irene McMullin, "The Amnesia of the Modern: Arendt on the Role of Memory in the Constitution of the Political," *Philosophical Topics*, 39. 2 (Fall 2011): 91–116, 93.

[342] Ibid., 93.

reminding us of its objective reality and the fact that we belong to it. Whereas Arendt describes the structure of modern totalitarian government as "organized loneliness," she calls the structure of the Greek *polis* "organized remembrance," conceiving of it as a space of collective memory that "assures the mortal actor that his passing existence and fleeting greatness will never lack the reality that comes from being seen, being heard, and, generally, appearing before an audience of fellow men."[343]

On Arendt's view, then, historical memory provides a means of returning individuals from the experience of loneliness and exile that has been set in motion by the emphasis in modern science, history, and technology on process. As such, the conception of citizenship that Arendt develops in order to contravene the loneliness of the modern age involves taking responsibility for the legacy of one's political community by remembering the words and deeds of the actors of the past in the space of politics in order to ensure that the meaningfulness of the world and the shared reality between human beings remains in tact. Arendt thus believes that overcoming the forms of exclusion that have been produced in the modern age depends on renewing the role of remembrance in political life and the responsibility citizens have to care for the legacy of the world in which they find themselves.

The concern for political belonging that Arendt first announces in her analysis of statelessness, and further develops in the context of her discussion of loneliness, thus brings into focus the vulnerability of our present political structures to totalitarianism. With this, her own conception of citizenship offers a novel alternative to liberal notions

[343] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 198. See also, Irene McMullin, "The Amnesia of the Modern: Arendt on the Role of Memory in the Constitution of the Political," 93.

of citizenship that perpetuate the forms of exclusion that have come to epitomize modern political life. Yet, despite the prescience of Arendt's critical insights into the liberal tradition and the novel conception of political agency that she develops in light of it, there is an internal inconsistency in her own account of citizenship. My aim in what follows will be to bring this inconsistency into focus by considering a tension that arises in her discussion of historical memory and the role it plays in the event of appropriation that she associates with human freedom.

IV.3. The Hiddenness of the Pariah Tradition

As I have suggested, remembrance has deep political significance for Arendt, particularly with regard to her conception of citizenship and belonging. Yet, in emphasizing the importance of preserving the words and deeds of our ancestors, Arendt does not consider how we reconcile ourselves to those aspects of the past that may fail to come into appearance as part of the narrative of a political community, but that are nevertheless bound up with its legacy. In this section, I will argue that Arendt acknowledges in her account of the experience of pariah peoples over the last two centuries that a legacy of violence and exclusion is bound up with the modern political tradition. This history, she thinks, often remains concealed, incapable of being brought fully into presence in the space of politics. Arendt suggests, too, that in remaining covered over, this history of violence and exclusion has the potential to keep those who were once cast out from appearing fully in the modern political arena. Yet, she neither offers an account of why citizenship fails in the case of pariah peoples, nor does she provide a means for coming to terms with the hiddenness of these traditions in the space

of politics, presuming instead that their legacy simply fades away when citizenship is granted to those who were once cast out. On the basis of this, I wish to show that an internal inconsistency arises in Arendt's notion of citizenship that keeps it from addressing the problem of loneliness that she diagnoses. As we have seen, Arendt believes that in order for individuals to participate fully in political life, the legacy of the world they have inherited must be able to appear in the context of politics so that it can be appropriated and carried forward into the future. Yet, the enfranchisement of those who were once cast out will always involve covering over those aspects of this legacy that are incompatible with the narrative of enlightened humanism and universal inclusion that forms the basis of the historical narratives of the modern political community. Hence, she leaves unresolved the question of how, in the modern era, we take shared responsibility in the public realm for the legacy of the modern political tradition if a part of this legacy always remains covered over.

As I will argue in what follows, this inconsistency ultimately leads Arendt to develop a notion of citizenship that is too reductive, condemning us to repeat unendingly the immemorial violence and exclusion that is entailed by the very implementation of Enlightenment citizenship. While this history of violence and exclusion may escape our collective memory, I wish to show that it does not disappear when citizenship is granted; on the contrary, because it is bound up with legacy of the modern political tradition, it simply remains unappropriated, leaving its trace in the political traditions, institutions, and values that constitute the common world and repeating itself in the violence and exclusion that continues to be carried out against those who were once cast out. In this,

the immemorial violence and exclusion of the past is deeply relevant to the problem of exclusion today, having the potential to forestall the event of appropriation that Arendt identifies with human freedom. Hence, if, as Arendt suggests, citizenship in the strongest sense means participating in an event of appropriation, I wish to show in what follows that Arendtian citizenship alone is not enough to ensure that a common world comes into view. As such, it remains inadequate to the task of addressing the problem of loneliness and the forms of exclusion it perpetuates in the modern era.

In her 1944 essay, "The Jew as Pariah: A Hidden Tradition," Arendt argues that even after emancipation, the Jewish people continued to be excluded from the life of nations, kept from achieving full recognition in the space of politics and enjoying political freedom.[344] I will turn to this text to show that Arendt acknowledges the limits of Enlightenment citizenship for coming to terms with the history of violence and exclusion that keeps those who were once cast out from fully appearing in political life. I will then consider Arendt's discussion in her 1970 essay, "Civil Disobedience," to demonstrate that despite her praise of the American Constitution and the revolutionary tradition it attempts to preserve, she believes that the United States has been thrown into crisis by its failure to come to terms with the tacit exclusion of the black population from the original agreement that founded the American political community. By considering Arendt's discussion of remembrance in light of these two texts, it is possible to complicate her account of the responsibility she believes citizens have to preserve in their memory the legacy of human freedom. On the one hand, Arendt insists that

[344] Hannah Arendt, "The Jew as Pariah: A Hidden Tradition," *The Jewish Writings*, ed. Jerome Kohn and Ron H. Feldman (New York: Schocken Books, 2007): 275–297, 276.

remembrance is necessary for rebuilding the world and returning modern individuals from their loneliness to themselves and others. On the other hand, she provides no means for coming to terms with the history violence and exclusion that has been covered over in the construction of the modern historical narrative, emphasizing instead the responsibility citizens have to preserve the traditions, institutions, and values that constitute a political community.

In the "Jew as Pariah" Arendt develops an account of the limited, ambiguous, and fleeting notion of freedom that the Jewish people in Europe have experienced since achieving emancipation at the end of the eighteenth century. In the wake of emancipation, she argues, the Jewish people in Europe became aware of the fact that they could never enter into the space of appearance as Jews, but would instead always face pressure to assimilate and, with it, the threat of alienating themselves from the Jewish community.[345] For this reason, Arendt says, "The status of the Jews in Europe has been not only that of an oppressed people but also of what Max Weber has called a, 'pariah people.'"[346] The concept of the "pariah" as a human type, she argues, is central for understanding political exclusion in the modern age. The pariah, she explains, is not merely impoverished, but also unwelcome, exiled within the community that is supposedly their own. With the rise of the European nation-state, the pariah tradition has become a central thread in the modern political tradition, which, in emphasizing the expansion of universal human rights, does little to guarantee the recognition of these

[345] Arendt, "The Jew as Pariah," 276.

[346] Ibid.

rights within particular political communities. Arendt thus explains that, "The concept of the pariah has become traditional, even though it be but tacit and latent, and its continuance automatic and unconscious."[347] She argues that while the figure of the pariah looms larger than ever in the thinking of assimilated Jews, it nevertheless remains hidden, having yet to come into full historical actuality as part of the narrative of the Jewish people in Europe.

In order to explain the phenomenon of the pariah, Arendt turns to four Jewish figures, Heinrich Heine (1797-1856), Bernard Lazare (1865-1903), Charlie Chaplin (1889-1977), and Franz Kafka (1883-1924), whose works epitomize the pariah tradition and the various turns it takes over the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In turning to each of these figures, Arendt attempts to shed light on those who have endeavored "to weave the strands of their Jewish genius into the general texture of the European life," but whose memory has nevertheless been covered over in standard histories of the Jewish people.[348] In offering this account of the pariah, however, she also shows that for pariah peoples, the kind of emancipation promised by the European Enlightenment is always out of reach, leading these figures to attempt to create an emancipation of their own on the basis of their pariah status.

Heine, who she describes as the "lord of dreams" (*Traumweltherrscher*), attempts in his capacity as a poet to re-imagine his emancipation by "[standing] outside

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[347] Ibid.

[348] Ibid., 275.

the real word and attacking it from without."[349] Heine is distinctive insofar as he accepts his status as a pariah; rather than assimilating, he takes a stance of comic indifference towards European society for the sake of entertaining and delighting those who have been ostracized. In so doing, he seeks refuge in his exclusion, creating his own emancipation outside the common world in the realm of nature, where human beings are equal insofar as they are all subject to the same life processes regardless of their social standing. As Arendt explains:

> The bare fact that the sun shines on all alike affords [Heine] daily proof that all men are essentially equal. […] Confronted with the natural order of things, in which all is equally good, the fabricated order of society, with its manifold classes and ranks, must appear a comic, hopeless attempt of creation to throw down the gauntlet of its creator.[350]

By seeking refuge in nature, Heine is able to disclose through his poetic imagination the absurdity of those in European society who take themselves to be superior to the Jews. He thus aligns himself with the pariah and upholds his political non-existence in order to protest against the prejudices of formal society. In so doing, Arendt argues, Heine is able to re-envision his emancipation from without, denying the reality of the social order by confronting it with a higher reality that has its basis in the experience of those who have been excluded. In other words, Arendt says, "[Heine] simply ignored the condition which had characterized emancipation everywhere in Europe—namely, that the Jew

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[349] Ibid., 280.

[350] Ibid., 278.

might only become a man by ceasing to be a Jew."[351] Yet, despite achieving a genuine emancipation for himself, Arendt argues that Heine's relation to the social order nevertheless appeared remote and unreal. Even if Heine was able to re-imagine his own emancipation from without, his approach did little to change the material conditions of the pariah who remains subject to the violence and exclusion that is carried out against those who fail to appear as human in the common world.

Arendt thus contrasts Heine with Lazare, who embodies the figure of "the conscious Pariah," taking an altogether different approach to the same experience of political exclusion in the modern era. Whereas Heine protests against this condition by adopting an attitude of superior indifference, refusing to believe in or engage the prejudices of European society, Lazare emphasizes the importance of the Jewish peoples' awareness of their pariah status within European society and the responsibility they have to rebel consciously against the pressures of assimilation. Lazare, unlike Heine, thus attempts to bring the Jewish question openly into the arena of politics.[352] Unlike Heine, Lazare witnessed an increasing tendency on the part of the Jewish people to transform from pariahs into parvenus, or those, Arendt explains, who give into the pressures of assimilation, unconsciously abandoning all of their Jewish characteristics for the sake of rising in the socioeconomic ranks of European society. This, Lazare, thought, would ultimately lead to the destruction of the Jewish people rather than their emancipation. For this reason, he called on them to renounce the fantasy world of

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[351] Ibid., 283.

[352] Ibid.

Heine's poetry and leave behind the comfort and protection of nature for the sake of entering into the space of appearance as representatives of the pariah. By refusing to take Heine's stance of comic indifference, Lazare suggests that the Jewish people would not only be able to come to terms with the reality of the world in which they found themselves, but would also be able to take responsibility for changing it. Whereas Heine emphasizes the innocence of the pariah, Lazare argues that unless the Jewish people engage politically, they will be accomplices in their own exclusion. Yet, Arendt argues that Lazare's efforts ultimately prove inadequate, demonstrating that "as soon as the pariah enters the arena of politics and translates his status into political terms, he becomes perforce a rebel."[353] As such, the "conscience pariah" can only ever appear as a "revolutionary in a society of others, but not in his own," or as a *Schnorrer* or beggar, "[appraising] his poverty by the standards of those who have caused it" and demanding recognition from those against whom he should be fighting.[354] Like Heine, then, Lazare's approach proves inadequate for navigating the pressures of assimilation and the forgetfulness that accompanies the transformation of the pariah into parvenu.

In contrast to both Heine and Lazare, Chaplin transforms the pariah into "the suspect," portraying "the chronic plight of the little man who is incessantly harried and hectored by the guardians of law and order—the representatives of society."[355] Like Lazare, Chaplin attempts to bring the pariah into the space of appearance. Yet, rather

[353] Ibid., 284.

[354] Ibid., 285.

[355] Ibid., 286.

than pointing to the injustice of his situation, Chaplin tries to shed light on the triumphant possibilities that emerge for the outcast within society. Because Chaplin's "little man" is always suspect, this portrayal of the pariah involves a tragic dimension, demonstrating that those standing at the margins of society will always be guilty even if they have committed no crime.[356] Yet, Chaplin's "little man" also embodies what Arendt describes as the "time-honored Jewish truth" that the sheer resolve and human ingenuity of a David can sometimes prevail over the brute animal strength of a Goliath.[357] She says, "Because [the little man] is suspect, he is called upon to bear the brunt of much that he has not done. Yet at the same time, because he is beyond the pale, unhampered by the trammels of society, he is able to get away with a great deal."[358] Chaplin thus suggests, in contrast to Lazare, that arguing for right and wrong from the standpoint of pariah will lead nowhere. He thus re-invents the figure of the pariah as one who, even in his bare existence, has the ability to triumph periodically over the injustice of his situation. In this, Chaplin's pariah is innocent like Heine's, but the pariah's divine indifference has been transformed into careworn insolence.[359]

For a time, Arendt explains, this image had widespread appeal among the masses, enabling the pariah to appear in society as a member of the common world. She says, "Standing outside the pale, suspected by all the world, the pariah—as Chaplin

[356] Ibid., 287.

[357] Ibid.

[358] Ibid.

[359] Ibid., 288.

portrays him—could not fail to arouse the sympathy of the common people, who recognized in him the image of what society had done to them."[360] By the thirties, however, Arendt explains that Chaplin's "suspect" lost its allure. As unemployment increased, the masses no longer found the poverty of the "little man" humorous, coming instead to admire the ideal character of Superman. "Today," Arendt says, "it is not Chaplin, but Superman. When, in *The Great Dictator*, the comedian tried by the ingenious device of doubling his role, to point up the contrast between the 'little man' and the 'big shot,' and to show the almost brutal character of the Superman ideal, he was barely understood."[361] Chaplin's pariah was thus able to appear in the world as human in a way that had not been possible for Heine or Lazare. Yet, the pariah's appearance proved temporary and inadequate for guaranteeing a place in the world for the Jew.

Whereas Heine, Lazare, and Chaplin are all concerned with whether or not the pariah is treated properly, Arendt argues that only Kafka captures the true question of the pariah today. This question, Arendt thinks, concerns whether those who live beyond the pale have any real existence at all.[362] On Arendt's view, Kafka recognized that the experience of being a pariah makes one doubt the reality and validity of one's existence, which, she says is "the greatest injury society can inflict."[363] Kafka's *The Castle*, she argues, captures this experience which, she believes is now well understood by the

[360] Ibid., 287.

[361] Ibid., 288.

[362] Ibid., 289.

[363] Ibid.

modern assimilated Jew. K., she thinks embodies the modern image of the Jewish pariah who desires complete assimilation for the sake of being recognized as a rights bearing human being. Yet, neither the common people of the town nor its rulers are prepared to recognize him even after he has assimilated.[364] As such, Arendt explains, K. became superfluous, continually charged with being 'unwanted and in everyone's way.'"[365] As she explains, "In the eyes of the minor bureaucratic officials his very existence was due merely to a bureaucratic 'error,' while his status as citizen was a paper one, buried 'in piles of documents forever rising and crashing' around him."[366] In his efforts to lay claim to his rights, K. thus finds himself 'completely and desperately alone.'"[367] For Kafka, then, loneliness characterizes the experience of the Jew who only wishes to be recognized as a human being. That is, K.'s very attempt to assert his "basic human rights" does not lead him to become a unique member of a community, but rather perpetuates his superfluity, rendering him indistinguishable from the other villagers, while severing him from his relation to his pariah people.

Arendt turns to Kafka to show that in the present age, the dilemma of the pariah no longer consists in asserting oneself as a Jew, but rather in asserting oneself as a human being.[368] Consequently, Arendt argues, we learn from K. that it is no longer

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[364] Ibid., 291.

[365] Ibid.

[366] Ibid.

[367] Ibid.

[368] Ibid., 295.

possible for the Jew to retreat from the world as a pariah or to assimilate as parvenu, as both are now marked by the status of the outlaw. As she explains:

> Today the bottom has dropped out of the old ideology. The pariah Jew and the parvenu Jew are in the same boat, rowing desperately in the same angry sea. […] Today the truth has come home: there is no protection in heaven or in earth against bare murder, and a man can be driven at any moment from the streets and broad places open to all. At long last, it has become clear that the 'senseless freedom' of the individual merely paves the way for the senseless suffering of his entire people.[369]

Kafka's portrayal of the pariah thus demonstrates that despite being emancipated, the Jew remains excluded, not because he is a Jew, but rather because he desires to be human in a world populated by individuals who have surrendered their humanity to the bureaucratic mechanisms of the modern world. Arendt thus explains that, for Kafka, "thinking is the new weapon—the only one with which the pariah is endowed at birth in his vital struggle against society."[370] On Arendt's reading of Kafka, the pariah's only recourse in the present age lies in his ability to think, exercising his inner freedom over and against the compulsory force of logic that drives mass society.

Arendt's account of the pariah tradition is significant for two reasons. First, it demonstrates that for Arendt, the figure of the pariah is integral for understanding the modern political tradition. The very structure of the European nation-state has left

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[369] Ibid., 296.

[370] Ibid., 290.

certain individuals living beyond the pale of the law even if they have assimilated. Taken together with her critique of the nation-state in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, she indicates this in her discussion of Kafka's account of the way in which the bureaucratic political apparatuses of Europe have called into question the validity of the existence of *both* the pariah and the parvenu, neither of whom are protected any longer from bare murder.[371] With this, she describes stateless people in this essay as "the living symbol of the pariah," whose rightlessness she will ultimately attribute to the structure of nation-state and the abstract, pre-political notion of human rights on which it is based.[372] Second, Arendt suggests that because the pariah has no way of fully appearing in the political arena, the pariah tradition has been covered over, unable to appear as a part of the history of the European political tradition. Yet, while Arendt gestures towards the implications of failing to remember the pariah tradition, she does not develop this in relation to her account of the responsibility citizens have to preserve the common heritage of their political communities. On the contrary, in her concluding remarks regarding Kafka, she argues that in order for the Jewish people to overcome their exclusion, they must assert themselves not as Jews but as human beings by exercising their inner capacity to think and distinguish themselves in their radical singularity in the presence of others. Given the radical way in which the humanity of the Jewish people was called into question by the unthinking totalitarian masses at the beginning of the twentieth century, it is not surprising that Arendt comes to this conclusion. Even so, her

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[371] Ibid., 296. For Arendt's critique of the nation-state, see Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism,* 290–302.

[372] Arendt, "The Jew as Pariah," 286.

own concern for the political significance of remembrance suggests that such an approach would ultimately fail to ensure that the pariah people found a place in the world as the history on which their exclusion is based would ultimately remain unappropriated.

Arendt makes a similar gesture in “Civil Disobedience,” a much later essay that concerns the American practice of civil disobedience and its importance for renewing the American revolutionary spirit without the undermining the stability of its political and juridical structures. She develops this essay in response to the student movements and Civil Rights protests of the 1960s and 1970s, which she argues had thrown the American republic into crisis. Drawing on the images of Thoreau and Socrates, Arendt distinguishes civil disobedience from revolution or rebellion, defining it as the decision to set aside one’s obligation as a citizen to obey the law in order to act in accordance with the individual demands of one’s conscience.[373] This practice, Arendt argues, is distinctively American, and while acts of civil disobedience may not accord with the statutes of American law, they are nevertheless consistent with its spirit.

She maintains in this essay that the obligation citizens have to obey the law is assumed to be the result of common consent on the part of its citizens to enter into a social contract. In its legal and historical manifestation, Arendt argues, the traditional concept of the social contract and the notion of consent that is imbedded within it may

[373] Arendt, “Civil Disobedience,” *Crises of the Republic* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1973): 49–102, 83.

easily be disavowed as a fiction.[374] Yet, the importance of the consent of citizens to be members of a community has existential and theoretical importance that Arendt believes has been overlooked. She says:

> Every man is born a member of a particular community and can survive only if he is welcomed and made at home within it. A kind of consent is implied in every newborn's factual situation; namely, a kind of conformity to the rules under which the great game of the world is played in the particular group to which he belongs by birth. We all live and survive by a kind of *tacit consent*.[375]

In the American context, however, this tacit consent contains within it the *de-facto* right to dissent which confirms and renews the revolutionary spirit that forms the foundation of the American political tradition. Arendt thus says:

> Consent as it is implied in the right to dissent—the spirit of American law and the quintessence of American government—spells out and articulates the tacit consent given in exchange for the community's tacit welcome of new arrivals, of the inner migration through which it constantly renews itself. […] Seen from this perspective, tacit consent is not a fiction: it is inherent in the human condition.[376]

While this notion of consent, she explains, is bound up with the foundation of the American revolutionary tradition, the turn in American politics towards representative

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[374] Arendt, "Civil Disobedience," 85.

[375] Ibid., 88.

[376] Ibid.

government has led the American people to forget this about themselves.[377] In having lost all institutions that once allowed the actual participation of citizens in political life, consent has instead come to be understood as *consensus universalis*, whereby one's citizenship is thought to imply consent not only to the Constitution, but to statutory laws as well.[378]

Such a conception of consent, Arendt argues, is unsustainable given the history of the United States. On her view, both the student movements and the Civil Rights Movement had created a constitutional crisis, not because those who participated in them challenged particular laws and political establishments, but because they expressed a simultaneous intent to withdrawal consent by refusing to recognize the *consensus universalis.* The difficulty involved in conceiving of consent this way, Arendt argues, can be seen by returning to the original agreement on which American political membership is based. This agreement, she argues, included the tacit consent by those who entered into it to tacitly exclude African descended people from the American political community:

> Tocqueville predicted almost a hundred and fifty years ago that 'the most formidable of all the ills that threaten the future of the Union arises,' not from slavery whose abolition he foresaw, but 'from the presence of a black population of its territory.' And the reason he could predict the future of Negroes and Indians for more than a century ahead lies in the simple and frightening fact that

[377] Ibid., 89.

[378] Ibid.

> these people have never been included in the original *consensus universalis* of the American republic.[379]

Arendt explains that the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments, which were adopted immediately after slavery was abolished, attempted to remedy this original crime by extending the rights of citizenship to all those in the United States and the right to vote to all male citizens. She argues, however, that these amendments ultimately failed to overcome the tacit exclusion of the black population from the original *consensus universalis* of the American republic. Indeed, Arendt explains that after these amendments were adopted, "this *tacit* exclusion from the *tacit* consensus" only becomes more pronounced with the repeated failures of the federal government to enforce its own laws.[380] She says:

> As time went by, and wave after wave of immigrants came to the country, it was even more obvious that blacks, now free, and born and bred in the country, were the only ones for whom it was not true that, in Bancroft's words, 'The welcome of the Common Wealth was as wide as sorrow.' We know the result, and we need not be surprised that the present belated attempts to welcome the Negro population explicitly into the otherwise tacit *consensus universalis* of the nation are not trusted.[381]

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[379] Ibid., 89–90.

[380] Ibid., 91.

[381] Ibid.

Important for our purposes is a parenthetical remark Arendt makes in light of this. It is striking, she thinks, that Congress failed to use any language in these amendments that acknowledged the former slaves, who only five years earlier, had been counted by the Constitution as three-fifths of a person. As this original exclusion is written into the legacy of the foundation of the United States, Arendt says, "An explicit constitutional amendment, addressed specifically to the Negro people of America, might have underlined the great change more dramatically for these people who had never been welcome, assuring them of its finality."[382] Because no such amendment was ever adopted, however, she argues that we should not be surprised that the black community continues to find that they are unwelcome in the political community that is supposed to be their own.

Arendt does not develop this parenthetical remark any further. Rather than tarrying on the decision of Congress not to address the black population explicitly in the reconstruction amendments, Arendt goes on to criticize black organizations whose leaders rebuff attempts at integration because, she says, they "care little about the rules of non-violence for civil disobedience and, often, just as little about the issues at stake […] because they are in open rebellion against them all."[383] She then insists that this tendency towards rebellion reveals that we no longer appreciate the nature of the right to dissent implicit in the original contract that forms the basis for American citizenship. Arendt maintains that those protesting against injustices in American society must do so

[382] Ibid.

[383] Ibid., 92.

not by means of rebellion, but instead through acts of civil disobedience. While one's right to disobedience is not explicitly written into the Constitution, she argues that such acts nevertheless renew the spirit of the American laws and, in this, reaffirm one's membership within the American political community. For Arendt, one's ability to appear in the fullness of one's humanity depends on being a citizen of some political community. Hence, she argues that the appearance of those who were once excluded depends not on withdrawing consent from the American *consensus universalis* and denying their membership within community, but instead on affirming it positively through acts of dissent. Such acts, she thinks, must be non-violent, as violence, by its very nature, is coercive and antithetical to freedom. Moreover, she believes that such acts must be oriented by goals that are directed towards preserving the common world or a space of appearance, rather than the interests of particular groups or individuals, which are governed by necessity and most appropriate to the private and social realms. By engaging in civil disobedience, Arendt thus believes that the formerly excluded can bring themselves into appearance fully as citizens, participating in the kind of appropriative event that is definitive of human freedom and able to contravene the forms of exclusion and world-alienation that are definitive of modern political life.

Arendt's emphasis on reaffirming one's citizenship within one's political community, rather than withdrawing membership from it, is no doubt compelling given her own analysis of the problem of statelessness and the space of rightlessness to which those who lack citizenship are exposed. Yet, Arendt's parenthetical remarks concerning the failure of Congress to confront the black population in the reconstruction

amendments warrant greater attention. Whereas Arendt treats this omission as a surprising oversight on the part of Congress, it seems to represent a far more significant moment of repression in the collective memory of the United States. Conceived as a moment of repression, rather than a mere oversight, the language of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments indicates that this history of violence and exclusion is unable to be held together with the historical narrative of the American political community; as such, it remains concealed, unable to come into presence in such a way that it can be appropriated and carried forward in the space of politics. Though Arendt draws her account of the figure of the pariah from the experiences of the Jewish people in Europe, the concept is broadly applicable to those who have been granted the rights of citizenship in the modern era, but who nevertheless find themselves subject to the forms of violence and exclusion that their enfranchisement promised to overcome. In the context of her discussion of the United States, then, the African descended population may be considered America's pariah people, and the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments, a further covering over of the pariah tradition that is bound up with the American legacy of foundation.

As we have seen, Arendt believes that remembrance plays a crucial role in political life, enabling us to reconcile ourselves to the past so that we can carry the world we have in common into the future. Yet, she neglects the role that the immemorial past, or the history of violence and exclusion that fails to come into appearance as part of the historical narrative of the modern political community, plays in perpetuating the exclusion of pariah peoples. Arendt's own insistence on the importance of remembrance

for rebuilding a common world thus comes into conflict with her account of the pariah tradition in the modern era. This tradition is, by its very nature, "hidden," incompatible with the legacy of freedom that Arendt believes we must preserve in our collective memory if we are to ensure the continuation of the common world from generation to generation. As such, becoming a citizen, for Arendt, seems to demand of those who were once cast out that they leave behind the history of violence and exclusion that is bound up with the modern political tradition. Without reconciling ourselves to this history, however, it is not clear how citizens of modern political communities come to terms with the reality of the world in which they find themselves so as to move forward in light of it. Therefore, despite Arendt's own concern for the pariah tradition and the role of remembrance in political life, she does not do enough to develop a method for coming to terms with the immemorial violence and exclusion of the past. Without developing a method for coming to terms in the space of politics with this immemorial past, it is unclear how those who were once excluded can find a home in their political communities and see themselves as part of a common world that is bound together by a shared legacy.

IV.4. An Internal Inconsistency in Arendt's Notion of Citizenship

As I have tried to show, Arendt offers a powerful account of the way in which the forms of citizenship that we have inherited from the liberal tradition perpetuate the loneliness and world-alienation that make modern individuals susceptible to totalitarian domination. Yet, I have also argued that her own account of citizenship is inadequate for overcoming the forms of exclusion that have become pervasive in the modern world.

Arendt recognizes that a legacy of violence and exclusion is entailed by the implementation of Enlightenment citizenship, keeping those who were once excluded from fully appearing in the space of politics. Yet, she fails to provide a means of coming to terms with this history of violence and exclusion in the context of politics. As such, her notion of citizenship does not go far enough, condemning us to a melancholic relation to the past that keeps those who were once cast out from appearing and participating in the event of appropriation that she associates with human freedom.

In the following chapter, I will suggest that the implications of this inconsistency in Arendt's notion of citizenship can be developed by considering her political framework within a broader set of political concerns raised in colonial and post-colonial theory regarding the memory of slavery and colonization in the African Diaspora. By considering both the scope and limits of Arendt's thought within this context, it is possible to give further contour to the critical insights she offers into the limits of Enlightenment citizenship and liberal inclusion. Moreover, by expanding Arendt this way, we find that there remains a pressing need in contemporary political life to make visible those legacies of violence and exclusion that continue to prohibit the complete enfranchisement of those who were once cast out.

Hence, my aim in what follows will be to expand the horizon of our concerns to this global context in order to challenge and deepen Arendt's political categories in light of it. To this end, I will consider Arendt in light of an analysis of the Haitian Revolution, which began in 1791 on the heels of the French Revolution. During this revolution, half a million enslaved Africans in the French colony of Saint-Domingue rose up in order to

realize the promise of universal freedom set forth by the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen. As I will suggest, the Haitian Revolution has an integral role to play in understanding what Arendt describes as the revolutionary tradition of the of the modern age, putting into relief the limits of Enlightenment citizenship for achieving its promised end of universal emancipation. Beyond this, it is a forgotten revolution, one that is decidedly important, but that has nevertheless been left out of the historical narrative, not only by Arendt, but by many European thinkers who take this era to be significant for understanding political life today. As such, it provides a unique point of departure for challenging and deepening Arendt's notion citizenship, and particularly the responsibility she believes citizens have to remember and appropriate the history of their political communities for the sake of preserving a common world. My aim in turning to this revolution will be to bring into focus the paradox of remembrance that I will suggest is internal to the legacy of the modern political tradition. In so doing, I will argue that the inconsistency that arises in Arendt's notion of citizenship points to a broader contradiction in the notion of modern citizenship. This contradiction indicates, in turn, that addressing political exclusion and the problem of loneliness in modern political life will depend on developing concepts that exceed citizenship in order to make room in the space of politics for the immemorial violence and exclusion that has been covered over, but that nevertheless continues to keep those who were once cast out from coming into appearance.

CHAPTER V

SPECTERS OF EXCLUSION: THE HAITIAN REVOLUTION AND THE PARADOX OF REMEMBRANCE IN MODERN POLITICS

In the previous chapter, I argued that while Arendt's analysis of citizenship forms the basis for a novel critique of the liberal tradition, an inconsistency arises in her notion of citizenship that centers on her account of historical memory. On the one hand, Arendt insists that remembrance in political life is necessary for rebuilding the modern world and returning individuals from their loneliness to themselves and others. On the other hand, she provides no means for coming to terms with the history of violence and exclusion that gets covered over in the construction of the modern historical narrative, emphasizing instead the importance of preserving the traditions, institutions, and values of one's political community. With this, Arendt's concern for the responsibility citizens have to reconcile themselves to the past comes into conflict with her discussion of the hidden tradition of the pariah in the modern age. On Arendt's view, citizens can only participate fully in the event of appropriation that she associates with human freedom if the past is be able to appear in the context of politics as a part of the shared reality between men. Yet, she does not develop a method for coming to terms with the immemorial violence and exclusion of the past that is entailed by the implementation of Enlightenment citizenship, presuming instead that its legacy simply fades away when citizenship is granted to those who were once cast out. Hence, in emphasizing the memorial past alone, Arendt leaves unanswered the question of how citizens in the

modern era take responsibility for the world they have inherited, given that the legacy of this world is bound up with a history of violence and exclusion that remains covered over, failing, in turn, to come into presence in the space of politics such that it can be appropriated anew.

As I have suggested, this inconsistency in Arendt's thought leads her to develop a conception of citizenship that is too reductive. If citizenship in the strongest sense means participating in an event of appropriation, and if such an event is possible only insofar as the legacy of the world one has inherited is able to come into view in the space of politics, then it is not clear how, on Arendt's account, citizens in the modern era participate in such an event if a part of the legacy of the modern political tradition remains concealed. As such, it is not clear how her account of citizenship accomplishes the end of bringing a common world into view, as it fails to provide a means of achieving an appropriative relation in the space of politics to those histories of violence and exclusion that have been covered over but that are nevertheless bound up with the legacy of the world we have inherited.

In this chapter, I will develop the broader significance of this inconsistency in Arendt's notion of citizenship for understanding the problem of exclusion today. Rather than dismissing Arendt on the basis of this inconsistency, I will suggest that her insights into the political significance of remembrance reveal a deeper problem regarding historical memory that is specific to the modern political tradition. This problem, which I will call the paradox of remembrance, turns on the tension between our need to preserve in our memory the legacy of the modern political tradition and the fact that this legacy

will always contain within it a history of violence and exclusion that is unable to be recalled in its entirety because it is incompatible with the Enlightenment narrative of universal inclusion that forms the basis of the modern political community. As I will demonstrate, this paradox of remembrance is crucial for understanding the character of exclusion today, clarifying the significance of the immemorial past for contemporary political practice and the role it can play in perpetuating the experience of loneliness and world-alienation in modern life.

In order to demonstrate this, however, I maintain that it is necessary to expand the horizon of our concerns beyond the European nation-state to a more global set of political issues raised in colonial and post-colonial theory regarding the memory of slavery and colonization in the African Diaspora. To this end, I will consider Arendt in light of an analysis of the Haitian Revolution (1791-1804), which provides a unique point of departure for challenging and deepening her notion citizenship and, especially, the responsibility she believes citizens have to remember and appropriate the history of their political communities. By developing Arendt's thought this way, we find that while the immemorial violence and exclusion of the past may fail to come into appearance as a part of our collective memory, it does not disappear when citizenship is granted, but instead repeats itself in the violence and exclusion that continues to be carried out against those who become enfranchised after having been cast out. While there may be many ways to expand Arendt's thought within this global context, I turn to the Haitian Revolution for three reasons.

First, given Arendt's interest in the French and American Revolutions, the Haitian Revolution is deeply relevant to her own concerns regarding the revolutionary spirit of the modern age. The Haitian Revolution began in 1791 on the heels of the French revolution when half a million enslaved Africans in the French colony of Saint-Domingue rose up in response to the promise of universal freedom set forth by the 1789 French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen. This decisive event in the colonial world gave birth in 1794 to the first instance of emancipation in the western hemisphere and set the stage for a series of colonial revolutions that would take place throughout the Caribbean and Latin American over the course of the nineteenth century. It thus constitutes a centerpiece of the revolutionary heritage with which Arendt is concerned. Beyond this, however, it is also a forgotten revolution, one that is decidedly important, but that has nevertheless been left out of the historical narrative of the revolutionary period, by many European thinkers, including Arendt, who take this era to be significant for understanding political life today. As such, it may be understood as offering an early and distinctive example of the hidden tradition of the pariah that Arendt believes is bound up with the legacy of the modern era.

Second, the action taken by the Haitian revolutionaries exemplifies in several important respects the lived and embodied activity that Arendt associates with citizenship. Significantly, the enslaved in Saint-Domingue achieved their emancipation not through a call for independence from France, but rather through an explicit affirmation of the spirit of the French revolutionary legacy, declaring their intent to become French citizens in accordance with the Declaration of the Rights of Man. As

such, the efforts of the Haitian revolutionaries offer an important illustration of the collective action that Arendt believes is necessary in order to renew the traditions, institutions, and values of one's political community for the sake of carrying a common world into the future. Moreover, it offers an important example of what it means for those who were once cast out to assert themselves as citizens in order to appear in the space of politics and participate in an event of appropriation.

Yet, despite achieving the rights of French citizenship, the formerly enslaved ultimately remained subject to the violence and exclusion that their enfranchisement promised to overcome. In the wake of the betrayal of the revolutionary leader Toussaint L'Ouverture in 1801 and Napoleon Bonaparte's attempt to reinstate slavery throughout the French Antilles in 1802, the leaders of the revolution were ultimately led to call for independence from France and establish the new nation of Haiti in 1804. In light of this, my third aim in turning to the Haitian Revolution is to suggest that even after citizenship is granted, a specter of the threat of a return to the violence and exclusion of the past still remains present that has the potential to forestall the event of appropriation that Arendt associates with human freedom. I thus turn to this revolution because it constitutes an original failure of Enlightenment citizenship to overcome the history of violence and exclusion that preceded its implementation.

The echo of this original failure of Enlightenment citizenship can still be heard in the racialized violence and exclusion that continues to haunt diasporic peoples decades and centuries after becoming enfranchised. Hence, rather than falling into oblivion, as Arendt suggests, I turn to this event to suggest that the immemorial past leaves its trace

in the traditions, values, and institutions that hold modern political communities together, keeping those who were once cast out from appearing and participating in the event of appropriation that she believes is necessary for human freedom. This repetition, I maintain, can be explained in terms of the nature of the legacy of the political tradition that we are tasked with preserving and the immemorial violence and exclusion that is necessitated by very implementation of Enlightenment citizenship.

This chapter will take shape in three parts. I will begin by considering the ways in which Arendt's approach to the question of race and racism in the African Diaspora has been critically received in recent scholarship. Many have been inclined to dismiss the importance of Arendt's thought for addressing these issues because of her lack of sensitivity to the particular experience of exclusion in the African Diaspora. My aim, by contrast, is to rehabilitate her political categories within this context and, in so doing, open new paths to resolving the inconsistency that arises in her notion of citizenship. Moreover, I will argue that by expanding Arendt's theoretical framework this way, we find that she has a novel contribution to make to the discourse concerning the legacy of European slavery and colonization through her analysis of remembrance that has yet to be fully appreciated.

I will then develop Arendt's notion of citizenship in light of an analysis of the Haitian Revolution, focusing in particular on the relationship between the French and Haitian Revolutions, the abolition of slavery in 1794, and the Leclerc Expedition (1801-1803), which set the stage for Haitian independence in 1804. There are, to be sure, a diversity of historical interpretations of the Haitian Revolution that have been offered

that help to situate this event within the broader landscape of the revolutionary period. While my reading of the Haitian Revolution will be guided by the historical literature, my aim is not to further this discourse, but rather to consider the philosophical stakes of the Haitian Revolution for understanding the implications of the immemorial past on political practice today.

My aim in the final section of the chapter will be to offer an interpretation of this event in light of Arendt's political categories. While Arendt does not recognize the political significance of the immemorial past, I will argue in this section that her own analysis demands greater consideration of it. By expanding Arendt within this context, we find that her analysis clarifies the need in modern political life to pay tribute to the hiddenness of the pariah tradition, which, despite being covered over, forms a central thread of the legacy of the modern era. Without developing a means of coming to terms with the hiddenness of this tradition, it is not clear how individuals in the modern world can come to see themselves as belonging to a common world held together by a shared legacy. On the basis of my analysis of Arendt and the Haitian Revolution, I therefore wish to show that the paradox of remembrance internal to the legacy of the modern political tradition makes it the case that citizenship, even as Arendt conceives of it, is inadequate to the task of overcoming exclusion and contravening the problem of loneliness in modern political life. With this, I will argue in Chapter Five that taking responsibility for the legacy of the modern political tradition depends on developing a new frame for the concept of belonging in political ontology that goes beyond citizenship in order to make room in the space of politics for the specters of the

immemorial violence and exclusion of the past that are necessitated by its implementation.

V.1. The Boomerang Thesis and the African in Arendt's Political Philosophy

Arendt's relation to questions concerning the history of European slavery, colonization, imperialism, and the experience of exclusion in the African Diaspora is complex. On the one hand, Arendt was among the first of her generation in Europe to suggest that the European imperial experience, and the racist, proto-genocidal political strategies that drove it, played a decisive role in producing the political culture that created the conditions for the rise of totalitarianism after World War I.[384] In her efforts to expose this relation, particularly in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, her political project bears greater resemblance to the work of black intellectuals such as W.E.B. Dubois, Aimé Césaire, and Frantz Fanon than it does to many of her European contemporaries. For this reason, several scholars, including Christopher Lee and Richard King, have suggested that her work makes important contributions to post-colonial and African studies that have yet to be fully appreciated within these fields.

On the other hand, Arendt demonstrates throughout much of her work a remarkable insensitivity to the particular experience of exclusion in the African Diaspora, at times employing a rhetoric in her characterization of Africans and African descended people that appears to reaffirm the very racism that she attempts to challenge

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[384] I have borrowed the term "proto-genocidal" from Richard King's introduction to *Hannah Arendt and the Uses of History: Imperialism, Nation, Race and Genocide*, ed. Richard King and Dan Stone (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), 3.

in her discussion of imperialism and totalitarianism.[385] On the basis of this, scholars including Shiraz Dossa, Kathyrn Gines, and Robert Bernasconi have raised the question of whether racist assumptions are at work in Arendt's thought that undermine the emphasis she places in her political discourse on the human condition of plurality and the importance of political belonging. While it is beyond the scope of this chapter to examine the entire range of concerns her work has raised in regard to these questions, my aim in what follows will be to consider several dimensions of her thought that have been of particular interest to scholars for examining the merits and limitations of her theoretical framework for addressing questions of exclusion in the context of the European legacy of slavery and colonization. This, in turn, will give orientation to the approach I plan to take to the Haitian Revolution in order to expand the implications of Arendt's notion of citizenship within this context.

Arendt only directly addresses the experience of exclusion in the African Diaspora a handful of times over the course of her career. Yet, themes that remain central to her work, such as her concern for capturing the precise character of the kind of racism that became pervasive throughout Europe in the early twentieth century, as well as her account of the phenomenon of stateless people, has deep resonances with questions that arise in colonial, anti-colonial, and post-colonial thought concerning the experience of exclusion among diasporic peoples. Moreover, when Arendt does address these questions directly, her approach has often proven to be highly controversial,

[385] Kathryn T. Gines, "Race Thinking and Racism in Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism*," in *Hannah Arendt and the Uses of History: Imperialism, Nation, Race and Genocide*, ed. Richard King and Dan Stone (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), 49.

prompting much criticism regarding the adequacy of her theoretical framework for addressing questions of exclusion in this context. Those aspects of her work that have received the most attention in this regard include her analysis of imperialism in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, her discussion of school integration in the United States in her 1959 essay, "Reflections on Little Rock," and her critique of the student movements in her 1970 essay, "On Violence." While scholars have challenged Arendt's work in these texts from a variety of angles, the nature of their criticisms typically fall into one of two categories.

The first type of criticism concerns the viability of Arendt's "boomerang thesis," which she introduces in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* to describe the dynamic link she suggests exists between the European imperial experience in Africa and Asia between 1870 and 1914 and the rise of totalitarianism on the continent after World War I.[386] On Arendt's view, it was through Europe's imperial endeavors in Asia and Africa that "the race principle" became a fully functioning mechanism for transforming "stranger and alien others" into superfluous, nonhuman entities for the sake of justifying their domination, exploitation, and extermination.[387] Such justification depended on the development of a structure of government that could reinforce and reproduce this superfluity. Hence, Arendt suggests that imperialism in African and Asia led to the discovery of bureaucratic government. Taken together, Arendt says, "Race […] was an

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[386] Richard King, "Introduction," *Hannah Arendt and the Uses of History: Imperialism, Nation, Race and Genocide*, ed. Richard King and Dan Stone (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), 3. See also, Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 206, 223.

[387] Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 206.

escape into an irresponsibility where nothing human could any longer exist, and bureaucracy was the result of a responsibility that no man can bear for his fellow man and no people for another people."[388] On the basis of this, Arendt argues that colonialism and imperialism in the late nineteenth centuries, particularly in the context of Africa, had real and immediate "boomerang effects" on the behaviors of European peoples.[389] She explains:

> The full impact of the African experience was first realized by leaders of the mob like Carl Peters, who decided that they too had to belong to a master race. African colonial possessions became the most fertile soil for the flowering of what later was to become the Nazi elite. Here they had seen with their own eyes how peoples could be converted into races and how, simply by taking the initiative in the process, one might push one's own people into the position of the master race.[390]

Arendt thus makes the provocative suggestion in *The Origin of Totalitarianism* that Europe's imperial and colonial practices abroad played a crucial role in setting the stage for the rise of totalitarianism in Europe.[391] While such a connection had already been established by a myriad of non-European thinkers, Arendt was among the first in Europe

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[388] Ibid., 207.

[389] Ibid., 206.

[390] Ibid.

[391] King, "Introduction," 3.

to establish this link, doing so through her novel insight into the relationship between the racism and bureaucracy that was established during the era of European imperial rule.[392]

Despite the novelty of Arendt's boomerang thesis, many have suggested that the link she attempts to establish between European imperial practices in the colonies and the rise of totalitarianism on the continent lacks explanatory power. Margaret Canovan set the trajectory for this line of criticism in her 1974 work, *The Political Thought of Hannah Arendt*. Here, Canovan argues that while Arendt offers some of her most brilliant insights in this part of *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, she only succeeds in establishing a "quasi-link" between imperial ideologies such as pan-Germanism and pan-Slavism and the rise of totalitarianism in Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union.[393] While this link is clearer in the case of Germany, Canovan argues that even here, the boomerang thesis is neither obvious nor necessary to explain the rise totalitarianism.[394] Canovan argues, too, that if the racism and bureaucracy of imperialism had such a devastating effect on the political and cultural practices of Europe, it is not clear why former imperial powers such as Britain and France were able to sustain their democratic institutions and political cultures during and after the age of imperialism.[395]

L.H. Gann and Peter Duignan have criticized Arendt on similar grounds, calling into question the adequacy of Arendt's historical analysis in her discussion of European

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[392] Ibid.

[393] Ibid., 9. See also, Margaret Canovan, *The Political Thought of Hannah Arendt*, 38.

[394] Ibid.

[395] Ibid., 12.

imperialism, particularly as it unfolds in her discussion of Germany. In *The Rulers of German Africa, 1884-1914*, they argue that the German colonial experience abroad was too short lived to have a significant impact on the political or intellectual climate of Germany. On their view, it was World War I that gave rise to totalitarianism, not colonialism, and while Germany's involvement in the scramble for Africa might have played some role in the formation of the totalitarian ideologies of Nazi Germany, the leaders of National Socialism had little interest in overseas colonialism.[396] More recently, Seyla Benhabib and others have reiterated Canovan's claim that Arendt fails to provide adequate support for her boomerang thesis and the implications she suggests it has for democratic liberalism.[397] Like Canovan, Benhabib calls into question Arendt's view that imperial racism and bureaucracy had a destructive impact on the political and cultural values of Europe, suggesting that Arendt's discussion is based on hunches and intuitions, rather than sound historical evidence.[398] Hence, while these scholars agree that Arendt's boomerang thesis is intriguing, they nevertheless believe that Arendt stops short of transforming this insight into a theory that has explanatory power, failing in turn to demonstrate the ways in which European imperialism and colonialism corrupted the liberal democratic structures and cultural values of the west.[399]

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[396] Ibid., 9. See also, L.H. Gann and Peter Duignan, *The Rulers of German Africa, 1884-1914*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1977).

[397] Seyla Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*, 83

[398] King, "Introduction," 12.

[399] Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*, 83.

A second line of criticism has arisen in Arendt studies that has shifted the focus of this debate from Arendt's discussion of the impact of imperial politics on totalitarianism to her problematic characterization of indigenous populations, and, especially, of sub-Saharan Africans.[400] Shiraz Dossa initiated this line of criticism in his 1980 essay, "Human Status and Politics: Hannah Arendt on the Holocaust." Here, Dossa argues that Arendt employs a notion of the human being throughout her work that is ethnocentric, privileging the values and traditions of the European over and against the colonized other, and especially the sub-Sarharan African.[401] Dossa explains that Arendt acknowledges throughout much of her work that since antiquity, the political practices of the west have been accompanied by genocidal massacre and the violent domination of foreign peoples.[402] In spite of this, however, Arendt believes that the Holocaust, in particular, was a novel and unprecedented moment in the history of the west, revealing, for the first time, the way in which this violence can be thrown back on itself, resulting not only in mass murder, but also in an assault on the culture and civilization that gave birth to the idea of human freedom. It is in this that Dossa locates Arendt's ethnocentrism. As Dossa suggests, Arendt believes that the rise of totalitarianism in the period between the world wars led to the discovery that "freedom can be used to eliminate its own conditions of existence: plurality and individuality. Totalitarianism is an exercise in the liquidation of freedom and restraint, and the arbitrary mastery of

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[400] King, "Introduction," 10.

[401] Dossa Shiraz, "Human Status and Politics: Hannah Arendt on the Holocaust," *The Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 13.2 (1980): 310.

[402] Ibid., 317.

men."[403] On Dossa's view, Arendt's assumption seems to be that those colonized others whose fate had been similar to the Jews in Nazi Germany, lacked the culture, history, and civilization that Arendt believes is expressly human. Hence, he suggests that for Arendt, similar events of extermination in the colonies did not reveal the same horrifying possibility of human freedom. This, Dossa thinks, comes out most clearly in Arendt's characterization of the sub-Saharan African in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. He says:

> Inability to master nature sufficiently, to fabricate an artifice beyond the one naturally given, to establish public bodies—that is the combined political human failure of the Africans. In broader and related terms the blacks testify, in Arendt's view, to a general lack of human culture and morality: people who had 'escaped the reality of civilization.' For Arendt, although their murder is clearly unjust it is somehow not immoral.[404]

On the basis of this, Dossa argues that the European moral and cultural context in which Arendt was writing produced an ethnocentric strain in her thought that framed her claims regarding the uniqueness of the Holocaust. This ethnocentric strain, Dossa says, is explicit in Arendt's characterization of sub-Saharan Africans in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* and implicit in her broader political philosophy.[405] He argues that Arendt repeats this characterization of non-European peoples in subsequent works concerning

[403] Ibid.

[404] Ibid., 319.

[405] Ibid., 320.

race and racism in the African Diaspora and thus calls for a further interrogation of Arendt's racial attitudes and the role they play in her broader political assumptions.[406]

Recent scholars including Robert Bernasconi and Kathyrn Gines have given further contour to this criticism, drawing attention to Arendt's blindness to non-European peoples in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, as well as in her later works, particularly those concerning the question of race and racism in the United States. In so doing, both have attempted to show that Arendt was led astray by her failure to engage non-European political discourses that have significant bearing on her own interests in the problem of statelessness and exclusion in contemporary political life. Because of this, they suggest that while Arendt may be a relatively enlightened European thinker who has important insights to offer into questions concerning contemporary political community, she nevertheless remains too deeply entrenched in the western tradition.[407] This, in turn, they suggest, keeps her from addressing the forms of racial violence and exclusion that have their basis in the global legacy of European slavery and colonization.

Bernasconi, for instance, argues that Arendt's appeal to the distinction between the social and political realms in her analysis of the United States blinds her to the distinctive forms of exclusion that have been produced by anti-black racism in this

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[406] Ibid. See also Richard King, "Introduction," 11.

[407] Robert Bernasconi, "When the Real Crime Began: Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism* and the Dignity of the Western Philosophical Tradition," *Hannah Arendt and the Uses of History: Imperialism, Nation, Race and Genocide*, ed. Richard King and Dan Stone (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), 63.

context.[408] According to Bernasconi, this distinction grows out of Arendt's analysis of the Greek division between the necessity of the private realm and the liberation from such necessity in the public realm. The birth of the social in the modern era clarifies that this distinction has collapsed, causing the necessities of life to bleed into the political and foreclose the possibility of the appearance of freedom. As Bernasconi explains, this distinction forms the basis for Arendt's praise of the American Revolution in *On Revolution*, which she believes was guided, in contrast to the French Revolution, by political goals rather than social interests.[409] Yet, on Bernasconi's view, this account of American history is based on a myth. As he explains:

> [Arendt's] subsequent claim in *On Revolution* that the United States of America had succeeded better than the European states at securing the political realm from the encroachment of the social, ignored the fact that this was accomplished by absolutizing certain racial divisions through the insistence on a system of classifications.[410]

Bernasconi notes that Arendt acknowledges in *On Revolution* as well as in "Civil Disobedience," that the American Republic was founded on the original crime of slavery and the tacit exclusion of African descended people from the Constitution. In spite of this, however, he argues that she nevertheless favors a mythical reading of the original spirit of the American Revolution in her criticism of the Civil Rights Movement in her

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[408] Robert Bernasconi, "The Double Face of the Political and the Social: Hannah Arendt and America's Racial Divisions, *Research in Phenomenology*, 26.1 (1996): 3–24, 4.

[409] Ibid., 11.

[410] Ibid., 22.

1959 essay, “Reflections on Little Rock.” This essay, Bernasconi says, was guided by Arendt’s criticism of NAACP leaders for focusing on social issues concerning discrimination in employment, housing, and education, that aimed at securing the necessities of life, rather than political goals that sought to open a space of freedom.[411] According to Bernasconi, Arendt fails to appreciate in her criticism of school desegregation that a white racial hierarchy is bound up with the American political tradition, creating conditions in American social life that keep non-white people from appearing in the space of politics. He argues that Arendt’s insistence on preserving a strict division between the social and political serves the interests of the white population in the United States at the expense of the political goals of the black population.[412] For this reason, Bernasconi says, “She has provided an account of political community that lacks the resources necessary to address the divisions sustained by racism.”[413] Moreover, he suggests that her attachment to the western tradition keeps her from remaining attuned to the distinctive forms of exclusion that have been produced by the global impact of the legacy of slavery and colonization, especially in the United States, and, as a result, her political philosophy has the potential to perpetuate the racist assumptions that he believes are bound up with the western political tradition.[414]

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[411] Ibid., 16.

[412] Ibid., 18.

[413] Ibid., 4.

[414] Bernasconi only suggests that Arendt’s treatment of race and racism in the United States has damning implications for her broader political framework in this essay. He gives full articulation to these implications in his more recent work, “When the Real Crime Began: Hannah Arendt’s *The Origins of Totalitarianism* and the Dignity of the Western Philosophical Tradition.” In this article, Bernasconi challenges Arendt’s boomerang thesis from the perspective of her racial attitudes and her commitment to

Similarly, Gines has argued in her recent work, *Hannah Arendt and the Negro Question*, that Arendt has a fundamentally flawed orientation to what Gines calls "the Negro question." Specifically, Gines maintains that Arendt frames issues of slavery, colonialism, imperialism, and segregation in ways that neglect the role white institutions and political practices play in perpetuating anti-black racism, approaching these issues by presenting black individuals as the problem. Gines argues, too, that Arendt's discourse on the Jewish question has direct bearing on the Negro question, but Arendt remains blind to these implications of her analysis. For instance, she argues that Arendt fails to connect her own childhood experience of anti-Semitism to the experience of anti-black racism and the challenges it poses for black parents attempting to raise their children to be political agents in a world that refuses to allow them to appear.[415] Moreover, Gines maintains that while Arendt advocates for the political importance of a Jewish army in the context of the Warsaw ghetto and is keenly aware of analogous forms of violent oppression that have been carried out against African descended people through the colonial system, she nevertheless arrives at the opposite conclusion in her analysis of the violence that figures like Sartre and Fanon call for in response to colonial oppression. With this, Gines suggests that while Arendt is able to see the Jewish

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the heritage of western political and philosophical thought. Specifically, he argues that she hesitated to go as far as other non-European thinkers in establishing a clear connection between European colonialism and imperialism and the rise of totalitarianism for fear of undermining the dignity of the western tradition all together. Bernasconi thus maintains that Arendt's insights into the question of imperialism not only lack the novelty that is often ascribed to them, but also perpetuate the racist assumptions inherent in the western political tradition. See Robert Bernasconi, "When the Real Crime Began: Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism* and the Dignity of the Western Philosophical Tradition," in *Hannah Arendt and the Uses of History: Imperialism, Nation, Race and Genocide*, ed. Richard King and Dan Stone (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), 55–67.

[415] Kathryn T. Gines, *Hannah Arendt and the Negro Question* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014), 123.

experience of exclusion as a political phenomenon, she is unable to do the same in the case of anti-black racism and the forms of exclusion it perpetuates. Following Bernasconi, Gines therefore argues that Arendt's blindness to the Negro question raises serious doubts about the viability of her criteria for distinguishing between the private, social, and political spheres.[416] Gines says:

> Her theoretical framework dividing up the political, the private, and the social guides her analysis of the Negro question in a way that undermines her judgment of it. Consequently, Arendt's approach to the Negro question as a private or social issue prevents her from recognizing that anti-Black racism (like Jew hatred) is a political phenomenon.[417]

On the basis of this, Gines concludes her discussion by suggesting that Arendt's Kantian notion of judgment and representational thinking only allows her to see from the perspective of those who are able to appear in the space of politics. For this reason, she argues, Arendt is neither able to appreciate the experience of those who have been denied access to this space, nor critically engage the exclusionary practices that keep this space closed off to all but an elite few.[418]

In relying on a conception of judgment that grows out of a Eurocentric heritage, Gines thus maintains that Arendt is led to represent African descended people in a severely distorted manner throughout her work. On her view, Arendt demonstrates this

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[416] Ibid., 123.

[417] Ibid.

[418] Ibid., 125.

not only in text such as "Reflections of Little Rock," and "On Violence," but also in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, where she recognizes the implications of European imperialism and colonialism on European culture but nevertheless takes the perspective of the European with great ease in her representation of Africans. Gines says, "To Arendt, it is was obvious that Africans lacked civilization, reason, culture, history, and political institutions."[419] Gines argues that Arendt correctly identifies racism as a tool used by Europeans to exploit and oppress non-Europeans; yet, in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, for instance, she focuses solely on the imperial period between 1870 and 1914 in her boomerang thesis, refusing, in turn, to acknowledge the forms of institutionalized racism that arose as early as the seventeenth century in the context of slavery and colonization, especially in the Americas.[420] In so doing, Gines argues, Arendt fails to see the broader impact of the European legacy of slavery and colonization on European political and intellectual culture, leading Arendt to overlook the racist assumptions that might have been at work in her own representation of African descended people. Turning in particular to Arendt's reliance on Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* to characterize European encounters with Africans in her discussion of the Boers and the British in South Africa, Gines says:

> *Heart of Darkness* is a thoroughly racist text, even if it also functions to expose and possibly condemn imperialism. Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* like Arendt's *Origins*, (re)presents the ravaging effects of imperialism, yet without satisfactory

[419] Ibid.

[420] Kathryn T. Gines, "Race Thinking and Racism in Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism*," in *Hannah Arendt and the Uses of History: Imperialism, Nation, Race and Genocide*, ed. Richard King and Dan Stone (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), 39.

reprimand or reproach. The fact that Arendt accepts and embraces this racist image of Africa undermines her efforts to position herself against racism.[421]

Gines thus argues that Arendt fails to liberate herself from her own idiosyncrasies in the way promised by her Kantian notion of judgment. On the basis of this, Gines suggests that Arendt's blindness to her own Eurocentric assumptions ultimately undermines the political project she seeks to advance. As a result, Gines argues, Arendt is led to develop a conception of political life that sustains, rather than challenges, the racialized violence and exclusion that keeps African descended people from appearing in the space of politics.[422] Hence, while Gines maintains that she is "not attempting to dismiss Arendt's thought altogether and label her as a racists" she nevertheless insists that we cannot not ignore or bracket these idiosyncrasies in her thought, as we may risk missing the role Arendt's broader political philosophy plays in perpetuating Eurocentric assumptions and anti-black racism in political thought today.[423]

Arendt's treatment of the European legacy of imperialism and colonization has therefore received much critical attention. As we have seen, criticisms of this aspect of her work range from those who believe she goes too far with her boomerang thesis in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* to those who believe that she fails to go far enough, remaining too deeply entrenched in the European tradition to free herself from the racist assumptions that are believed to be inherent in it. To be sure, these methods of engaging

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[421] Ibid., 50.

[422] Gines, *Hannah Arendt and the Negro Question*,130.

[423] Ibid., 1.

Arendt's work are important for shedding light on significant problems in Arendt's theoretical analysis that keep it from adequately addressing the impact of European imperialism and colonization on the political existence of non-European peoples. Yet, neither allows for the further development of Arendt's thought within this context. Whereas those who pursue the first line of criticism deny altogether the plausibility of the relationship Arendt establishes between the European imperial experience in Africa and the rise of totalitarianism on the continent, those who take the second approach suggest that Arendt's racist assumptions render even those insights that may have significance for this discourse worthy of suspicion.

In light of this, I wish to take an alternative approach to developing Arendt's thought within the global discourse concerning the memory of slavery and colonization in the African Diaspora. Those who follow the second approach to this problem are right to point out Arendt's blindness to the experience of race and racism in the African Diaspora. Yet, I wish to show that this blindness does not foreclose the possibility of learning from Arendt within this context. Rather, it suggests that the context itself is too significant to be neglected in our consideration of Arendt's thought even if she failed to appreciate it. Moreover, while Arendt may have been blind to the experience of exclusion in the African Diaspora, I maintain that merely dismissing Arendt's thought on the basis of this blindness is not enough challenge or undermine the problematic assumptions that arise in her work. On the contrary, truly undermining these problematic assumptions depends on expanding Arendt's thought within this context, not only to put

into relief its limitations, but also to find ways of rehabilitating her political concepts in light of it for the sake of thickening this discourse.

With this in mind, my aim in what follows will be to consider Arendt in light of an analysis of the Haitian Revolution. Arendt's omission of the Haitian Revolution from her analysis of revolution in her 1963 text *On Revolution* has received a notable amount of scholarly attention in recent years, particularly from those who take the second approach to criticizing Arendt's analysis of the European legacy of imperialism and colonization. Gines, for instance, says that while Arendt erases this revolution, along with the European legacy of slavery and colonization that accompanies it, from her own account of revolution:

> The significance of the Haitian Revolution cannot be overstated even on Arendt's own terms. […] The Haitian Revolution sought not only liberation from slavery and from the French colonial order but also the foundation of freedom for political participation and most certainly new beginnings and the unfolding of a story never told before—the establishment of an independent Black state by former slaves and their free allies.[424]

Gines thus cites this omission as further evidence of Arendt's failure to view anti-black racism and the role that the history of slavery and colonization has to play in it as a political phenomenon.

Likewise, Sybille Fischer notes that Arendt places paradigmatic emphasis on the French and American Revolutions in *On Revolution*, while altogether silencing the

[424] Ibid., 74.

Haitian Revolution in her historical analysis. This omission, Fischer thinks, is symptomatic of Arendt's inability to conceptualize slavery as a political issue, relegating it instead to the realm of the social. Because Arendt is unable to understand slavery as something that exceeds these distinctions, Fischer argues that the Haitian revolution disappears from her analysis. As Fischer explains:

> Slavery shows that we cannot neatly separate the social from the political, and that we cannot theorize liberty without thinking about liberation and what kind of liberty ensues from liberation. Revolutionary anti-slavery combines what in Arendt's language would be the social and the political in ways that make it intractable to her. Considering slavery as a political issue makes her recoil […] Revolutionary anti-slavery is a contradiction in terms [for Arendt]. Haiti becomes unthinkable.[425]

On Fischer's view, Arendt's omission of this revolution from her larger narrative of the Age of Revolution is symptomatic of a deeply ingrained Eurocentrism that has caused Arendt, and western political thinkers more generally, to refuse to see slavery as a central thread of the modern tradition, treating it instead as an anomaly that has no place in the history of the west.[426]

Other scholars including David Scott, Richard King, and Nick Nesbitt, whose work I will return to later on, have also noted Arendt's omission of the Haitian Revolution from her discussion in *On Revolution*. While all three suggest that this

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[425] Sybille Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed: Haiti and the Cultures of Slavery in the Age of Revolution* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 9.

[426] Ibid., 10.

omission is striking and disappointing given Arendt's concern for developing a political framework that promises plurality and visibility in the space of politics, they suggest, in contrast to Gines and Fischer, that it provides an important starting point for further inquiry into the importance of the Haitian Revolution for understanding the revolutionary tradition of the modern age and its implications for thinking about contemporary forms of political exclusion. In what follows, I will approach my analysis of the Haitian Revolution this way, taking this omission on Arendt's part to provide an important point of departure for rethinking the implications of the legacy of slavery and colonization for questions concerning citizenship and the role of remembrance in contemporary political life.

V.2. The Place of the Haitian Revolution in the Revolutionary Tradition of the Modern Age

In *On Revolution*, Arendt develops an account of the distinctively modern spirit of revolution. While Arendt believes that this revolutionary spirit has been forgotten, either because it has been overshadowed by the violent pursuit of the social interests of the masses, or confused with the drive to secure liberty in the private realm, she nevertheless argues that it lies at the heart of the modern political tradition and tells a story about this tradition that must be renewed. On Arendt's view, revolution is the guiding principle of the modern era insofar as its traditions, institutions, and values are held together by the belief that the course of history can be suddenly begin anew and a story that has never been told before can start to unfold. In this, she says, "Revolutions are the only political events that confront us directly and inevitably with the problem of

new beginnings."[427] According to Arendt, the phenomenon of revolution is unique to the modern era insofar as it is driven by the two-fold aim of liberating the oppressed for the sake of creating a permanent foundation for freedom. While a conception of political freedom based on the human capacity for new beginnings was well understood in antiquity, she explains, "The revolutionary spirit of the last centuries, that is the eagerness to liberate *and* to build a new house were freedom can dwell, is unprecedented and unequalled in all prior history."[428] On her view, the revolutions of the late eighteenth century brought a pathos of novelty into existence in the political sphere, or a belief, not merely in change, but in the possibility of ushering in an entirely new epoch aimed above all at the political constitution of a space for freedom.[429]

In being bound up with this pathos of novelty, Arendt argues that the revolutionary spirit of the modern era has also brought the problem of freedom into the space of politics more forcefully than ever before. She says:

> If foundation was the aim and the end of revolution, then the revolutionary spirit was not merely the spirit of beginning something new but of starting something permanent and enduring; the lasting institution, embodying this spirit and encouraging it to new achievements, would be self-defeating. From which it unfortunately seems to follow that nothing threatens the very achievement of

[427] Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 11.

[428] Ibid., 25.

[429] Ibid., 19.

> revolution more dangerously and more acutely than the spirit which has brought it about.[430]

On her view, the French and American revolutions are emblematic not only of this revolutionary heritage, but also of the tensions involved in the two-fold aim of liberation and foundation that is contained within the modern notion of revolutionary freedom. While the French failed to develop a constitution that could preserve this revolutionary spirit in its political institutions in order to provide a lasting foundation for freedom, the Americans, who succeeded in developing such a constitution, failed to develop a mechanism for remembering its revolutionary origin. This, she argues, has produced a society of citizens in twentieth century America who are afraid of revolution and unwilling to enter into the space of politics for fear of disrupting the status quo.[431] Arendt thus believes that in order to understand the world we live in, we must consider the general implications of the complexities and tensions inherent in revolution for modern man's political existence so as to reclaim and preserve the revolutionary spirit of the modern age.[432]

Whereas Arendt emphasizes the importance of the French and American revolutions, my aim in this section will be to add another dimension to her analysis by considering the place of the Haitian Revolution in this heritage of modern political revolution. In so doing, I will argue that the revolutionary tradition we have inherited

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[430] Ibid., 225.

[431] Ibid., 225.

[432] Ibid., 209.

and are now responsible for preserving is even more complex than Arendt suggests. In order capture the stakes involved in this revolution for understanding the revolutionary spirit of the modern age, it is necessary to consider its relation to the French Revolution. Focusing on the work of French historian François Furet, I will consider briefly the initial moments of the French Revolution, turning in particular to the democratic vocabulary that Furet believes was set forth by the 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen. According to Furet, this document introduced an unprecedented language of revolutionary freedom to the space of politics that continues to frame the historical narrative of our democratic institutions today. I will therefore turn to Furet's discussion to suggest that this dimension of the revolutionary tradition is emblematic of the memorial past, or that part of the revolutionary tradition that can be held together with the modern Enlightenment narrative and, as such, is able to be brought into appearance as a part of our collective memory.

I will then consider this in light of several key events that took place at the same time as the French Revolution on the other side of the Atlantic in the colonial context of French Saint-Domingue. The Haitian Revolution is an especially complex example of modern revolution that has been complicated even further by the relatively sparse historical documentation that exists to account for it. Widespread illiteracy among the enslaved in Saint-Domingue and general neglect of the voice of the masses in the historical record make it difficult to discern from first hand accounts what the experience of emancipation might have been like for those engaged in this revolution. As Carolyn Fick explains, "For the vast majority [of the slaves], the ability to read and write was an

unknown luxury. So they left no memoirs, pamphlets, tracts, nor accounts of events."[433] In light of this, my aim is not to offer an original historical account of the Haitian Revolution, but rather to use those narratives of it that are especially helpful as a platform for clarifying the theoretical significance of this event for deepening our understanding of the revolutionary tradition.[434] With this in mind, I will thus turn to several turning points during the Haitian Revolution including the initial uprising of the enslaved in 1791, the abolition of slavery in 1794, and the Leclerc Expedition (1801-1803), which set the stage for Haitian independence in 1804. In so doing, I will suggest that the Haitian Revolution represents a central thread of the modern tradition, the significance of which is distinct from that of the French and American Revolutions in two respects.

First, it marks decisive and perhaps originary failure of Enlightenment citizenship to bring those who were once cast out into the space of appearance. As I will

[433] Carolyn Fick, *The Making of Haiti: The Saint-Domingue Revolution From Below* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1990), 9.

[434] It is important to note that while this event has been widely neglected in mainstream European and American interpretations of the revolutionary period, it has played a significant role the development of the twentieth century intellectual tradition in the African Diaspora. Figures including Jean Price-Mars, CLR James, and Aimé Cesairé, all develop narratives of the Haitian Revolution in the service of demonstrating its significance for understanding the impact of European slavery and colonization on the African Diaspora. Jean Price-Mars can be credited with introducing the notion of a black consciousness to this tradition through his account of the history of the Haitian Revolution in works such as *So Spoke the Uncle.* In *The Black Jacobins*, CLR James draws heavily on Price-Mars's work to develop a narrative of the Haitian Revolution oriented by both Marxist and anti-colonial themes. Similarly, in *Toussaint-Louverture, la Revolution Française et le Probleme Colonial*, Aimé Césaire relies on Price-Mars's conception of black consciousness to draw the figure of Toussaint L'Ouverture into the negritude and anti-colonial movements of the 1950s and 1960s. In re-appropriating the Haitian Revolution, their efforts have paved the way for contemporary historians to draw attention to the one-sided story that continues to be told by mainstream European and American historians of the revolutionary period. This, in turn, has led to a new historiographical approach to this era over the last decade and a half that takes seriously the seismic impact of the Haitian Revolution on the broader Atlantic world during the Age of Revolution.

suggest, the formerly enslaved attempted to enact themselves as French citizens in precisely the way that Arendt recommends, affirming the spirit of the French revolutionary tradition rather than withdrawing their consent from the French political community on the basis of the violence and exclusion they suffered under slavery. Yet, the event of appropriation that the formerly enslaved attempted to participate in was ultimately forestalled, revealing that citizenship was not enough to overcome their previous exclusion. I therefore wish to show that the Haitian Revolution offers an important counter-example to Arendt's own notion of citizenship, indicating that even her lived and embodied conception of it may not be enough to overcome the history of violence and exclusion that is entailed by the implementation of Enlightment citizenship.

Second, I will suggest that this failure of Enlightenment citizenship to overcome the violence and exclusion of the past reveals another dimension of the revolutionary tradition that Arendt's analysis of revolution does not capture. Specifically, the Haitian Revolution is emblematic of the birth of the pariah tradition in the modern era, and, with this, the fact that the very expansion of Enlightenment citizenship in the modern era will always involve the covering over of those histories of violence and exclusion that are too traumatic to come into presence as a part of our collective memory. By turning to this example, we find that the European legacy of slavery and colonization did not disappear with the implementation of French citizenship during the Haitian Revolution, but instead left its trace in the political institutions and traditions into which the formerly enslaved entered, only to be repeated in the racialized violence and exclusion that continued to be carried out after citizenship was granted. The Haitian Revolution thus provides a unique

point of departure for considering the impact of the immemorial violence and exclusion of the past on modern political life. Moreover, this revolution illustrates that in order to take responsibility for the world we have inherited, it is necessary to attend not just to the memorial past, but also to the immemorial violence and exclusion that is entailed by the expansion of Enlightenment citizenship. Hence, in turning to the Haitian Revolution, my aim is to provide a platform for considering the responsibility citizens have, not only to commemorate the memorial past as Arendt suggests, but also to come to terms with those histories of violence and exclusion that may fail to come into full presence as a part of our collective memory but that nevertheless keep those who were once cast out from appearing in the modern political arena.

On August 26, 1789, working against the backdrop of the chaos and uncertainty surrounding the initial moments of the French Revolution, the members of the newly formed French National Assembly adopted the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen.[435] Furet explains that those who drafted the 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen sought to enumerate a social contract based on natural law that would guarantee equal rights to those who entered into it. In proclaiming that "men are born and remain free and equal in rights," it gave political articulation to a universal and

[435] See François Furet, *The French Revolution 1770–1814* (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 1996), 73. For more on the debates that took place in the French National Assembly throughout the summer of 1789 and the final decision to adopt the revolutionary Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, see Lynn Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights: A History* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2008), 115–131.

inalienable conception of human rights.[436] Moreover, it generated a new conception of national identity, whereby what it meant to be French was to belong to a democratically enlightened and emancipated political community.[437]

In stipulating that these rights were deducible through reason, requiring no appeal to an external authority, the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, even more so than the American Declaration of Independence, brought a new conception of the human being to bear on the political sphere. Though the idea of inalienable human rights had been introduced to the modern political tradition a century and a half earlier, the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen gave unprecedented political significance to this conception of the human being.[438] According to Lynn Hunt, the 1789 French declaration constituted a particularly radical moment in Europe as it extended these rights universally and without reference to particular groups, proclaiming that all human beings, regardless of religion, class, sex, or race had an irreducible and pre-political claim to the rights of man. For this reason, Hunt explains, "The challenge to the old order of Europe could not have been more forthright."[439]

It was well understood by members of the French National Assembly that the implementation of this document would initiate an irreversible break from the

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[436] Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, Article 1, August 26 1789. All English translations of the constitutions and declarations of France come from Colin Jones, *The Longman Companion to the French Revolution* (New York: Longman Inc., 1988).

[437] Ibid.

[438] Lynn Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights: A History* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2008), 126.

[439] Ibid., 132.

monarchical order of the past. Hence, while the idea of "the rights of man" had been widely accepted prior to the storming of the Bastille on July 14, Furet says that the debates leading up to the final formulation of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen were "long, complex, contradictory, and passed through the filter of numerous preparatory drafts."[440] In the midst of growing anxiety about the future of France and widespread disagreement regarding the underlying aims of the revolution, the members of French National Assembly struggled to decide whether or not to adopt such a radical declaration of freedom. Unable to come to a resolution, the members of the Assembly compromised on a temporary draft of the document, and while they had planned to revisit it after drafting a new constitution, the question was never reopened.[441] Hence, this temporary and highly contested document became the final version of the 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen.[442]

While many of the Assembly members were reluctant to embrace this declaration, Furet argues that upon adopting it, they introduced what he describes as a new democratic vocabulary to the modern political arena. That is, he says:

> What the French brought into being at the end of the eighteenth century was not politics as a laicized and distinct area of critical reflection but democratic politics as a national ideology. The secret of the success of 1789, its message and its

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[440] François Furet, *The French Revolution 1770-1814* (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 1996), 73.

[441] Hunt, 131.

[442] Ibid.

> lasting influence lie in that invention, which was unprecedented and whose legacy was to be so widespread.[443]

Consequently, Furet explains that while the French Revolution might have failed to achieve its political goals, it nevertheless made a novel contribution to the modern world, providing the basis for a new revolutionary political culture, the vocabulary of which continues to frame the narrative of our modern political communities today.

On the basis of Furet's interpretation of the French Revolution, it seems that this thread of the revolutionary tradition occupies a place in our collective memory, memorialized in the language that frames the political culture of liberal democratic society. Yet, this memorial past cannot be thought apart from its immemorial counter-part, or those legacies of violence and exclusion that are bound up with the Enlightenment narrative but that have been covered over with its expansion. While Arendt believes that these legacies of violence and exclusion fade into oblivion when citizenship is granted, I will suggest by turning to the Haitian Revolution that citizenship alone is not enough to overcome this history of violence and exclusion and, indeed, can even serve to reinforce the transgressions of the past.

As the members of the French National Assembly were drafting the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, France was simultaneously engaged in the most lucrative colonial enterprise in the world. French Saint-Domingue, what is now Haiti, was France's most prized colonial possession. Though Saint-Domingue was among the smallest of the European colonies in the Caribbean and Atlantic world, occupying the

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[443] François Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 26.

western half of the Caribbean island of Hispaniola, Laurent Dubois says, "The livelihood of as many as a million of the twenty-five million inhabitants of France depended directly on the colonial trade. The slave colonies of the Caribbean were an engine for economic and social change in metropolitan France."[444] By 1789, Saint-Domingue was exporting half of the world's coffee and as much sugar as Jamaica, Cuba, and Brazil combined.[445]

The economic success of Saint-Domingue depended on France's investment in the Transatlantic Slave Trade.[446] By 1789, nearly half a million enslaved Africans inhabited the colony, comprising ninety percent of its overall population and providing the labor force necessary to run Saint-Domingue's eight thousand plantations.[447] In accordance with the 1685 Code Noir, the enslaved in Saint-Domingue had no political status in 1789 and lacked most forms of legal protection.[448] As this system of slavery was based on racial casting, French colonial law also prohibited the extension of

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[444] Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 21.

[445] Nancy Josephson, *Spirits in Sequins: Voodu Flags of Haiti* (Lancaster: Schiffer Publishing, 2007), 11. See also Madison Smartt Bell, *Toussaint L'Ourverture* (New York: Random House Inc., 2009), 13.

[446] Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, 21 and 30.

[447] Ibid., 21 and 30.

[448] Though the Code Noir only offered limited protection for the slaves, historians have become increasingly interested its importance for prohibuting certain forms of brutality and violence against slaves and stipulating the circumstances under which slaves could lay claim to their freedom. As Malick Ghachem has shown, there are documented cases of slaves suing their masters and wining their freedom on the basis of these stipulations in the Code Noir. For this reason, Ghachem argues, the dependence of the slaves on the Code Noir for protection from their masters raises some doubt as to the role that the ideals of revolutionary France played in the Haitian Revolution. Rather than overthrowing the *ancien régime*, Ghachem maintains that from a historical perspective, the primary concern of the Haitian revolutionaries was to secure basic rights and liberties. See Malick Ghachem, *The Old Regime and the Haitian Revolution* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

political rights to *gens de couleur libres*, or free men of color. [449] Hence, in 1789, no person of African descent in Saint-Domingue, whether enslaved or not, had the rights of French citizens.

As word of the French Revolution spread throughout the French Antilles, it became clear that the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen had set in motion a revolutionary break, not just with the *ancien régime* in metropolitan France, but also with the French colonial regime, providing the grounds for those of African descent in Saint-Domingue to assert their inalienable human rights in the spirit of the ideals of revolutionary France. While it was not clear whether the 1789 revolutionary principles accepted in Paris would be applied to the colonies, Dubois explains that the Saint-Domingue planters "saw the universalist Declaration as a clear threat to slavery, reacting as if it were a disease to be quarantined."[450] It was well understood by the planters and colonial administrators in Saint-Domingue, as well as their representatives in Paris, that the Declaration of the Rights of Man had the potential not only to provide legitimate legal ground for the abolition of slavery, but also to incite the slaves to rebel if word of the French Revolution reached the Antilles. Given that the enslaved vastly outnumbered the white planters in Saint-Domingue, whites were keenly aware of the danger of slave

[449] The term "free men of color" or "*gens de couleur libres*" referred specifically to those of mixed heritage in the French Antilles. Freed African slaves, by contrast, were called *affranchis*.[449] While the former were disenfranchised and racially oppressed by the French, they were also the descendents of their masters. Consequently, they were often freed, thus became part of a racial caste that was distinct from and had a superior status to the cast that the enslaved occupied. For this reason, the *gens de couleur* in Saint-Domingue, though aligned initially with the enslaved, ultimately took themselves to be rightful heirs to the island, challenging the freedom that the *affranchis* would ultimately achieve in 1793–4. See Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, 61. See also James, *The Black Jacobins*, 182.

[450] Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, 77.

rebellion, structuring the legal and political institutions of the colony in order to prevent such an event. Hence, extraordinary measures were taken throughout 1789 to control the circulation of information about the French Revolution throughout the colonies.[451] Even so, word of the French Revolution eventually reached Saint-Domingue, and, by the fall of 1790, the impact of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen on the colonial world was beginning to be felt. In October of 1790, Vincent Ogé, a free man of color initiated a rebellion in Cap Français, or Le Cap, the capital city of Saint-Domingue, after being been denied the right to vote.[452] Though Ogé was arrested and publicly executed by the French colonial authorities in Le Cap, this initial uprising provided the impetus for the unprecedented slave revolution that would unfold over the course of the next thirteen years in Saint-Domingue.

The Haitian Revolution began on August 22, 1791 when one hundred thousand slaves in the northern province of Saint-Domingue rose up, killing their masters and burning plantations throughout the region. The revolution was set in motion by the coordinated efforts of 200 "privileged" slaves who had earned the trust of their masters and had been given special occupations along with relative freedom of movement.[453] Serving as delegates of their plantations, these slaves had gathered secretly a week prior to the start of the revolution on August 14, 1791 at the Lenormand de Mézy plantation to

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[451] Ibid., 97.

[452] Ibid., 87.

[453] Ibid., 97.

plan the insurrection.[454] The fact that these slave delegates were able to organize thousands of slaves across plantations separated by significant distances, while under the close supervision of their masters and overseers who, at this time, had an especially heightened awareness of the threat of slave insurrection, is without question, one of the most remarkable feats of the Age of Revolution.[455] Moreover, the sophistication of the slave delegates' strategies for organized resistance speaks to the enduring and widespread urge for freedom that had been cultivated in the decades leading up to the Haitian Revolution.[456]

After this meeting of the slave delegates, the enslaved were prompted to action by the Vodou priest Boukman who held an infamous Vodou ceremony at Bois Caïman just before the revolution began. The Bois Caïman Vodou ceremony has become legendary, symbolizing not only of the beginning of the Haitian Revolution, but also the history of the violence and exclusion that shaped the experience of the enslaved in Saint-Domingue. As Jean-Price Mars has argued in his seminal early twentieth century work, *So Spoke the Uncle,* the Haitian tradition of Vodou, as well as Haitian Creole, are unique creations, born out of a drive for liberation and freedom that is specific to experience of

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[454] Ibid.

[455] Ibid., 99.

[456] Dubois explains that the sophistication of the military tactics of the Haitian revolution's leaders also had to do with the fact that many Africans who arrived in Saint-Domingue decades before the Haitian Revolution had been soldiers before being captured and sold into slavery. Hence, those captured during the civil wars in this region of Africa would likely have been veterans, well versed in military strategy and the use of firearms. Kongolese military strategy differed significantly from European military strategy, involving organization in small groups that conducted repeated attacks and retreats aimed at confusing the enemy. This kind of strategy became the primary tactic of the insurgents in Saint-Domingue, which helps to explain why the slave insurgents were so successful in fighting the French, British, and Spanish during the Haitian Revolution. See Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 108–9.

modern slavery and colonization. Price-Mars explains that while aspects of Haitian Vodou can be traced to a number of different religious practices in Africa, Vodou itself cannot be found anywhere on the African continent. For this reason, Prices-Mars argues, Vodou is the product of the creative appropriation of pre-colonial African religions and the Christian practices that were violently imposed on the enslaved upon arriving in Saint-Domingue, held together by a spirit of resistance that distinguishes it from both.[457] Price-Mars makes a similar argument in the case of Haitian Creole. He says:

> We will agree without any difficulty that our Creole is a collective creation arising from the need of masters and slaves to communicate their thoughts with one another. As a consequence, it bears the imprint of the vices and qualities of the human milieu and the circumstances which developed it.[458]

Creole has its roots in Spanish, English, and French, as well as in the languages of Africa that the enslaved brought with them to Saint-Domingue. Creole, Price-Mars explains, thus has an "unsuspected depth," riddled with ambiguity that gives the language, particularly in its spoken form, great subtlety.[459] According to Price-Mars, Creole, whether spoken or sung, expresses through this ambiguity a deeper, common history unique to the Haitian. This common history has the two-fold significance of reflecting an inability to return to a pure pre-colonial African origin and the impossibility of assimilating completely to the traditions, values, and institutions of the European.

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[457] Jean Price-Mars, *So Spoke the Uncle*, trans. Magdalene W. Shannon (Washington DC: Three Continents Press, 1983), 47.

[458] Ibid., 24.

[459] Ibid 25.

The Vodou ceremony at Bois Caïman thus reflected the internal complexity of the colonial situation out of which this revolution was born, marking the beginning of what would be an exceptionally violent insurrection guided by multifarious and, at times, contradictory, political goals.[460] Though some of the enslaved declared from the outset that their efforts were aimed at securing the Rights of Man in the spirit of the ideals of liberty and equality set forth by the French Revolution, others took the side of the royalists, believing that the king would be able to assure a more humane system of slavery than French republicanism.[461] Yet, the remarkable success of the slave insurgents against the French troops during the first years of the revolution set the course of these events on an irreversible path towards emancipation.

In response to the crisis in Saint-Domingue, the French National Assembly granted the rights of French citizens to the *gens de couluer libres* in Saint-Domingue on August 4, 1792, in an effort to unite them with the French troops against the slaves. The French thus initially aligned themselves squarely against the insurgency with the intention of preserving slavery throughout the colony. This, however, began to change in 1793 when François-Thomas Galbaud, a decorated French revolutionary general and plantation owner, arrived in Cap Français.[462] Galbaud had been sent to command the French troops in Le Cap. Given Galbaud's sympathy for white plantation owners, however, he was opposed to the decision to enfranchise free people of color. Galbaud's

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[460] Ibid., 47-8.

[461] Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, 108.

[462] Jeremy Popkin, *A Concise History of the Haitian Revolution* (New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 56.

leadership in Le Cap thus threatened the position of the free people of color in the city and undermined the alliance that the commissioners had established with them.[463] Well aware of the danger this posed to the position of the French in Saint-Domingue, the commissioners ordered Galbaud to return to France. Rather than obeying their orders, Galbaud instead joined forces with the British and Spanish, who wanted to gain possession of the colony for the sake of bolstering their own colonial enterprises, and mounted a rebellion against the French commissioners.[464]

Léger-Félicité Sonthonax, the French commissioner of Saint-Domingue, realized that even when united with the free people of color, their forces would not be able to withstand Galbaud's attack. Hence, on the evening of June 20, 1793, Sonthonax sought the help of the thousands of black slaves in the city, promising their freedom in return for their service to the French Republic.[465] As Jeremy Popkin explains, this set off what would be the bloodiest urban conflict to take place in either metropolitan France or the Americas during the entire revolutionary period and, after three days of fighting, Sonthonax's troops, together with the slave insurgents, succeeded in defeating Galbaud.[466]

In response to these events, Sonthonax thus issued a "Decree of General Liberty" declaring on August 29, 1793 that "all *nègres* and mixed blood people currently in

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[463] Ibid., 56.

[464] Ibid., 57.

[465] Ibid.

[466] Jeremy Popkin, *You Are All Free: The Haitian Revolution and the Abolition of Slavery* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 3.

slavery are declared free to enjoy all the rights of French citizens."[467] In addition to this, the decree stipulated that the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen would go into effect throughout Saint-Domingue.[468] Though there has been much debate regarding the extent to which Sonthonax was guided by a genuine concern for the emancipation of the enslaved or if this decree was issued out of desperation, it nevertheless paved the way for France to become the first nation in European to abolish slavery. The events in Saint-Domingue thus forced, for the first time, a direct confrontation between the ideals of the European Enlightenment and the history of slavery and colonization that was bound up with this legacy.

Many of the insurgent leaders, including Toussaint L'Ouverture, who would become the most distinguished military leader of the Haitian Revolution, were deeply suspicious of Sonthonax. Until 1793, the French republicans in Paris and the commissioners in Saint-Domingue had, for the most part, shown no interest in abolishing slavery. Thus, Popkins says, many of the insurgent leaders "saw the proclamation of June 20 as a desperate gamble by a defeated faction."[469] In an effort to demonstrate his commitment to ending slavery and to preserve his much needed alliance with the slave insurgents, Sonthonax held elections in Le Cap on September 23, 1793. According to some accounts, both the free people of color and the newly emancipated

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[467] Léger Félicité Sonthonax, "Decree of General Liberty, August 29, 1793," in *Slave Revolution in the Caribbean: A Brief History With Documents*, ed. Laurent Dubois and John Garrigus (New York, Bedford/St. Martin's, 2006), 123.

[468] Ibid. See also Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens*, 157.

[469] Popkin, *You Are All Free*, 3.

slaves participated in this election. The purpose of the elections was to choose several deputies to represent Saint-Domingue in the newly formed French National Convention in Paris and push for emancipation throughout the French Republic. Among those elected were Jean-Baptiste Belley, a former slave, and the French official Louis Dufay. Together, Belley and Dufay succeeded in demonstrating the loyalty of the slaves to the French Republic, persuading the National Convention to adopt Sonthonax's decree into French law.[470] On February 4, 1794, a motion was made to ratify Sonthonax's decree and abolish slavery throughout the French Republic "not by temporary enthusiasm but by the principles of justice, faithful to the Declaration of the Rights of Man."[471] The motion was accepted with out opposition and, in its final formulation, the proposal to abolish slavery read, "The National Convention declares that slavery of the *nègres* is abolished in all the colonies; consequently, it decrees that all men living in the colonies, without distinction of color, are French citizens and enjoy all the rights guaranteed by the constitution."[472]

These events during the Haitian Revolution marked a pivotal moment in the Age of Revolution, bringing the tension between France's colonial enterprise and its revolutionary mission to the forefront. According to Dubois, the insurgents in Saint-Domingue and the French Antilles more generally played a direct role in reshaping the

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[470] Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*,170.

[471] The National Convention, "Abolition of Slavery, February 4, 1794," in *Slave Revolution in the Caribbean: A Brief History With Documents*, 130.

[472] Ibid. See also Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 170.

idea of Enlightenment citizenship in the early stages of the Haitian Revolution and, in so doing, radicalized the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen.[473] Through the efforts of the Haitian revolutionaries, those who had been excluded from the human community in which they found themselves were granted the right to appear as citizens in the full illumination of the public realm. In so doing, they brought the Enlightenment narrative of universal humanism to bear perhaps more powerfully than ever before on the modern political arena.

The events of February 4, 1794 shifted the sentiments of the insurgent leaders, and especially those of L'Ouverture. Upon learning in June of 1794 that the National Convention had ratified Sonthonax's emancipation decree, L'Ouverture declared his allegiance to the French, pledging to fulfill the ideals of the French Revolution by transforming Saint-Domingue into a "colony of citizens."[474] Under the leadership of L'Ouverture, the formerly enslaved would attempt to enact their new French citizenship in ways that are exemplary of the lived and embodied notion of citizenship that Arendt endorses.

L'Ouverture, like many of the leaders of the Haitian Revolution, was an ex-slave, born into slavery in 1743 and freed in the 1770s.[475] Yet, unlike most slaves, L'Ouverture's father was a West African prince who had been captured and sold into

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[473] Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens*, 167.

[474] Popkin, *You Are All Free*, 3. Popkin takes this term from Laurent Dubois who uses it in his discussion of the meaning of emancipation in Saint-Domingue and its relation to the ideals of the French Revolution. See Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens*, 159.

[475] Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, 171.

slavery in the 1720s. L'Ouverture, the eldest of his sons, learned the African language and traditions of his parents. Once they had died, he began learning geometry, French, and Latin from his godfather, Pierre Baptiste, a free African living in Le Cap.[476] Hence, despite being born into a system of slavery that strategically denied the enslaved the opportunity to read or write, L'Ouverture had the unusual good fortune of being educated, not only in the European tradition, but also in the African traditions of his parents. As Dubois says, "Descendent of West African Royalty, but also raised Catholic and educated in European arts and sciences, [L'Ouverture] emerged from the crossing of these two traditions […]. He would draw on both experiences in governing the evolving colony of Saint-Domingue."[477] Though L'Ouverture was simply known as Toussaint during the initial stages of the revolution, in 1793, he came to be recognized by the slave insurgents and French colonial administrators alike as "L'Ouverture," or "the opening," both for his genius as a military and political leader and for the new beginning he was initiating in Saint-Domingue. Though some have suggested that the French commissioners gave Toussaint this name because of his ability to find openings in the battlefield, others have argued that he chose this name for himself in order to remind those under his rule that he was an agent of radical change, responsible for bringing something new into the world.[478] As CLR James says in *The Black Jacobins*, perhaps the most famous historical narrative of the Haitian Revolution to date, "If the Republic,

[476] Ibid., 172.

[477] Ibid., 176.

[478] Ibid., 172.

liberty and equality, gave the army its morale, its center was Toussaint himself. His presence had that electrifying effect characteristic of great men of action."[479] Upon swearing his allegiance to the French Republic after learning of the 1794 emancipation decree, L'Ouverture remained unwavering in his commitment to the ideals of liberty and equality. His commitment to the French republican ideals was coupled with an equally enduring commitment to prevent the restoration of slavery in the Antilles, two goals that L'Ouverture believed were compatible in 1794.

Returning now to Arendt's notion of the revolutionary tradition of the modern age, we see that insofar as L'Ouverture was responsible for overseeing the first major transition from slavery to freedom in the New World, he was leading a revolution guided by an especially pronounced pathos of novelty, bringing into existence a story about the experience of human freedom that had never before been told.[480] Under the leadership of L'Ouverture, the events of the Haitian Revolution unfolded according to his concern for liberating the masses from the oppression of slavery and establishing a new and stable foundation for freedom in Saint-Domingue. As such, the story of the Haitian Revolution appears to be embody the spirit of revolution that Arendt associates with the modern political tradition. Beyond this, while the abolition of slavery in the French Antilles created great unrest, confusion, and violence throughout the region, the formerly enslaved who achieved French citizenship nevertheless participated in the lived and embodied form of citizenship that Arendt endorses. That is to say, under L'Ouverture's

[479] CLR James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (New York: Random House, 1963), 147.

[480] Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, 170.

leadership, the new French citizens affirmed, rather than withdraw their consent from the *sensus communis* that had, until 1794, been predicated on the tacit exclusion of African descended people even after the ratification of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen in 1789. As James says:

> Despite the ignorance and confusion there was a new spirit abroad. Black [Saint-Domingue] had changed and would never be the same again […]. All the French blacks, from the labourers at Port-de-Paix demanding equality, to the officers in the army, were filled with an immense pride at being citizens of the French Republic, 'one and indivisible' which had brought liberty and equality into the world. Five years of revolution had wrought these astonishing changes. Toussaint always addressed the blacks as French citizens: what will France think if she learns that your conduct was not worthy of true republicans?[481]

In the period between 1794 and 1801, L'Ouverture had a number of military successes, driving the Spanish and the British from Saint-Domingue, and preserving the colony for the French. Moreover, he managed to secure the position of the formerly enslaved on the island, resisting the attempts of the free people of color in the south to claim the colony for themselves and return it to a plantation society. Despite these successes, however, L'Ouverture struggled during this period to effectively transition Saint-Domingue from a colony of slaves to a colony of citizens. Doubling down on his loyalty to the ideals of the republic, he began instituting policies that were designed to ensure that the colony remained economically profitable without compromising the liberty of the enslaved. In

[481] James, *The Black Jacobins*, 154.

so doing, however, the laws he implemented made the colony look more like the plantation society it once was than like the free society it was striving to become, justifying these laws by arguing that they were in the spirit of transforming the former slaves into disciplined, self-reliant, and self-respecting French citizens.[482]

Recently, there has been much debate surrounding the historical L'Ouverture, particularly regarding the extent to which his own interest in laying claim to the economic potential of the island's sugar plantations informed his revolutionary aims.[483] Yet, despite the importance of these discourses, his symbolic significance as the founding father of the post-colonial world cannot be doubted. Indeed, the events that took shape under his leadership were unprecedented, bringing the ideals of the revolutionary Enlightenment into direct confrontation with the European legacy of slavery and colonization. Beyond this, however, he oversaw what may be described as a limit-experience of Enlightenment citizenship, which, as we will eventually see, brings into focus a contradiction internal to the concept of citizenship and the ideal of universal inclusion set forth by the Enlightenment project. For the purposes of this discussion, then, L'Ouverture's symbolic significance, particularly as it concerns his attempt to

[482] Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, 249.

[483] Philippe Girard, for instance, argues that despite the remarkable accomplishments of L'Ouverture, the Haitian Revolution was as much about greed as it was about liberty, centering more often than not on concerns regarding the preservation of the enormously profitably sugar plantations of the colony. Indeed, Girard argues that L'Ouverture, no less than his successor, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, were consummate opportunists, driven less by an interest in fulfilling the ideals of the French Revolution, than by the desire to lay claim to the riches of the colony. See Philippe Girard*, The Slaves Who Defeated Napoleon and the Haitian War of Independence* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2011). Carolyn Fick has also argued that the overwhelming emphasis that has been placed in the historiography of the Haitian Revolution on leaders like L'Ouverture has not only silenced the voices of the enslaved masses, but has also obscured their motives and desires in undertaking this revolutionary project. See Carolyn Fick, *The Making of Haiti: The Saint-Domingue Revolution From Below* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1990).

appropriate the ideals of the French Revolution in the context of a former plantation society, is of central concern. L'Ouverture's 1801 constitution reveals the tension at the heart of the situation in which the new French citizens found themselves, coming into full view with L'Ouverture's demise in 1802 and the call for Haitian independence in 1804.

By 1801, Napoleon Bonaparte had seized power in France, instituted his own constitution, and declared that the colonies would be governed by particular laws that were in the best interest of their populations, effectively undoing the decision of the 1794 National Convention to extend the French Constitution and the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen throughout the French Antilles. In response, L'Ouverture swiftly drafted a constitution in Saint-Domingue in order to "lay the foundations" for a prosperous and egalitarian society that would no longer be structured according to a racial hierarchy.[484] In this, the constitution sought to establish an enduring space for freedom in the way that Arendt suggests is emblematic of modern revolutions, characterizing the conditions for the establishment of this space in terms of the liberation of oppressed. L'Ouverture's 1801 constitution reasserted the 1794 French emancipation decree, proclaiming that slavery would be abolished permanently throughout Saint-Domingue in the spirit of the laws of the French Republic. Yet, L'Ouverture also believed that in order for the colony to flourish, the transition to liberty had to be slow and the laws of the colony had to be appropriate to the specific history of Saint-Domingue. The 1801 constitution was thus based on the sentiment that "all citizens owe

[484] Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, 243.

their services to the land which feeds them and in which they were born, to the maintenance of liberty and equality, of property whenever the law calls on them to defend it."[485] For L'Ouverture, this meant that the formerly enslaved would need to return to their plantations and work under the strict supervision of their former masters for several years before being granted the freedom of movement and the right to choose their own occupation. While L'Ouverture used the language of "cultivation" to describe this system of labor, it was nearly identical to the old system of slavery that had supposedly been abolished. As Dubois explains, "On the one hand, the project that all of the people of Saint-Domingue were called on to support was a project of emancipation, of freedom from racial hierarchy, of liberty for all in a land once dominated by slavery. At the same time, ex-slaves were given very particular responsibilities that were defined by their old status."[486] Hence, while L'Ouverture remained unwavering in his commitment to fulfilling the political goals of revolutionary France, he continued to be weighed down by the French legacy of slavery and colonization, which would ultimately forestall the event of freedom that he believed the formerly enslaved could achieve by affirming themselves as French citizens.

L'Ouverture's faith in the French Republic ultimately turned against him in 1802. As L'Ouverture was working to implement this new constitution in Saint-Domingue, Bonaparte was plotting his demise, having ordered his brother-in-law and fellow general during the French Revolution, Charles Leclrec, to bring 20,000 French

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[485] Ibid., 245.

[486] Ibid.

troops to the colony to arrest L'Ouverture and reinstate slavery throughout the French Antilles. Bonaparte had, to this point, shown only support for L'Ouverture's service to France, promoting him to the position of commander-in-chief in Saint-Domingue and effectively giving him authority over any French official who arrived in the colony. By the fall of 1801, however, Bonaparte decided that L'Ouverture needed to be eliminated in order to rebuild France's colonial economy.[487] Though L'Ouverture was suspicious of Leclerc's troops and began bracing the colony for the possibility of war before they arrived, he struggled to believe that the French would betray their own revolutionary ideals. Leclerc attempted to reassure L'Ouverture's officers that he came with good intentions, sending messages explaining that the purpose of the mission was to protect Saint-Domingue from "enemies of the Republic" and preserve the freedom that the formerly enslaved had fought for in the name of the Republic.[488] Hence, even after declaring war on L'Ouverture's troops in Saint-Domingue in 1802, Leclerc, whose true goal had been to unseat L'Ouverture and return Saint-Domingue to a slave colony, easily caught him off guard. Upon enticing L'Ouverture to meet with a French officer to discuss the banditry that had been taking place in the region, Leclerc arrested L'Overture and deported him to Paris where he died in prison in 1803.[489]

In the wake of Leclerc's initial success in Saint-Domingue, Bonaparte signed several decrees re-establishing slavery in the various colonies throughout the French

[487] Ibid., 253.

[488] Ibid., 263.

[489] Ibid., 277.

Antilles. In May of 1802, Bonaparte had reopened the slave trade to French ships and, by October of 1802, it was clear that his intention, along with Leclerc's, was to re-establish slavery in Saint-Domingue, despite repeatedly vowing throughout 1802 to keep this colony free.[490] In the midst of L'Ouverture's absence, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, an ex-slave and general in L'Ouverture's army, who had been suspicious of the French throughout much of the revolution, had taken his place as the leader of the Haitian Revolution. By March of 1803, after an extraordinarily violent period of fighting between Leclerc's troops and the insurgents, Dessalines began calling his troops the "indigenous army."[491] The betrayal of L'Ouverture and the efforts on the part of Bonaparte to reestablish slavery confirmed Dessalines's suspicion that the presence of the white European on the island would always carry with it the threat of a return to slavery. Dessalines thus announced his intention to break with France by tearing the white out of the tricolor republican flag, signally his intention to eradicate the legacy of French slavery and colonization by destroying the white forces in Saint-Domingue. This blue and red flag, with the white torn out of it, would eventually become the flag of the independent nation of Haiti.[492]

In the wake of the betrayal of L'Ouverture, Dessalines led the insurgents against the French, guiding them with the principle in mind that for the formerly enslaved, being French and free were mutually exclusive ends. Leclerc's successor as general in chief of

[490] Ibid., 284.

[491] Ibid., 293.

[492] Ibid., 293.

the expedition, Rochambeau, having lost half of his troops to yellow fever and the increasingly violent attacks of the insurgents, surrendered to Dessalines's new "indigenous army" in mid-November of 1803.[493] Dessalines was thus in a position by the end of 1803 to declare independence from France, and while his call for independence was not the first of the Age of Revolution, it was certainly a distinctive one that would set off a series of independence movements throughout the Caribbean and Atlantic world over the course of the next century. While Dessalines and his followers had, for the most part, followed L'Ouverture in his loyalty to the French, L'Ouverture's betrayal clarified to the insurgents that the presence of the French would always carry with it a trace of the colonial past and the possibility of a return to slavery. Dessaline thus maintained that achieving liberty depended on creating an independent nation for the formerly enslaved that was no longer haunted by the French legacy of slavery and colonization.[494] On December 31, 1803, Dessalines drafted the Haitian Declaration of Independence with the aim of erasing the presence of the European from the island in order to provide a homeland for all indigenous and African descended people in the Americas who had suffered at the hand of European slavery and colonialism. The opening lines of the Haitian Declaration of Independence thus read:

> It is not enough to have expelled the barbarians who have bloodied our land for two centuries; it is not enough to have restrained those ever-evolving factions that one after another mocked the specter of liberty that France dangled before

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[493] Ibid., 297.

[494] Ibid., 298.

> you. We must, with one last act of national authority, forever assure the empire of liberty in the country of our birth; we must take any hope of re-enslaving us away from the inhuman government that for so long kept us in the most humiliating torpor. In the end we must live independent or die.[495]

Significantly, Dessalines's declaration indicates that assuring "the empire of liberty" and removing "any hope of re-enslaving" African descended people on the island depended not just on the physical eradication of the French, but also on the destruction of the traditions, values, and institutions of the French—that is to say, the very, memory of the French, which, in their capacity as French citizens, the formerly enslaved had been tasked with preserving. Referring to L'Ouverture, Dessalines goes on to say:

> These generals who have guided your efforts against tyranny have not yet done enough for your happiness; *the French name still haunts our land*. Everything revives the memories of the cruelties of this barbarous people: *our laws, our habits, our towns, everything still carries the stamp of the French*. Indeed! There are still French in our island, and you believe yourself free and independent of that Republic, which, it is true, has fought all the nations, but which has never defeated those who wanted to be free.[496]

With this, Dessalines's declaration suggests that despite the enduring effort of the formerly enslaved to embrace the French revolutionary tradition, the legacy of slavery

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[495] Jean-Jacques Dessalines, "1804 Haitian Declaration of Independence," in *Slave Revolution in the Caribbean: A Brief History With Documents* 1789-1804, trans. Laurent Dubois and John Garrigus (New York, Bedford/St. Martin's, 2006), 188

[496] Ibid. Emphasis added.

and colonization did not disappear once the Enlightenment narrative had reached the shores of Saint-Domingue. On the contrary, even after the enslaved had become French citizens, a specter of this legacy of violence and exclusion continued to haunt the institutions, traditions, and values of revolutionary France, keeping the ex-slaves and ex-colonizers alike from collectively appropriating a common world and bringing about an event of freedom. Thus, in his attempt to eradicate this legacy of French colonialism and slavery once and for all, Dessalines called for a radical break from the French in order to erase the memory of this legacy in its entirety:

> Let them tremble when they approach our coast, if not from the memory of those cruelties they perpetrated here, then from the terrible resolution that we will have made to put to death anyone born French whose profane foot soils the land of liberty. […] Therefore vow before me to live free and independent, and to prefer death to anything that will try to place you back in chains. Swear, finally, to pursue forever the traitors and enemies of your independence.[497]

The emphasis in the 1804 Haitian Declaration of Independence on eradicating the memory of the French reveals a crucial dimension of the revolutionary tradition that Arendt fails to appreciate in her own account of citizenship, particularly with regard to the responsibility she believes citizens have to remember. The universalism of the Enlightenment project necessitates the covering over of those histories of violence and exclusion that are entailed by the implementation of Enlightenment citizenship but incompatible with the narrative of universal emancipation on which it is based. The

[497] Ibid., 189–90.

European legacy of slavery and colonization is among the most violent and exclusionary of these histories, inextricably bound up with the tradition of the modern era and the legacy of those who have become enfranchised through the expansion of Enlightenment citizenship. The Haitian Revolution offers a decisive illustration of an attempt on the part of the formerly enslaved to enter into the modern space of appearance by affirming themselves as citizens of the French Republic, attempting to carry the traditions, institutions, and values of revolutionary France into the future as a part of a common world. This world, as the story of L'Ouverture suggests, was one that was believed to be held together by the distinctively modern revolutionary goal of liberating the oppressed for the sake of providing a foundation for freedom's appearance. Yet, even upon affirming their citizenship in the lived and embodied way that Arendt suggests, this legacy of violence and exclusion did not fall into oblivion as she believes it should have. On the contrary, the tacit threat of a return to slavery continued to haunt the new citizens, keeping them from coming into appearance as part of a common world bound together by the shared legacy of the revolutionary spirit of the modern era. While this legacy of violence and exclusion might have remained concealed, unable to come into full presence as a part of the Enlightenment narrative, the 1804 Haitian Declaration of Independence gave clear articulation to the way in which this immemorial past has the potential to keep those who were once cast out from fully appearing and participating with their fellow citizens in the event of appropriation that Arendt associates with human freedom.

On January 1, 1804, the Haitian Declaration of Independence was officially adopted, giving birth to the only independent nation born out of slave revolution. This declaration reshaped the Caribbean and Atlantic World, inspiring numerous slave rebellions and fueling the debate regarding abolition throughout the Americas.[498] Moreover, as Kersuze Simeon-Jones argues, the events that began in 1791 with the Bois Caïman Vodou ceremony and ended with the 1804 Declaration of Independence had a lasting impact of the political and intellectual traditions on the African Diaspora, laying the foundation in the nineteenth century for political movements such as Black Nationalism and the birth of the concept of black consciousness, while providing the inspiration for the political projects of Pan-Africanism and anti-colonialism in the twentieth century.[499] The Haitian Revolution thus stands at the beginning of a long heritage of political thought aimed at addressing the forms of political exclusion that have been perpetuated by the global legacy of European slavery and colonization.[500]

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[498] Kersuze Simeon-Jones, *Literary and Sociopolitical Writings of the Black Diaspora in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (New York: Lexington Books, 2010), 39. Simeon-Jones refers specifically to Denmark Vesey's attempted rebellion in South Carolina in 1822. This rebellion was unique in that it not only sought freedom from slavery, but also re-contextualized the struggle as one amongst all African descended people whether in the United States, the Caribbean or Africa. Specifically, Vesey called on blacks to "unite together as the people of San-Domingue did," rising above ethnic divisions for the sake of delivering all colonized people from bondage.

[499] Simeon-Jones explains that in the context of the United States, the Haitian Revolution provided a platform for black figures working to abolish slavery in the nineteenth century, such as David Walker, Martin Delany, Sojourner Truth, and Fredrick Douglass, to establish political agendas oriented by the conception of a unified African Diaspora.[499] By the beginning of the twentieth century, the ideas of Black Nationalism and black unity that had grown out of the Haitian Revolution came to inform the work of W.E.B Dubois, Marcus Garvey, Zora Neal Hurston, and eventually figures such as Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire, Léon Damas, and Malcolm X. Simeon-Jones, 33.

[499] Simeon-Jones, 44.

[500] Ibid., 33–4.

Yet, Dessalines's attempt to eradicate the memory of the French legacy of slavery and colonization proved short-lived in the context of Haiti. In the decades following the 1804 Declaration of Independence, Haiti remained, in one way or another, haunted by a specter of the violence and exclusion of the colonial past. Europe and the United States, for instance, refused to recognize the political existence of Haiti after the end of the revolution, effectively denying that the revolution had happened so as to undermine the legitimacy the former slaves' claim to freedom.[501] In order to sustain itself economically, Haiti thus agreed in 1825 to pay an indemnity to France in exchange for diplomatic recognition. Having lost their most prized colonial possession, the French government agreed to open diplomatic relations with Haiti only after it had paid 150 million French francs, roughly equivalent today to 40 billion US dollars, for property lost during the Haitian Revolution, including the hundreds of thousands of slaves who had been freed. Unable to pay, the Haitian government was forced to take out loans from France, entering into a cycle of debt that destroyed the Haitian economy and plunged the island nation into poverty from which it has yet to recover.[502]

As Mimi Sheller explains, the leaders of Haiti also struggled throughout the nineteenth century to build a new nation from the ashes of French Saint-Domingue that was founded on the principles of liberty and equality and devoid of any trace of the French. Sheller turns, in particular, to the nineteenth century image of the Haitian citizen soldier who was modeled after the slave insurgents and their efforts to liberate

[501] Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, 305.

[502] Ibid., 302.

themselves from slavery at the end of the eighteenth century. Sheller says, "A fundamental aspect of the Haitian nation-building project was the elevation of the black man out of the depths of slavery into his rightful place as father, leader, and protector of his own people."[503] In this, the image of the citizen soldier in Haiti was based not on a European figuration of liberty, but rather on an experience of freedom internal to the situation of the colonized. Sheller explains, however, that once the revolution had ended, what had been a symbol of freedom ultimately gave way to an elitist structure of citizenship and civic duty, creating a paradox whereby "the egalitarian and democratic values of republicanism were constantly undercut by the hierarchical and elitist values of militarism."[504] As Price-Mars explains, a new Haitian elite thus emerged by the end of the nineteenth century, who, he says, "donned the old frock of western civilization," embracing the values of the French, repressing any trace of an African heritage, and implementing a plantation economy based on a cultural and racial hierarchy that was nearly identical to the French colonial regime of the past.[505]

More so than the French and American Revolutions, the Haitian Revolution puts into relief the effect of the immemorial histories of violence and exclusion that are entailed by the implementation of Enlightenment citizenship on the modern political arena. Through the example of the Haitian Revolution, we find that even if these legacies fail to come into appearance as part of our collective memory, they nevertheless

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[503] Mimi Sheller, *Sword-Bearing Citizens: Militarism and Manhood in Nineteenth-Century Haiti*, *Plantation Society in the Americas* 4.2&3 (1997): 233–78, 241.

[504] Ibid., 233.

[505] Price-Mars, *So Spoke the Uncle*, 7–8.

have the potential to forestall the event of appropriation that Arendt associates with human freedom. In her own account of citizenship, Arendt does not go far enough in considering the effect of the immemorial violence and exclusion of the past on political life, assuming instead that citizenship is enough to overcome these histories of violence and exclusion. Yet, this comes into conflict with her own insistence on the responsibility citizens have to reconcile themselves to the past for the sake of carrying a common world into the future.

My aim in what follows will be to rehabilitate Arendt's political categories in light of this example. In so doing, I will argue that Arendt's analysis of the responsibility citizens have to remember the legacy of their political communities reveals a paradox of remembrance that lies at the heart of the modern political tradition. By extending Arendt's analysis beyond the French and American contexts to the Haitian Revolution, we find that this paradox is central to the revolutionary spirit that she believes we are tasked with preserving in the modern era. While Arendt fails to recognize the full implications of her concern for reclaiming the "lost revolutionary treasure" of the modern age, I will suggest that she nevertheless has an important contribution to make to the discourse concerning the European legacy of slavery and colonization. By considering this paradox of remembrance in relation to Arendt's concern for remembrance in political life, it is possible to provide a frame for examining the repetition of this legacy in our present political structures. With this, however, I will suggest that taking responsibility for the world we have inherited will depend not only on citizenship, as Arendt suggest, but also on developing methods for coming to terms in

the space of politics with the immemorial violence and exclusion that is entailed by the very implementation of Enlightenment citizenship.

V.3. Arendt, Haiti, and the Paradox of Remembrance

As I previously suggested, several scholars including Richard King, Nick Nesbitt, and David Scott have considered Arendt's work in light of the Haitian Revolution. In so doing, each has developed an account of how the tension this revolution brings to bear on the modern political sphere complicates her analysis. With this, however, they have also suggested that by considering Arendt within this context, it is possible to develop the broader implications of her work for the world we live in today. While Arendt failed to appreciate the implications of her analysis, these scholars suggest, in contrast to Gines and Fischer, that she has the potential to open up new ways of thinking about the discourse concerning political exclusion in a post-colonial era. In this section, I will take my point of departure for thinking about Arendt in light of the Haitian Revolution from their work. In so doing, I will argue that the paradox of remembrance that is revealed by considering Arendt within the context of the legacy of European slavery and colonization does not merely point to a contradiction in her thought, but rather sheds light on a central problem of the modern political tradition. Specifically, it indicates that the legacy of the modern political tradition is one that will always contain within it the immemorial violence and exclusion that is entailed by the implementation of Enlightenment citizenship. While this immemorial past may fail to come into full presence, I wish to show that we are nevertheless responsible for it and

must therefore reconcile ourselves to it if we are to appropriate the legacy of the world we have inherited and bring a common world into view.

In response to those who have criticized Arendt's omission of the Haitian Revolution from her analysis in *On Revolution*, King has argued that problematic as this omission is, her reluctance to embrace revolutions like it has a legitimate basis in her enduring concern for the creation of a "constitution of liberty."[506] While King is critical of Arendt's outright dismissal of revolutions driven by the alleviation of poverty and her overly simplistic characterization of figures like Fanon, King argues that her concern for creating a foundation for freedom through revolution has important implications in the post-colonial world. To demonstrate this, he considers Arendt's boomerang thesis in light of her omission of the Haitian Revolution from her analysis of the revolutionary period to show that while she undoubtedly holds problematic views regarding African descended people, "In the post-colonial era, Arendt's focus on the importance of a 'constitution of liberty,' implying for her a politics of democratic participation in the context of stable institutions, remains a worthy, if limited, goal."[507] King reminds us that *On Revolution* came out in 1963, the same year that both James's revised edition of *The Black Jacobins* and Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* were published. During this period, national liberation movements were taking place throughout the Third World and the Civil Rights Movement was at its height in the United States.[508] Keeping this in

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[506] Richard King, "Hannah Arendt and the Concept of Revolution," *New Formations*, 71.03 (2011): 30–45, 30.

[507] Ibid., 30

[508] Ibid.

view, he says, "*On Revolution* remains one of the most important, even if eccentric, post-1945 texts for rethinking the modern revolutionary tradition of the West and global revolutions."[509] Given the failure of this era of national liberation to truly emancipate the Third World, he argues that Arendt's work warrants greater attention in the context of post-colonial discourses concerning the global impact of the legacy of European colonization and imperialism on non-European peoples. Rather than dismissing Arendt on the basis of her blindness to the experience of exclusion in the African Diaspora, King insists that what is called for today is greater consideration of her work within this context. In particular, he believes that Arendt's analysis of statelessness has a crucial role to play in addressing the exclusion of non-European populations that have been rendered superfluous in their own political communities, becoming candidates for extermination as a result of the continued imposition of cultural and racial hierarchies that have been inherited from the legacy of European slavery and colonization.[510]

Nesbitt has also considered the importance of Arendt's thought within this context, though he turns to it to give full articulation to the significance of the Haitian Revolution. Nesbitt argues that while Arendt never acknowledges the Haitian Revolution, she develops a conception of human freedom, particularly in her essay, "What is Freedom?" that is deeply relevant for any interpretation of this event.[511] Upon turning to Arendt's notion of freedom, he says:

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[509] Ibid., 31.

[510] Ibid., 45.

[511] Nick Nesbitt, *Universal Emancipation*, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2008), 126.

> The Haitian Revolution is of consequence insofar as it was a fully manifest human action, an intervention based upon *principle* in Arendt's sense, in which human freedom as a universal and undivided concept could 'become manifest only in the performing act itself' […]. It was the first world-historical event to enact such a notion of universal human freedom not as a mere idea of the Enlightenment, nor as the hypocritical, cynical compromise of a 'free' nation economically and socially growing rich of slave labor (France and the United States), but as a principled human act of universal emancipation in consonance with reason. […] In its short appearance in the world […] it was truly a miracle of human creativity.[512]

According to Nesbitt, the Haitian Revolution, perhaps more so than any other revolution during this period, truly intervened in the cyclical processes of nature, bringing about the end of slavery and, with it, a new beginning that interrupted what had been believed to be a part of the natural development of the modern world. He thus argues that those who participated in the Haitian Revolution embodied Arendt's notion of human freedom, revealing that freedom is not a natural possession of the human being, but rather something that comes into existence through the human capacity for action or the ability to introduce something new and wholly unexpected into the world.[513]

Whereas King and Nesbitt emphasize the importance of Arendt's thought for capturing the significance of non-European revolutions, Scott considers Arendt's work

[512] Ibid., 126–7.

[513] Ibid.

in *On Revolution* in order to challenge current conceptions of the relation between the colonial past and post-colonial present. He argues in *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment* that what is called for in today's post-colonial era is not the romanticized narrative of anti-colonial revolution, but rather a tragic characterization of the Enlightenment that underscores the impossibility of returning to a pre-colonial past. In contrast to the romantic, anti-colonial narrative, he explains that in tragedy, the relation between past, present, and future is never guided by a "triumphant and seamless progressive rhythm, but a broken series of paradoxes and reversals in which human action is ever open to unaccountable contingencies and luck."[514] In order to illustrate the tragedy of the colonial Enlightenment, he offers a tragic re-reading of James's revised 1963 edition of *The Black Jacobins*, focusing in particular on his characterization of L'Ouverture in the final chapter of the text.

Scott argues that while L'Ouverture believed that embracing the ideals of the Enlightenment of the French Revolution would be enough to guarantee the freedom of the enslaved, James depicts L'Ouverture as coming to realize by the end of the Haitian Revolution that he would in fact have to decide between these two ends despite being wholly committed to both. In this, Scott says, James depicts L'Ouverture as a tragic hero who "must choose and yet cannot choose without fatal cost."[515] L'Ouverture's predicament, Scott argues, is broadly representative of the tragedy of the colonial Enlightenment. By reading James this way, rather than as an anti-colonial thinker, Scott

[514] David Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 13.

[515] Ibid., 14.

suggests that the tragedy of the colonial Enlightenment comes to appear not as something to be overcome, but rather as “a permanent legacy that has set the conditions in which we make of ourselves what we make and which therefore demands constant renegotiation and adjustment.”[516] In light of this, Scott turns to Arendt’s work in *On Revolution*, which he believes provides an important starting point for thinking about the tragedy of the colonial Enlightenment, offering a similarly tragic characterization of the Enlightenment through her discussion of the lost revolutionary treasure of the modern era.

Scott argues that Arendt, much like James, is fundamentally concerned with the problem of freedom and its relation to tragedy. He explains that Arendt models her notion of political life after the Athenian *polis* because, he says, “As the birth place of tragic thought, it is well attuned to the fact of human actions exposure to contingencies, its vulnerability to the unexpected and unplanned for.”[517] The *polis* is only a space of words and deeds insofar as it is also a space of “collisions and negotiations,” depending for its existence on an “acute sense of human fragility and the inherent mutability of human ends.”[518] On Scott’s view, both *On Revolution* and the revised edition of *The Black Jacobins* are oriented by a tragic notion of freedom that guides their respective discussions of revolution and its implications for the world we live in today.

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[516] Ibid., 21.

[517] Ibid., 212.

[518] Ibid.

Turning to *On Revolution*, Scott argues that Arendt believes modern revolution is fundamentally tragic. Even the American Revolution, which she believes succeeded in laying a foundation for freedom, ended tragically, failing to establish political institutions that would ensure the preservation of the memory of this moment of foundation. According to Scott, Arendt thus believes that we are now responsible for remembering a revolutionary tradition that has been lost and this loss is inseparable from the legacy of the revolutionary spirit that we are now tasked with preserving. Turning to Arendt's concluding reference in *On Revolution* to Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*, Scott argues that Arendt settles on tragedy as the mode of remembrance in the modern age.[519] Yet, he also argues that Arendt's insights into the problem of remembrance in *On Revolution* reveal the political possibilities that emerge from tragedy. Scott says, "This loss, Arendt suggests, grave and dismaying as it is, is not—or at least, not necessarily—final."[520] For Arendt, it is only insofar as human freedom is fundamentally characterized by tragedy that it allows for the possibility of new beginnings and thus, her analysis of the lost revolutionary spirit does not lead to tragic conflict and paralysis, but rather to the possibility for tragic reconciliation.[521]

In light of this, Scott argues that Arendt's characterization of the tragedy of the Enlightenment provides a decisive starting point for thinking about how to move forward in light of the colonial past. He attempts to bring this into view by developing

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[519] Arendt, *On Revolution*, 273. See also Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity*, 211.

[520] Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity*, 211.

[521] Ibid., 216.

Arendt's tragic figuration of the Enlightenment in relation to James's account of the Haitian Revolution. He turns in particular to James's depiction of L'Ouverture in a 1797 letter to the French Directory in which, suspecting the French of attempting to re-establish slavery, L'Ouverture clarifies that any attempt to do this "will be met with determined force: 'we have known how to face dangers and obtain our liberty, we shall know how to brave death to keep it.'"[522] According to Scott, James depicts L'Ouverture in this moment as the tragic hero of the colonial Enlightenment and an Arendtian political agent par excellence.[523] As James says:

> Leader of a backward and ignorant mass, [L'Ouverture] is yet in the forefront of the historical moment of his time. The blacks were taking part in the destruction of European feudalism begun by the French Revolution and liberty and equality, the slogans of the revolution meant far more to them than to any Frenchman. […] Rivers of blood were to flow before they were to understand that elevated as was his tone Toussaint had written neither bombast nor rhetoric but rather the simple somber truth.[524]

L'Ouverture, Scott explains, is forced to decide in this moment, coming to terms with the tragedy of his situation and acting in light of it with the eloquence and sophistication of the best European statesmen despite having been a slave until he was forty-five.[525] In

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[522] Ibid., 218.

[523] Ibid.

[524] Ibid., 219.

[525] Ibid.

light of this, Scott says, "The story of L'Ouverture in *The Black Jacobins* is, I believe the story of the tragedy of the revolutionary tradition that *On Revolution* wishes to remember."[526] Scott rightly notes, however, that Arendt's reflections on tragedy as a mode of remembrance remain underdeveloped, and her account of the experience of revolution, disappointingly narrow. For Arendt, there are only two eighteenth century revolutions, the French and American, leading her overlook what is perhaps the most tragic event of the revolutionary period, the Haitian Revolution. As Scott says, "Arendt's oversight is all the more puzzling, and all the more disappointing, because what she is lamenting is precisely the failure of memory; she is in fact urging the importance of 'remembrance' to sustain the spirit of the revolutionary spirit."[527]

Scott thus suggests that it is necessary to consider Arendt in light of the Haitian Revolution in order to clarify the implications of Arendt's thought that never became transparent to her but that are decidedly important for coming to terms with a world that has been so deeply impacted by the European legacy of slavery and colonization.

Scott's analysis of Arendt and James offers an important point of departure for thinking about the implications of Arendt's analysis for the discourse in post-colonial theory. Following Scott, I wish to suggest that Arendt's work helps to clarify that the legacy of slavery and colonization is a permanent feature of the world we have inherited, and the attempt to return to something prior to or divorced from this legacy is untenable. In this, her work has the potential to make an important contribution to this discourse,

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[526] Ibid., 220.

[527] Ibid., 218.

pointing to the impossibility of overcoming exclusion through political projects like anti-colonialism that seek to return to an age before colonialism by calling for the destruction of the reality of the post-colonial situation in which we find ourselves. By considering Arendt in light of the Haitian Revolution, however, we also find that she turns a blind eye to a revolution that illuminates an important thread of the modern political tradition. Consequently, she fails to appreciate the implications of her own insights into the role of remembrance in political life given the revolutionary tradition we have inherited. As I have tried to suggest, this revolution demonstrates that even after citizenship is granted, the immemorial violence and exclusion of the past has the potential to forestall the event of appropriation that Arendt associates with human freedom. It therefore puts into relief the limits of her notion of citizenship for overcoming the forms of exclusion that have become definitive of the modern age. As the struggles of L'Ouverture and Dessalines demonstrate, this immemorial past is bound up with the revolutionary spirit of the modern era that Arendt believes we are tasked with preserving, even though it has been covered over and is unable to come into appearance as a part of this legacy.

By expanding Arendt's political categories within this context, we thus find that her own account of the responsibility citizens have to remember, when considered in light of the Haitian Revolution, reveals a paradox of remembrance at the heart of the political tradition of the modern age. This paradox consists in the conflict between the responsibility citizens have to remember in order to preserve a common world, and the impossibility of bringing those histories of violence and exclusion that are entailed by the modern political tradition into appearance as a part of our collective memory. Arendt

is right to insist on the importance of remembrance in the modern age for renewing the meaningfulness of the world and returning individuals from their loneliness to themselves and others. Yet, considering Arendt in light of the Haitian Revolution raises the question of how we reconcile ourselves to the past for the sake of carrying a common world into the future if a part of the legacy of that world always remains hidden.

Whereas Scott turns to tragedy, I will turn in the final chapter of this project to the philosophical concept of repetition to develop the implications of this paradox of remembrance for understanding political exclusion today. Focusing in particular on Friedrich Nietzsche's development of this concept in his discourse on history and Heidegger's ontological appropriation of it in his discussion Dasein's inheritance in *Being and Time*, I will use this idea to frame the ontological concepts of homecoming and belonging that orient Arendt's notion of citizenship. I will then turn to the work of Jacques Derrida, whose critique of the originality of the event of appropriation and the homecoming it promises in his work, *Specters of Marx*, provides an important point of departure for understanding the implications of the paradox of remembrance in contemporary political life. Specifically, I will suggest by way of Derrida's notion of ghosts and specters that the concept of modern citizenship is self-effacing, as the very affirmation of one's citizenship necessitates the covering over of those histories of violence and exclusion that are internal to the legacy of the modern revolutionary tradition but incompatible with the Enlightenment narrative of universal emancipation that forms the basis for the modern political community. As such, I will argue that citizenship itself keeps a part of the legacy that we are tasked with preserving from

coming into appearance, thereby necessitating the repetition of the immemorial violence and exclusion of the past in our political traditions, institutions, and values. On the basis of this, I will suggest that addressing political exclusion today depends on going a step further than Arendt does in her analysis of citizenship. By expanding Arendt's thought within the context of the European legacy of slavery and colonization, we find that citizenship alone is not enough to bring a common world into appearance; beyond this, we are called upon to develop political practices that enable us to come to terms in the space of politics with those histories of violence and exclusion that have been covered over through the implementation of Enlightenment citizenship but that are nevertheless bound up with the legacy of the world we have inherited. I will therefore suggest that addressing the problem of political exclusion that Arendt introduces in her discourse on statelessness and deepens through her analysis of loneliness depends on developing a new and more expansive frame for the concept of belonging in political ontology that makes room in the space of politics not only for citizens, but also for the specters of the immemorial violence and exclusion of the past that are necessitated by the implementation of Enlightenment citizenship.

CHAPTER VI

CARING FOR A HAUNTED HOUSE: TOWARDS A POST-ENLIGHTENMENT POLITICAL ONTOLOGY

As we have seen, Arendt offers a prescient characterization of political exclusion through her analysis of statelessness and her diagnosis of the problem of loneliness in the modern era. Both statelessness and loneliness arise when individuals have lost their place in a political community. This, she explains, produces a feeling of homelessness or the sense of having been severed from the nexus of meaningful relations that grants us our singularity and reminds us of our responsibility to the world in which we find ourselves. Without a political community, or a place in the world where one can speak and act in order to realize one's native capacity for new beginnings and come into view in the presence of others as radically unique and unrepeatable, human beings run the risk of becoming superfluous. Under these conditions, individuals cease to appear as human beings and are recognized instead only as interchangeable parts in the necessary processes that govern nature or history, thereby becoming vulnerable to totalitarian domination. Arendt thus insists that in order for human beings to find a home in the world, they must belong to political community. With this, she argues that combating the physical and existential displacement that has become widespread in the modern era depends on developing a conception of citizenship that is oriented not by the liberal concern for the expansion of rights in the private sphere, but instead by our shared responsibility to make one another visible in the public sphere.

The importance of Arendt's insights into the dangers and limits of modern political life cannot be overlooked and will remain a guiding thread of the final chapter of this project. Yet, as I have suggested, the notion of citizenship that Arendt develops on the basis of her critique of the loneliness and world-alienation in modern political life does not go far enough. She argues that citizenship, conceived as self-enactment in the space of appearance, promises freedom insofar individuals are able to enter into the public realm and rise above their concern for their particular existence in private life by working in concert with others to appropriate the world they have inherited. This, she thinks, involves taking responsibility for preserving the traditions, institutions, and values of the past such that they can be renewed and carried forward as part of the shared reality of a common world. So long as individuals affirm their citizenship by taking shared responsibility for remembering and renewing the legacy of the world they have inherited, Arendt believes that they can enact their freedom and restore the meaningfulness of the world in which they find themselves.

Arendt thus takes this notion of citizenship to provide the means for achieving a homecoming in the modern era, offering a solution to the problem of political exclusion that is grounded in the ontological conditions of human existence. Yet, by considering Arendt in light of an analysis of the Haitian Revolution, I have tried to show that her notion of citizenship reveals a conflict internal to the concept of modern citizenship that keeps it from achieving this end. The example of the Haitian Revolution indicates that the legacy of the modern political tradition necessitates what I have called the paradox of remembrance that keeps even Arendt's radical conception of citizenship from making

good on the promise of political inclusion. As I have suggested, the very implementation of Enlightenment citizenship necessitates the covering over of those histories of violence and exclusion that cannot be held together with the Enlightenment narrative of universal emancipation. Yet, because the revolutionary Enlightenment demands the universal expansion of citizenship, these immemorial legacies of violence and exclusion cannot be thought apart from the legacy of the political tradition that we are tasked with preserving. Hence, while Arendt believes that citizens have a responsibility to preserve in their collective memory the legacy of the world they have inherited, a part of the modern political legacy will always remain covered over, unable to come into appearance as a part of a shared reality that can be appropriated and carried forward. As remembrance is necessary for rebuilding the world in the modern era and overcoming the problem of loneliness, I have thus argued that Arendt's notion of citizenship falls short of achieving the homecoming that she believes it promises.

By bringing this paradox of remembrance into focus, we find that the Haitian Revolution epitomizes an original failure of Enlightenment citizenship. The purpose of this chapter is to provide an account of the echo of this original failure of Enlightenment citizenship in the racialized violence and exclusion that continues to haunt diasporic peoples decades and centuries after becoming enfranchised. To this end, I will turn to the philosophical concept of repetition that emerges in Friedrich Nietzsche's account of history and genealogy. This notion of repetition provides a frame for the ontological conception of homecoming that Heidegger introduces in the twentieth century and that Arendt further develops in the context of her notion of political belonging. While

Heidegger and Arendt take this notion of repetition to provide the ground for the possibility of appropriating the world we have inherited so as to find a home in it, discourses in post-structuralism and post-modernism rely on this notion of repetition to emphasize the violence, disunity, and fragmentation that is repeated each time we inherit, rendering the event of appropriation and the homecoming it promises impossible. By focusing, in particular, on Jacques Derrida's account in *Specters of Marx* of the ghosts of the inappropriable that are left behind only to return again with each new event of appropriation, I will use this notion of repetition to provide a frame for interpreting the return of the immemorial violence and exclusion that continues to keep those who were once cast out from coming into appearance in the modern political arena. As I will suggest, this repetition can be understood as an effect of the paradox of remembrance that is entailed by the implementation of Enlightenment citizenship, and, by turning to it, we find that the concept of modern citizenship is self-effacing. That is, because this paradox of remembrance is bound up with the legacy we are tasked with preserving as citizens, affirming it will always necessitate a covering over and subsequent repetition of those histories of violence and exclusion that citizenship promises to overcome.

In light of this, I wish to show that addressing political exclusion today depends on going beyond the concept of citizenship to allow the immemorial legacies of violence and exclusion that are necessitated by it to come into appearance as part of the heritage of the modern world. While this immemorial past may fail to come into appearance as such, I will turn to Derrida's notion of specters and ghosts to put into relief the trace these legacies leave in modern political communities. I will give further contour to the

political significance of the immemorial by considering the notion of “nonhistory” that Édouard Glissant develops to describe the way history is experienced by colonized peoples and the obsessive presence these intangible histories have in their lived experience. On the basis of this, I will argue that what is called for today is a new frame for the concept of homecoming in political ontology that is keyed to the finitude of our collective memory and the ghosts of the immemorial violence and exclusion of the past that are produced by it.

As I will demonstrate, Arendt fails to appreciate the political significance of these ghosts in the modern era because she develops her conception of political life on the basis of a notion of homecoming rooted in the Greek political tradition. Indeed, the Greek *polis* might have promised a home in the world that was uninhabited by ghosts. Yet, because the Greeks were not concerned in the wake of their colonial endeavors with the universal expansion Greek citizenship, they could appropriate the legacy of the Greek city-state without contradiction or remainder, leaving behind these histories of violence and exclusion and ridding the *polis* of any presence of ghosts. Historical examples like the Haitian Revolution, by contrast, illustrate that such a possibility no longer exists in the modern world, as the legacy of the modern political tradition will always contain within it a trace of the immemorial violence and exclusion that is entailed by the implementation of Enlightenment citizenship. With this, I will suggest that Arendt may be right in her suggestion that in order for human beings to find a home in the world, they must belong to a political community. Yet, I will argue that in order for the

possibility of political belonging to be realized today, it is necessary to come terms with the fact that our home, in contrast to the Greek *polis*, is one that will always be haunted.

On the basis of this, I maintain that finding a home in the modern world depends on rethinking the space of politics, not as a refuge from these specters of exclusion, but rather as a space in which they can dwell and help guide political practice. That is, rather than conceiving of the space of human belonging as a home that promises an escape from the transgressions of the past, as Arendt and Heidegger do, or as a space from which we are interminably exiled, as Derrida does, I will suggest instead that this space must be understood in the modern age as a haunted house. By denying the existence of these ghosts and excluding them from the space of politics, I will argue that we fail to take shared responsibility for the legacy of the world we have inherited, thereby perpetuating the problem of loneliness that has become pervasive in modern political life. If, by contrast, we come to terms with the fact that the modern world will always be haunted, we can begin addressing the problem of exclusion in a way that is attuned to the legacy of the political tradition we have inherited.

Developing a political framework that enables us to care properly for the legacy of the modern political tradition will thus require going beyond humanism and Enlightenment rationality so that the immemorial violence and exclusion of the past can become a part of the shared reality of the common world. Likewise, it will depend on going beyond the concern for the universal expansion of citizenship to develop an even more inclusive model of political life that makes room in the space of politics not just for the living present and the knowable, but also for the presence of ghosts. Therefore, rather

than turning to the Greek *polis* or the European Enlightenment, I will suggest by way of conclusion that a more suitable model for political life today may be found in a pariah tradition such as Haitian Vodou. As this tradition emphasizes a notion of belonging that turns on the responsibility the living have to become accustom to being with ghosts, it offers a metaphor for political life that brings the legacy of the revolutionary tradition of the modern era into view more clearly. Hence, in turning to it, my aim is to provide an alternative frame for the task of politics that has the potential to open new paths to addressing the problem of exclusion today.

VI.1. Repetition and Homecoming

As I have suggested, the Haitian Revolution epitomizes an original failure of Enlightenment citizenship to make good on the promise of universal inclusion set forth by the revolutionary tradition of the modern era. My aim in what follows will be to provide a conceptual framework for understanding the echo of this original failure of Enlightenment citizenship through the concept of repetition that is entailed by Arendt's figuration of the space of appearance. To this end, I will turn to Nietzsche's conception of history and the role it plays in Heidegger's ontological notion of homecoming as he develops it in *Being and Time*. With this, I will suggest that Arendt, following Heidegger, takes political action to be a dynamic re-enactment of the space of appearance, or a repetition of the moment of foundation or new beginning that gave birth to the world in which we find ourselves. This notion of repetition is integral to Arendt's conception of political belonging and her belief that human beings can find a home in the world so long as they are able to come into appearance in their radical singularity

through speech and action in the space of politics. On her view, this homecoming is promised by the appropriation of our inheritance, which Heidegger describes in terms of our thrownness, in the space of appearance. For Arendt and Heidegger alike, we inherit only insofar as we find ourselves always already thrown into language and history. Through our appropriation of language and history—which amounts for Arendt to speaking and acting in the space of politics—we repeat, hold open, or hand down a space of belonging or a home in the world where freedom can make its appearance. Hence, the notion of repetition that Nietzsche introduces particularly in his account of history provides an important frame for capturing the notion of homecoming or belonging that forms the basis for Arendt's political ontology. As I shall demonstrate, however, the concept of repetition also forms the basis for post-structural and post-modern critiques of the violence inherent in the event of appropriation and the impossibility of finding a home in the world in virtue of the repetition of this violence. By turning to these critiques, and especially Jacques Derrida's deconstructive political analysis of language and history, I will suggest that Arendt's notion of citizenship necessitates the repetition of the paradox of remembrance, keeping those who were once cast out from participating fully in the event of appropriation that she believes is necessary for finding a home in the world.

Nietzsche's characterization of the notion of repetition as it unfolds in his genealogical approach to morality and his closely related account of history marks a decisive break with modern approaches to history and provides an important frame for understanding Arendt's ontological account of the political sphere. Most relevant for our

purposes is Nietzsche's discussion in *The Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life*, where he takes to task modern historiography and the "superhistorical" standpoint it takes to evaluating the events of the past. According to Nietzsche, the "superhistorical" person believes that history functions in the service of pure knowledge, revealing truths about the world that hold universally across time. Those who adhere to such a conception of history, Nietzsche argues, agree that "the past and present are one in the same, that is, typically alike in all manifold variety and, as omnipresence of imperishable types, a static structure of unchanged value and eternally the same meaning."[528] Yet, such a conception of history overlooks the forgetfulness that is inherent in all human remembrance. Whereas the superhistorical person presumes that our capacity for remembrance is infinite, elevating us above the status of animals, Nietzsche suggests that we are worse off than the animals, as they have the good fortune of being able to forget without remainder. Beasts, he explains, are essentially unhistorical, incapable of recalling the past. It is in virtue of their unhistorical nature that they have no need for language. They simply appear as they are, unhidden and honest, free of any inclination to account for themselves beyond the present moment. Human beings, by contrast, are conditioned by the impulse to resist the burden of the past through remembrance.[529] Yet, while we are able to remember, this capacity for memory is finite, as all action involves some measure of forgetting. Hence, Nietzsche explains that what comes to appear through action as historical will always be born of the unhistorical or what has been

[528] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life* (Indianapolis: Hacket Publishing Company, 1980), 13.

[529] Nietzsche, 8–9.

forgotten for the sake of the coherence of the story we tell of ourselves. Whereas the superhistorical person is driven by the misguided desire to be essentially historical, Nietzsche says, "The unhistorical and the historical are equally necessary for the health of an individual, a people, and a culture."[530] He thus wishes to bring into focus the line that divides "the observable brightness from the unilluminated darkness," so as to remind us that history never reveals universal truths about the world, but instead takes shape within a specific context or limited set of horizons that encircle one's particular existence.[531] For remembrance to be a life affirming venture, Nietzsche thus insists that our impulse towards it must be tempered by our awareness of the forgotten contingencies, transgressions, and errors that have given rise to those moments of greatness that we preserve in our collective memory. He argues, in light of this, that each imitation or repetition of the original historical moment will not be identical to it, as the superhistorical person suggests, but will instead be infused with difference, interpreted anew and more meaningfully with each repetition. Therefore, by coming to understand ourselves as both historical and unhistorical, we find that our engagement in rituals that commemorate the past through our re-enactment of an original moment of foundation, as well as our efforts to imitate the great deeds of our ancestors, will always be novel. That is, he says, "As long as the past must be written about as worthy of imitation, as capable of being imitated, with the possibility of a second occurrence, history is definitely in danger of becoming something altered, reinterpreted into something more beautiful, and

[530] Nietzsche, 10.

[531] Nietzsche, 4.

thus coming close to free poeticizing."[532] For Nietzsche, while each repetition of the past will be distinct and distant from the origin it seeks to repeat, its difference from this origin is precisely what enables great individuals to bring new meaning into the world. Nietzsche thus challenges the modern obsession with transforming history into a science. While we may have encyclopedic knowledge of the Greeks, Nietzsche explains that modern man's restless effort to fill himself with knowledge of an alien age, philosophy, religion, and culture only reveals that he lacks a culture of his own.[533] On Nietzsche's view, the effort to achieve encyclopedic historical knowledge will always be a life-denying endeavor because it involves a failure to embrace the creative possibilities that are opened up, not just by the human being's historical nature, but also by her unhistorical nature. Nietzsche thus argues that if history is to function in the service of life, it requires that great individuals have the strength to forget in order to allow the difference that is entailed in every repetition of the past to come into appearance and give birth to a new and superior culture.[534]

This notion of the interplay between repetition and difference and, with it, the sentiment that the unhistorical, repressed, and forgotten cannot be thought apart from the historical, expressed, and remembered has been decisive for the development of the major theoretical currents of the twentieth century. It plays a central role, for instance, in Heidegger's ontology in *Being and Time* of the event-character of being and his account

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[532] Nietzsche, 17.

[533] Nietzsche, 24.

[534] Nietzsche, 22.

of the existential constitution of Dasein, particularly as it unfolds in his characterization of authentic Dasein's relation to its thrownness and the possibilities that are opened up by Dasein's appropriation of its heritage. Heidegger's development of the notion of repetition is crucial for understanding the trajectory of twentieth century discourses in phenomenology, existentialism, and hermeneutics concerning the question of belonging, particularly as it unfolds in Arendt's thought.

As we saw in Chapter One, Heidegger believes that the emphasis in western metaphysics on discerning the fixed properties and eternal essences that lie behind appearances has led us to forget the ground of being as it reveals itself in what comes to appear in the world. Divorced from the inherent meaningfulness of the world, modern man has thus become alienated and homeless. In order to overcome this homelessness, Heidegger thus calls for the destruction of metaphysics so as to bring about a return to the ontological ground of being. In order for ontology to set the being of beings into relief, Heidegger argues that it is necessary to employ the method of phenomenology, which takes truth and meaning to flow not from fixed and pre-given essences imposed from without, but rather from the phenomena themselves.[535]

As Heidegger explains, the phenomenon is not merely an appearance or self-showing that reveals itself in the same way each time it comes into appearance. On the contrary, Heidegger argues, the phenomenon can only show itself meaningfully as what it is insofar as it also conceals itself.[536] That is, the condition for the possibility of its

[535] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh, rev. ed. Dennis J. Schmidt, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010), 26.

[536] Ibid.

coming into appearance as meaningful is its concealment or the fact that with each appearance in the world, it "precisely and continually veils what it is in itself."[537] Hence, truth and meaning in the ontological sense are distinct from metaphysical and epistemological conceptions of truth and meaning insofar as what is discovered in "letting [beings] be seen as something unconcealed" never exhausts the ground of being.[538] That is, the phenomenon never gives itself over entirely as what it is and must therefore be uncovered or discovered anew in our encounters with it. In this, Heidegger argues, the method of phenomenology must be understood in terms of the interplay between phenomenon and logos, as it is through language or discourse that we wrest beings from their concealment such that they come to appear in the world as meaningful.[539] The truth of being thus makes its appearance in the world because we are able "to take beings that are being talked *about*...out of their concealment; to let them be seen as something unconcealed (ἀληθές); to *discover* them."[540] That is, for Heidegger, the truth or meaning that emanates from the phenomenon is never absolute, but must instead be drawn out and made meaningful through discourse. Thus, through discourse, we discover anew the inherent truth of the phenomenon, thereby bringing about an event or interruption in our everyday dealings with things that introduces new meaning into the world. In this, truth and meaning are not pre-given or universal, but must instead be

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[537] Ibid., 29.

[538] Ibid., 31.

[539] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh, rev. ed. Dennis J. Schmidt, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010), 26.

[540] Ibid.

discovered anew through discursive engagement, or our appropriation of language, which brings the meaningfulness of the world into appearance.

Heidegger's ontological account of being provides the frame for his investigation into the being of human beings and their relation to history. What it means to enact oneself fully as a human being, Heidegger argues, consist not in actualizing a pre-given essence, but instead in deciding to seize upon the possibilities that are opened up by the finite set of horizons that encircle one's particular existence. The freedom that emerges from this decision depends on Dasein's temporality, or the fact that Dasein is essentially futural in being-towards-death, while equiprimodially "having-been," constituted by its throwness.[541] In §74 of *Being and Time*, Heidegger draws on Nietzsche's notion of repetition in order to develop an account of how it is that Dasein can return to itself from out of these conditions in order to be free for its own most possibilities to be.

Being free, Heidegger argues, always involves a resolute decision to take over one's thrownness, a decision that amounts to the appropriation of one's inheritance. In this, he says, the resolute decision of authentic Dasein always involves "*handing oneself over* to traditional possibilities, though not necessarily *as* traditional ones."[542] This handing over of oneself to one's throwness is also a handing down, or as, Heidegger explains, a repetition. He says, "*Repetition is explicitly a handing down* [*Überlieferung*], that is, going back to the possibilities of the Dasein that has been there."[543] Resoluteness

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[541] Heidegger, 366.

[542] Ibid., 365.

[543] Ibid., 367.

thus involves Dasein's decision to hand itself down by gathering together and interpreting anew its inherited possibilities in light of the freedom that emerges from its being-towards-death in order to "*take over its thrownness and be in the Moment for 'its time.'*"[544] Authentic historicity, fate, or destiny, as Heidegger describes it—or what might be described in Arendt's language as the traditions, institutions, and values that constitute the world in which we find ourselves—are thus given to us by the repetition of the possibilities of Dasein's existence through the resolute decision to take over one's inheritance. This repetition, however, is not identical to what came before, nor does it "disclose the Dasein that has been in order to actualize it again." [545] As Heidegger explains:

> Arising from resolute self-projection, repetition is not conceived by 'something past,' in just letting it just come back as what was once real. Rather, repetition *responds* to the possibility of existence that has been there. But responding [Erwinderung] to this possibility in a resolution is at the same time, *as a response to belonging to the moment*, the *renunciation* [*Wilderruf*] of that which is working itself out in the today as 'past.' Repetition neither abandons itself to the past, nor does it aim at progress. In the Moment, authentic existence is indifferent to both of these moments.[546]

[544] Ibid., 366

[545] Ibid., 367.

[546] Ibid.

In this, Heidegger argues, history cannot be understood as the free-floating succession of the experiences of subjects, nor can it be understood as a mere chronicle of what has happened. Moreover, our repetitions of the past are not identical to the origin they seek to repeat. On the contrary, history is born out of Dasein's authentic being-towards-death, or the finitude of the temporality of Dasein that orients it towards the future. Dasein, in being temporally constituted hands down only by appropriating anew the possibilities that emerge from its thrownness or its inheritance, which always contain within them the possibility of being free for its death and its own most possibilities to be. That is, Heidegger says, "Dasein does not first become historical in repetition, but rather because as temporal it is historical, it can take itself over in its history, retrieving it."[547] The repetition of the past, on Heidegger's view, is thus the repetition of the enactment of Dasein's existential choice to be free.

History, understood in terms of Dasein's authentic historicity tells the story of Dasein's being at home in the world, whereby Dasein brings itself into accord with the conditions of its existence by choosing to enact its own most possibilities to be from out of its thrownness. That is, history arises through appropriation, whereby Dasein brings new meaning into the world through its enactment of those possibilities that are most its own. Insofar as Dasein is finite, this event of appropriation, or the discovery of new meaning that is brought to bear on the world through Dasein's actualization of those possibilities that are most its own, will always involve the simultaneous covering over of the possibilities it chooses not to enact. Hence, because Dasein can only authentically

[547] Ibid., 367.

appropriate its inheritance by first coming to terms with the radical singularity and unrepeatability that is given by its being-towards-death, the repetition of its thrownness will always be keyed to this singularity, differentiating it from what came before and leaving the origin it seeks to repeat partially concealed. In this, what it means for Dasein to be historical is also to be unhistorical, falling into forgetfulness with each resolute decision to appropriate the past anew. Yet, in much the same way as Nietzsche, Heidegger suggests that it is only in virtue of this forgetfulness that Dasein can return authentically to itself from out of its finitude. That is, it is only in virtue of Dasein's ability to bring its inheritance into accord with its own most possibilities to be that it can take ownership of the world in order to renew its meaningfulness and find a home in it.

While the notion of historical destiny that Heidegger employs in this section of *Being and Time* has been interpreted as an expression of his political and ideological involvement in National Socialism, his account of repetition as the handing down of Dasein's existential possibilities has deep resonances with Arendt's concern for tradition and the role she suggests it plays in preserving the space of appearance. Likewise, while Arendt is deeply critical of what she describes as Nietzsche's rebellion against tradition, her own account of history is unquestionably rooted in it.[548] As we have seen, Arendt challenges the way in which history in the modern era has come to be understood scientifically and the events of the past reduced to a process that serves to explain these events, not as meaningful in themselves, but rather as a means towards the fulfillment of

[548] For Arendt's critique of Nietzsche's rebellion against tradition, see Hannah Arendt, "Tradition in the Modern Age," in *Between Past and Future* (New York: Penguin Group, 2006): 17–40.

a future destiny of mankind. On Arendt's view, the original task of history was to "save human deeds from the futility that comes from oblivion," preserving in our collective memory those moments of foundation that remind us of who we are in our freedom and of the world to which we belong.[549] In the attempt to explain away the unpredictable by totalizing the events of the past as process, Arendt argues that such conceptions of history not only cover over our finitude but, in so doing, also keep us from taking responsibility for appropriating our inheritance anew and ensuring the continuation of the world from the generation to generation. In this, Arendt's critique of modern history echoes the work of both Nietzsche and Heidegger, insofar as she emphasizes the way in which this totalizing approach to history leaves us alienated from ourselves in our freedom. Moreover, in much the same way as Nietzsche and Heidegger, Arendt emphasizes the finitude of memory, or the forgetfulness that is inherent in the task of remembrance, and the fact that what we come to call history is conditioned by the unhistorical or those contingencies and errors that give birth to the events we have preserved in our memory but that have fallen into oblivion, failing to come into appearance as a part of the reality of the world we share in common. In this, history does not reveal the totality of what has happened, but instead preserves in our memory only those words and deeds that are too important to be forgotten, reminding us of our freedom and the fact that we belong to the world in which we find ourselves.

Arendt's political ontology and the emphasis she places on the need in political life to preserve the traditions, institutions, and values of the past can thus be understood

[549] Arendt, "The Concept of History," in *Between Past and Future* (New York: Penguin Group, 2006), 41.

in terms of the notion of repetition that arises in Nietzsche's account of history and Heidegger's further development of this idea in his account of the existential constitution of Dasein as being-in-the-world. As we have already seen, especially in Arendt's account of Roman political practice, she insists that preserving the traditions of the past means taking responsibility for the legacy of one's freedom manifest in the beginning or foundational moment of a political community.[550] In this, taking responsibility for one's inheritance involves handing down the traditions, institutions, and values that constitute the common world through the repetition of this moment of beginning. Yet, the meaning that is sustained through this repetition arises not from its identity to the origin but rather from being augmented or appropriated anew by each generation that inherits it. Hence, the preservation of this beginning will always involve the dynamic and novel re-enactment of it, differentiating it from its origin such that it becomes a part of a shared reality that belongs to the present and can, in turn, be carried forward into the future.

In light of this, we find that Arendt's notion of political action can be understood in terms the repetition of this moment of origin.[551] By speaking and acting in concert in the space of appearance, human beings appropriate the world anew and in so doing enact their freedom. Hence, political action is itself a repetition of the original moment of foundation. This repetition is possible only insofar as the founding moment is appropriated anew in light of the conditions in which we find ourselves such that it can be carried forward into the future. Hence, repetition in Arendt's work can be understood

[550] Arendt, "What is Freedom," 165.

[551] Ibid.

as the handing down or carrying forward of natality and plurality, or the existential conditions for the possibility of human freedom. In this, the enactment of one's freedom through speech and action in the space of politics is itself a repetition of the beginning, and this repetition, along with the difference it necessitates, is the condition for the possibility of finding oneself at home in the world. By announcing who we are through speech in the space of politics, we appropriate our thrownness as it is manifest in language, coming into appearance in our radical singularity so as to realize our inherent capacity for new beginnings manifest in the human condition of natality. Likewise, action marks a new beginning only insofar as it involves the appropriation of history, or the preservation and augmentation of the traditions of the world we have inherited so that it can be carried forward into the future. In this, speech and action in political life can be seen as the handing down or repetition of the legacy of human freedom, holding open a space in the world where human beings can come into accord with themselves in their natality and plurality. It is therefore in virtue of the repetition of the moment of foundation, or the appropriation of language and history through speech and action in the political sphere, that human beings, Arendt thinks, are able to find a home in the world. Moreover, while the event of appropriation is a new beginning in itself, it is precisely this repetition of human freedom that we preserve in our collective memory as history, reminding us of our ability to rise above the finitude of our particular existence by taking responsibility for a world that existed before us and will outlast our lives in it.

The work of each of these figures marks a radical departure from modern conceptions of history, putting into relief the finitude of human memory and, with it, the

fact that our origins, whether as individuals or as members of a community, will always remain inaccessible in their entirety. Moreover, each suggests that the decision to act into the future will always involve the covering over of that which no longer has a place in the shared reality of the common world. In this, each suggests that the re-enactment of the past will never be identical to the origin it seeks to repeat, but will instead be differentiated from it and, as such, will always involve some measure of forgetting. Yet, these figures also suggest that this forgetfulness is the condition for the possibility of human freedom, enabling us to act into the future by offering a novel interpretation of what came before. With this, Arendt and Heidegger maintain that the possibilities that arise from our finitude, or the fact that we always already find ourselves encircled by a finite set of horizons, constitute the condition for the possibility of a homecoming. Hence, rather than longing melancholically for a past that no longer exists by developing encyclopedic knowledge of it, these figures emphasize the need in modern life to embrace the redemptive and creative possibilities that are opened up by forgetting. That is, they call on us to develop the ability to perceive both historically and unhistorically, suggesting that it is necessary to consign the wounds of the past to oblivion in order to open up new and more meaningful relations that enable us to find a home in the world. Hence, Nietzsche's challenge to the "superhistorical" standpoint of the modern individual gives birth to a redemptive conception of forgetting, leading figures like Arendt to suggest that while modern man may be alienated from himself, this does not preclude the possibility of finding a home in the world. Achieving such a homecoming, however, depends first on coming to terms with the finitude of our existence. For Arendt

and those like her it is only in virtue of our forgetfulness that we are able to bring something new into the world and, in so doing, enact our freedom.

VI.2 Repetition and Exile

Whereas these figures emphasize the possibility of finding a home in the world by coming to terms with the finitude of our memory and the difference it entails in each repetition of the past, more recent discourses in post-structuralism and post-modernism suggest that such a notion of homecoming does not do enough to carry Nietzsche's insights into the contingency of meaning and history to its logical conclusion. Rather than emphasizing the redemptive and creative possibilities that are born out of the temporality of human existence and finitude of human memory, figures such as Jean-Françoise Lyotard, Jean-Jacques Lacan, Gilles Deleuze, and Michel Foucault turn to the notion of difference and repetition to draw attention to the violence that is bound up with each moment of foundation. In so doing, they take the concept of repetition to reveal that each event of appropriation necessitates the repetition of an originary violence, re-inscribing with each "handing down" the very disunity, fragmentation, contingency, and error that appropriation attempts to resolve.

Foucault's work in "Nietzsche, Genealogy, and History," epitomizes the post-modern or post-structuralist interpretation of the stakes involved in Nietzsche's conception of history and genealogy. In this text, Foucault employs the method of genealogy to go beyond Nietzsche in order to evaluate the effective role that the immemorial past plays in the production of power and knowledge. Foucault argues that while genealogy is concerned with the question of descent, it stands in opposition to the

search for pure origins and teleological explanations of history, working instead to identify the accidents and faulty calculations that gave birth to the truths that exist today.[552] Such an approach to history, Foucault insists, is crucial for exposing the fact that what we know and who we are reveals neither truth nor being. On his view, genealogy addresses the question of descent not by building mythical foundations, but rather by exposing the fractures in these foundations and the social deformities that have been inscribed in us by the history of errors our ancestors have committed and that we have, in turn, inherited.[553] Foucault's thus draws on the method of genealogy in the service of uncovering the endlessly repeating play of domination and violence involved in the appropriation of the past and the production of knowledge, logic, and law.[554] With this, Foucault suggests that if history is understood genealogically, it forms the basis for a vital critique of traditional histories, "introducing discontinuity to our very being" by drawing attention to the disunity and fragmentation that gets carried through with every repetition of the past.[555]

In contrast to Arendt, figures who engage Nietzsche this way presume that the difference inherent in every repetition of the past exposes our interminable exile from ourselves and the world we have inherited. Whereas Arendt takes human finitude to create an opening for finding a home in the world, these figures suggest that such

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[552] Michel Foucault, *Language, Counter-memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. D.F. Boushard (Ithica: Cornell University Press), 147.

[553] Ibid.

[554] Ibid., 150–1.

[555] Ibid.,154.

notions of homecoming overlook the way in which the originary violence inherent in the moment of foundation gets repeated in the structures that organize social and political life with each event of appropriation. For Foucault, every repetition of the origin is at the same time a repetition of the violence, impurity, or fracturing entailed by this origin that we may have forgotten, but that nevertheless re-inscribes itself in each new generation. Our blindness to the violence and disunity that is imbedded within each moment of foundation is an ineluctable feature of the finitude of human memory. Thus, for these figures, the task of resolving this disunity will never be complete and the appropriative event that promises belonging will always be self-effacing, reifying the violence, impurity, or fracturing of the moment of foundation with each repetition of it. Rather than searching for a home in the world, these figures suggest instead that we come to terms with the fact that our inheritance will always leave us alienated from ourselves. On the basis of this, they suggest that rather than searching for a home that does not exist, we should instead remain vigilant in our critique of the violence and exclusion that gets repeated in every event of appropriation.[556]

This notion of exile and the opposition it forms to the concept of homecoming is perhaps no more salient than in the work of Jacques Derrida. We have already seen how Derrida's notion of deconstruction works in "The Force of Law" to expose the violence inherent in the foundation of law and the way in which the originary cut or divide that is

[556] It is important to note that my discussion here does not do enough to capture the complexity of discourses in post-modernism and post-structuralism. In making such broad claims, my aim is simply to emphasize the contrast between this milieu of thinkers and Arendt, while bringing into focus, in general terms, the important critical perspectives they offer on the notion of homecoming that arises in twentieth century traditions such as existentialism, hermeneutics, and phenomenology.

inherent in this foundation is repeated in every attempt to restore justice through its execution. His concern for the question exile comes into view even more clearly in his political discourses concerning language and history, where he suggests that our the effort to take over our thrownness through the appropriation of language and history will always leave behind a remainder, or an inappropriable other, that reveals the impossibility of ever returning to ourselves entirely. In *The Monolingualism of the Other, or the Prosthesis of Origin*, for instance, Derrida deconstructs the presumed purity of his mother tongue in order to put into relief the impossibility of the homecoming that figures like Heidegger and Arendt suggest is promised by our relation to language. To this end, he turns to his own experience as a French speaking Algerian Jew to show that while we only ever have one language, this language is never our own, exposing us, in our very intimacy with it, to the exile in which we always already find ourselves.[557] In a rare moment, Derrida takes direct aim at Arendt in this text, calling into question her proclaimed affection for the German language in her 1964 interview with Günter Gaus, where she suggests that even in the aftermath of Auschwitz, her mother tongue remains, promising a homecoming or a return to an originary and orienting context of meaning.[558] Derrida explains that he, like Arendt, has a deep and abiding affection for his mother tongue. Yet, he turns to his own experience as a French colonial subject to show that the language he calls his own is in fact other to him,

[557] Jacques Derrida, *The Monolingualism of the Other, or the Prosthesis of Origin*, trans. Patrick Mensah (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 2.

[558] Hannah Arendt, "What Remains? The Language Remains: A Conversation with Günter Gaus," trans. John Stambaugh, *Essays in Understanding*, *1930-1954: Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Shocken Books, 1994), 13.

imposed from without by an unknown source in the colonial motherland. Derrida takes this experience of language to be disclosive of a universal structure of language, whereby we find ourselves always already alienated from the pretense of our "mother tongue" or the language that purports to promise a metaphorical homecoming through the restoration of our relation to the world. In this, Derrida argues, the language that is assigned to us does not return us to ourselves, as Arendt suggests, but instead points to something outside, a law originating elsewhere that keeps us from ever fully appropriating or taking over our thrownness. He maintains, too, that the claim to the purity of one's relation to one's mother tongue is not only self-effacing but also contains within it a violent colonial impulse to eradicate difference or the otherness that is always disclosed in the intimacy of our relation to language. That is, he says, "The monolingualism imposed by the other operates by relying upon the foundation, here, through a sovereignty whose essence is always colonial, which tends, repressively and irrepressively to reduce language to the One, that is, to the hegemony of the homogenous."[559] Hence, Derrida insists that while we find ourselves thrown into a language, the very intimacy of our relation to it only ever discloses our distant and fractured relation to the homecoming it promises. Derrida thus maintains that the expansion and repetition of those foundations and origins that promise unity will always be self-effacing, exposing us to the impossibility of returning to the home we seek to rebuild or renew through an event of appropriation.

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[559] Ibid., 40.

Derrida gives articulation to the political implications of the inappropriable in the context of memory, inheritance, and generation in his discussion of ghosts in *Specters of Marx*. Derrida's specific concern for the ghost or specter can be traced to a conflict he identifies in the concept of the new beginning or event that is central to the thought of both Heidegger and Arendt. He takes his point of departure for thinking about ghosts from two modern specters, Marx's specter of communism and the ghost of Hamlet's father, both of whom stand at the opening of two distinctively modern events. Derrida says:

> The *first noun* of the *Manifesto*, and this time in the singular, is 'specter.' 'A specter is haunting Europe—the specter of communism.' Exordium or *incipit*: this first noun opens, then, the first scene of the first act: 'Ein Gespenst geht um in Europa—das Gespenst des Kommunismus.' As in *Hamlet*, the Prince of a rotten State, everything begins by the apparition. More precisely by the waiting of this apparition. […] The *revenant* is going to come. Still more precisely, everything begins in the imminence of a re-apparition of the specter as apparition *for the first time in the play*.[560]

These figurations of the specter form the basis for Derrida's critique of the pure originality and singularity of the event of appropriation. Insofar as we only project from out of our inheritance, he argues that the new beginning or event is conditioned by the re-apparition or repetition of something past. Action that gives birth to the event is only possible to the extent that we find ourselves haunted by the feeling that something

[560] Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge University Press, 1994), 2.

remains in need of appropriation. This feeling arises from our inheritance and is a fact of our birth, leaving us from our beginning with the task of gathering together what came before in order to bring ourselves into alignment with the present. Yet, inheritance always resists unification, remaining disparate and heterogeneous, as a result of the finitude of our memory. Derrida thus argues that the appropriation of our inheritance, or the gathering together of the past for the sake of carrying a common world into the future, will always involve a decision that cuts, and this cut is necessitated by the responsibility we have to take over our inheritance. He says:

> Its presumed unity, if there is one, cannot exist without *injunction* to *reaffirm by choosing*. 'One must' means *one must* filter, sift, criticize, one must sort out several possibilities that inhabit the same injunction. […] The critical choice called for by any reaffirmation of the inheritance is also, like memory itself, the condition of finitude. The infinite does not inherit (from) itself. The injunction itself (it always says 'choose and decide from among what you inherit') can only be one by dividing itself, tearing itself apart, differing/deferring itself, by speaking at the same time several times and in several voices.[561]

The injunction, or the decision that cuts, thus reveals that our inheritance can never be one with itself, brought together with the living present, but will instead only ever inhabit the present as temporally disjointed and phenomenologically out of place. The event itself will always carry with it a trace of the inappropriable other, or "what would have happened otherwise and thus also happens, like a specter, in that which does not

[561] Ibid., 18.

happen."[562] The specter thus represents an originary wrong or birth wound of inheritance, revealing that there can be no event or new beginning without this concomitant haunting. In other words, Derrida says, "One never inherits without coming to terms with some specter, and therefore with more than one specter."[563] On Derrida's view, then, the event of appropriation will always begin with a specter, or a repetition of the inappropriable or immemorial past. This specter is at once beyond the phenomenological presence of the event, while at the same time felt in our anticipation and anxious waiting for a return or reapparition of the departed.[564] That is, Derrida says, it is "a habitation without proper inhabiting, call it a haunting of both memory and translation."[565] Because these specters are reapparitions or repetitions, rather than novel and phenomenally robust eruptions of meaning, they fail to come into full presence. As such, Derrida says, the ghost or specter is "something that one does not know precisely, and one does not know if precisely it *is*, if it exists, if it responds to a name and corresponds to an essence."[566] And yet, its absence is felt immanently, as if interred within the event, undermining the cathartic release and the pure originality that is promised by each new beginning.

Derrida's discussion in this text turns on the question of justice, understood not as a matter of law or right, but rather as a matter of the infinite responsibility we have to

[562] Ibid., 25.

[563] Ibid.

[564] Ibid., 5.

[565] Ibid., 21.

[566] Ibid., 5.

bear the weight of our inheritance. The concept of responsibility, Derrida argues, is thinkable only because it is keyed to the paradoxical absence of those who have yet to be born and those who have already died. That is, to find oneself responsible is to feel the burden, not of the living present, but rather of one's inheritance and the manifestation of this inheritance in what is owed to the future.[567] Responsibility thus involves being accountable for something that no longer is or has yet to come into being, temporally out of joint with the living present and, in this, hidden from view. Hence, in order to begin addressing the question of justice, Derrida argues that our investigation must begin, not with the events of birth and death, but rather with what is beyond or between the two.[568] This, he argues, points to a new kind of politics that involves learning to live ghosts, or the immemorial violence and exclusion that gets repeated in the event of appropriation. Politics today must involve being-with specters, and, he says, "This being-with specters would also be, not only but also, a *politics* of memory, or inheritance, and of generation."[569] Hence, rather than calling for a political ontology, Derrida calls instead for a political "hauntology" that investigates the question of the event not in terms of the freedom it promises from the wounds of the past, but instead in terms of our encounter with ghosts and specters, or the inappropriable that is entailed by every attempt to appropriate our inheritance.[570]

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[567] Ibid., xvii.

[568] Ibid.

[569] Ibid., xviii.

[570] Ibid., 10–11.

In light of this, we find that the concept of repetition not only provides a frame for understanding Arendt's conception of the political action, but also brings into focus the broader implications of political ontology that Arendt, in her indebtedness to the tradition of phenomenology, fails to appreciate. In what follows, I will use Derrida's hauntalogy to suggest that Arendt's conception of citizenship necessitates an encounter with ghosts; that is, it necessitates the repetition of the inappropriable or the immemorial violence and exclusion of the past that fails to come into presence in the space of appearance, but that nevertheless haunts our political traditions, institutions and values. This notion of ghosts offers an interpretive frame for understanding the repetition of the paradox of remembrance that is entailed by the implementation of Enlightenment citizenship and its implications for contemporary political practice. This, in turn, will help to show that the modern concept of citizenship itself is self-effacing, undermining the belonging or homecoming that Arendt believes is necessary for overcoming loneliness in the modern era.

VI.3. The Self-Effacing Character of Enlightenment Citizenship

As we have seen, Arendt gives political articulation to her concern for belonging through her conception of citizenship. Rather than conceiving of citizenship in terms of the liberal concern for securing rights in the private sphere, she argues instead that citizenship must be understood as a lived and embodied activity in the public sphere that involves speaking and acting in concert with others in order to carry a common world from the past into the future. In this, her account of citizenship is oriented by the responsibility citizens have to preserve the legacy of the world they have inherited for

the sake of appropriating it anew and ensuring its continuation for future generations. On Arendt's view, it is only by participating in such an event of appropriation that human beings can realize their freedom. Moreover, as this event of appropriation depends on taking responsibility for the world one has inherited, the political belonging that Arendt believes is promised by her conception of citizenship depends on remembrance or the preservation of the legacy of one's political community. In the context of modern political life, she argues, remembrance, or the appropriation of the legacy of the revolutionary spirit of the modern age, is crucial for rebuilding the world and finding a home in it.

Yet, as I have tried to show, Arendt fails to appreciate the paradox of remembrance that lies at the heart of the revolutionary tradition of the modern age that she suggests must be preserved and renewed if we are to find a home in the world. By framing Arendt's conception of the political sphere in terms of the notion of repetition, we find that this paradox of remembrance is necessitated by the implementation of Enlightenment citizenship. As we saw through the example of the Haitian Revolution, the universal humanism of the Enlightenment project necessitates the covering over of those histories of violence and exclusion that are bound up with the legacy of the modern political tradition but that are incompatible with the narrative of universal emancipation on which the expansion of Enlightenment citizenship is based. As such, the very implementation of citizenship in the modern era renders the legacy that must be preserved in our collective memory if we are to renew the meaningfulness of the world incapable of being fully memorialized. The European legacy of slavery and colonization,

which is among the most violent and exclusionary of these histories, is a feature of the tradition of the modern era. Yet, because this history cannot be held together with the ideal of universal emancipation inherent in the narrative of the Enlightenment, the very expansion of Enlightenment citizenship to those who bear the burden of these histories covers over it, keeping it from coming into appearance as a part of the common world.

A conflict thus arises between the responsibility Arendt suggests modern citizens have to preserve the legacy of the revolutionary tradition and the fact that this legacy will always contain within it a history of violence and exclusion that has been forgotten, failing, in turn, to come into appearance as part of the shared reality of the common world. This conflict reveals that the concept of citizenship in the modern era is self-effacing. Its affirmation depends on the repetition of the revolutionary spirit of the modern age, which, in disclosing the meaning of this heritage, simultaneously covers over those parts of it that cannot be held together with the Enlightenment narrative. On Arendt's view, citizenship promises political belonging only insofar as citizens take responsibility for bringing the legacy of their political community into full view in the space of appearance such that it can be appropriated and carried forward as part of a common world. Yet, because this paradox of remembrance is bound up with the revolutionary spirit of the modern age, fulfilling one's responsibility as a citizen to preserve the legacy of the modern political tradition will at the same time always involve the preservation or repetition of the immemorial history of violence and exclusion that is entailed by this legacy. Hence, the promise of political belonging that citizenship makes remains unfulfilled in the modern era, as the legacy that we are tasked with remembering

can never come into full view, and the very appropriative event that is required in order to achieve this will always involve the repetition of the inappropriable or the immemorial violence and exclusion that is entailed by the implementation of Enlightenment citizenship.

The paradox of remembrance that is internal to the revolutionary spirit of the modern era thus has a central role to play in understanding the character of political exclusion today. In light of it, we see that the racialized violence and exclusion that continues to haunt diasporic people decades and centuries after becoming citizens can be understood as a repetition of the original failure of Enlightenment citizenship epitomized by the Haitian Revolution. This failure of Enlightenment citizenship discloses the paradox of remembrance at the heart of the revolutionary tradition that we are tasked with preserving in the modern era. Because the French legacy of slavery and colonization could not be held together with the Enlightenment narrative of the French Revolution and carried forward as part of a common world, it was left unappropriated and covered over. Yet, rather than fading into oblivion, this unappropriated legacy continued to haunt French Saint-Domingue in the form of the threat of a return to slavery, or a repetition of the immemorial violence and exclusion of the past that failed to be appropriated. The repetition of the immemorial violence and exclusion of the past thus comes to appear through this example as a part of the legacy of the revolutionary tradition that we are tasked with preserving in the modern era. However, because the very implementation of Enlightenment citizenship necessitates the covering over of this history of violence and exclusion, this threat of a return to the violence and exclusion of

the past fails to come into full presence, remaining unappropriated and returning again with each re-enactment of the political sphere.

Édouard Glissant's account of "the quarrel with history" that he suggests characterizes the problem of historical consciousness in the Caribbean helps to clarify both the character and effect of the hiddenness of these histories in light of the memory of slavery and colonization in the African diaspora. Focusing on the French Antilles, and Martinique in particular, he says, "The French Caribbean is the site of a history characterized by ruptures that began with a brutal dislocation, the slave trade."[571] Because of this, he maintains, a historical consciousness could not be deposited or sediment in the Caribbean. Whereas European histories, Glissant argues, can be retained in our historical memory, appearing as unbroken continuums that claim to clarify the reality of a people, the history of the Caribbean came together "in the context of shock, contradiction, painful negation, and explosive forces," and, as such, cannot be absorbed in its entirety into a collective consciousness.[572] As this history was born not of a historical continuum, but through the displacement of this continuum in the colonies, it appears out of joint and discontinuous with history and, in its dislocation, partially concealed. For this reason, he explains, the particular experience of history in the Caribbean and histories of a colonial origin more generally have taken on the character of "nonhistory."[573] As nonhistory, these histories negatively manifest themselves as

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[571] Edouard Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia), 62.

[572] Ibid.

[573] Ibid.

something that has been erased in the official documents and excluded from our collective memory. Yet, Glissant argues that while one may expect these histories to fade into oblivion, they in fact remain "obsessively present" in the lived experience of the daily reality of those who continue bear their burden.[574]

Because such histories or nonhistories are displaced or dislocated from the continuum that characterizes history in the European colonial motherland, Glissant argues that they come into appearance, not with clear consistency and linearity, but instead with stunning unexpectedness. He says:

> The emergence of this common experience broken in time (of this concealed parallel in histories) that shapes the Caribbean at this time surprises us before we had even thought about this parallel. That means also that our history emerges at the edge of what we can tolerate, this emergence must be related immediately to the complicated web of events in our past. The past, to which we were subjected, which has not yet emerged as history for us, is, however, obsessively present.[575]

Glissant argues that those living in a colonial context thus find themselves faced with laying claim to a history that cannot be known or brought fully to consciousness, but that nevertheless remains obsessively present, coming to appear with eruptive force at the outer edges of what one can comprehend. This, he explains, constitutes the quarrel with history that characterizes the longing and simultaneous impossibility of memorializing a

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[574] Ibid., 61.

[575] Ibid., 63.

history born out of the legacy of European slavery and colonization in the African diaspora.

On the basis of this, Glissant explains that his task is to examine this obsessively present nonhistory and clarify its relevance in the lived reality of those who those who continue to carry these legacies. In so doing, however, he believes we find that this experience of the obsessive presence of nonhistory is not something that characterizes the specific situation of the colonized subject. On the contrary, it exposes a truth that underlies the notion of history more generally. Specifically, it reveals that history as it has come the be understood in the West has shattered in the face of global expansion, such that no one can claim to have mastery or ownership over it.[576] In this, these nonhistories reveal the myth of ideal of history in the west and, particularly, the emphasis placed in this tradition on preserving one's heritage or line of descent for the sake of transcending one's finitude. Moreover, in revealing this myth, it simultaneously exposes the oppressive colonial impulse that lies behind it, working to suppress those histories or nonhistories that break apart the continuity and linearity of the narrative we tell of ourselves. This, he says, can be seen in the difficulty involved for those living in a colonial context of knowing one's history, which, in remaining out of reach, "provokes the deepest isolation" and a feeling of complete disorientation.[577]

In this, Glissant's discussion offers an important critical perspective on Arendt's account of remembrance in political life, putting into relief the danger involved in failing

[576] Ibid., 77.

[577] Ibid., 72.

to appreciate the significance of the immemorial past on present political life. In "provoking the deepest isolation," the yearning for an ideal history and the failure to remain open to these unknown histories can be seen as further perpetuating the isolation and loneliness that Arendt believes keeps a common world from coming into view. Moreover, the propagation of the myth of ideal history has the potential to destroy plurality and natality, or the "stunning unexpectedness" and irreducible diversity that is revealed in the obscurity of these histories. As we have seen Arendt, resists notions of history that reduce the spontaneity of human action to process. Yet, we may wonder whether her account of the responsibility citizens have to remember in political life runs the risk of covering over a new iteration of human plurality that has come to appear in these nonhistories as a result of the global impact of the European legacy of slavery and colonization.

Glissant insists that by coming to terms with this shattering of history and learning to dwell in the obscurity it necessitates, it is possible to develop methods of resistance to the forms of oppression that continue to haunt diasporic peoples. He uses the metaphor of the communities of escaped slaves that emerged in the forests and mountains of the Caribbean to elucidate this dilemma of history, along with the possibilities for resistance that emerge from it. He says:

> The forest of the maroon was thus the first obstacle the slave opposed to the *transparency* of the planter. There is no clear path, no *way* forward, in this density. You turn in obscure circles until you find the primordial tree. The formulation of history's yearned for ideal, so tied up with its difficulty,

> introduces us to the dilemma of peoples today still oppressed by dominant cultures.[578]

This dilemma consists in the need to know one's history and appropriate one's legacy while coming to understand that this task is not only impossible but also furthers the oppressive colonial impulse inherent in the myth of ideal history. He thus calls on those who continue to carry these legacies to embrace nonhistory by considering the possibilities for resistance that are opened up by its obscurity and fragmentation. He believes that the very rebellion of the maroon is emblematic of the way in which this obscurity can be used as a mode of resistance, in much the same way as the Caribbean folktale, which, he says, "zeroes in on our absence of history."[579] These tales, he explains, are often fragmented in nature, such that no clear chronology can emerge. They involve sudden changes in tone, abrupt physiological twists, a taste for excess, and, in their discontinuity, resist the myth of history as systematic process. He says, "The taste for excess, this is, in the first place the total freedom with regard to the paralyzing fear of repetition."[580] On the basis of this, Glissant thus argues that resisting oppression in a globalized, post-colonial world depends on remaining open to this excess. That is, he says:

> The Caribbean, the Other America. Banging away incessantly at the main ideas will perhaps lead to exposing the space they occupy in us. Repetition of these

[578] Ibid., 83.

[579] Ibid., 84.

[580] Ibid.

> ideas does not clarify their expression; on the contrary, it perhaps leads to obscurity. We need those stubborn shadows where repetition leads to perpetual concealment, which is our form of resistance.[581]

In this, Glissant not only gives articulation to the ways in which the immemorial violence and exclusion of the past remains a present and powerful force in the lives of those who continue to bear the weight of these legacies, but also clarifies the need in contemporary political life to remain open to the excess these histories necessitate and the possibilities of resistance that come to appear in them.

In light of this, the repetition of the paradox of remembrance in present political life can perhaps be understood in terms of the ghosts or specters that Derrida suggests stand at the opening of each new beginning, along with Glissant's notion of non-history, making their appearance with stunning unexpectedness at the outer edges of what can be comprehended. If we take seriously the effect of the paradox of remembrance in the modern era, then the legacies of violence and exclusion that get covered over with the implementation of citizenship remain unappropriated, failing to come into full presence in the space of appearance. Even so, because they are entailed by the implementation of Enlightenment citizenship, they nevertheless remain "obsessively present," continuing to re-appear in the form of a threat of the return of the violence and exclusion of the past and lingering in the traditions, institutions, and values that constitute the common world. These forms of exclusion thus have a spectral quality, coming back with each dynamic re-enactment of the moment of foundation, keeping this moment from ever bringing

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[581] Ibid., 4.

something entirely new and unencumbered by the transgressions of the past into appearance.

This repetition can be seen, for instance, in the anti-black racism that continues to be carried out against African descended people in the United States. While Arendt upholds the United States as a paragon of the modern political community, one wonders whether this original crime of slavery and the tacit exclusion that she argues is contained within its original founding moment can be held together with the modern revolutionary tradition. While this history of violence and exclusion is bound up with the legacy of the American political community, its immemorial status keeps this history from coming into appearance as part of its collective memory. As immemorial, it thus appears as a specter, or a return of something past and unappropriated. The return of this immemorial past can be seen as clearly as ever today in the ongoing police shootings, white supremacist violence, and systemic racism that continues to keep African Americans from coming into appearance as members of the American political community. These racialized forms of violence and exclusion can thus be seen as repetitions of the paradox of remembrance, continuing to haunt the African American community in the form of the threat of a return to this legacy of violence and exclusion.

These specters of the immemorial violence and exclusion that continue to haunt modern political communities thus indicate that citizenship in the modern era is not enough to overcome the forms of exclusion that are distinctive of the present age. Arendt, for her part, does not believe in ghosts. That is, she fails to appreciate the implications of the immemorial past for addressing the problem of political exclusion in

modern political life. This, it seems, is because Arendt develops her conception of the event of appropriation on the basis of a notion of homecoming rooted in the Greek political tradition. As we have seen, Arendt conceives of speech and action from out of the model of political life represented by the Greek *polis*. As she explains, the Greeks conceived of the *polis* as a space where men could engage in the "sharing of word and deed" and, in this, hold open a space where the least tangible of man-made things could be preserved.[582] That is, she describes the function of the *polis* as providing "a remedy for the futility of action and speech; for the chances that a deed deserving of fame would not be forgotten, that it would actually become 'immortal,' were not very good."[583] The *polis* thus created a space where the words and deeds of great men could be remembered and immortalized so as to "inspire admiration in the present and in future ages."[584] In conceiving of citizenship from out of the notion of speech and action that emerges in the context of the Greek *polis*, Arendt is thus led to conceive of the space of human belonging as one that promises, through citizenship, the possibility of appropriation without remainder, or a home in the world that is not haunted by the transgressions of the past.

To be sure, the Greek *polis* might have promised a home in the world for its citizens that was uninhabited by ghosts. Yet, the Greeks were not concerned in the wake of their colonial endeavors with the universal expansion Greek citizenship and, as such,

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[582] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 196–7.

[583] Ibid., 197.

[584] Ibid.

could appropriate the legacy of the Greek city-state without contradiction or remainder, while ridding the *polis* of any specters of the violence and exclusion of the past. Hence, the dimension of human finitude that is revealed through the modern paradox of remembrance remained covered over in the context of Greek political life. We find through examples like the Haitian Revolution, by contrast, that this is not a viable model for politics in the modern era. While it may be true that political belonging is necessary for finding a home in the world, such belonging can only be realized today if we come terms with the fact that our home, unlike the Greek *polis*, is haunted.

In light of this, I will suggest in what follows that what is called for today is a new concept of belonging in political ontology that is keyed to the finitude of our collective memory and the fact that taking responsibility for the legacy of the modern world depends on learning to live with ghosts and specters in the modern political arena. I use the notion of ghosts and specters to describe these repetitions in order to put into relief the uncanniness of their appearance as something out of joint with the times or improper to the world in which we find ourselves. On the one hand, the immemorial violence and exclusion of the past remains obsessively present in the lived experience of those who bear the weight of these hidden histories, repeating itself again and again in their daily reality. On the other hand, because this history of violence and exclusion has not been appropriated, failing, in turn, to come into appearance as a part of the collective memory of the modern political community, its repetition provokes disbelief. As apparitions, these ghosts of the immemorial are almost accessible, but not quite, evoking a double take, while at the same time confounding reason's ability to know with clarity

what has been seen. In this, the ghostly repetition of the immemorial violence and exclusion of the past has an unnerving effect, prompting one to recoil and reassert reason by claiming that what one thought was saw was not real. That is, these repetitions provoke fear, and, in lacking the courage to face them in political life and instead doubling-down on the traditional principles of Enlightenment humanism and rationality, we fail to take responsibility for the immemorial violence and exclusion of the past that is internal to the legacy of the world we have inherited.

So long as we deny the existence of the specters of exclusion that are necessitated by the paradox of remembrance in the modern era, a common world will continue to fail to come into appearance, precluding the possibility of overcoming the loneliness and world-alienation that Arendt diagnoses. Moreover, if we insist, as Arendt does, that the affirmation of one's citizenship alone is enough to overcome the legacy of American slavery that preceded the implementation of citizenship then political action can never address the repetition of this legacy If, on the other hand, we allow these ghosts to dwell with us in the space of politics, it becomes possible to bring the shared reality of a common world into appearance and begin addressing the problem of political exclusion in modern political life. I will therefore suggest in what follows that what is called for today is a model for political life that is keyed to the political implications of the hiddenness of the pariah tradition, and, with this, open to the immemorial violence and exclusion that may escape our collective memory, but that refuses to fade into oblivion because it is bound up with the legacy of the world we have inherited.

VI.4. A New Concept of Belonging in Political Ontology: Ghosts and Specters in the Modern Political Arena

Whereas Arendt develops a lived and embodied notion of citizenship that she believes promises political belonging in the modern era, I have tried to show that her conception of citizenship reveals a conflict internal to the concept of modern citizenship that keeps it from achieving this end. In light of the paradox of remembrance that I have outlined above, I have suggested that in order to address political exclusion today, it is necessary to go beyond the concept of citizenship so that the immemorial violence and exclusion that are necessitated by it can come into appearance as part of the legacy of the world we have inherited. While this immemorial past may fail to come into appearance as such, I have used Derrida's notion of specters and ghosts as an interpretive frame for capturing the implication of these legacies in contemporary political life.

Yet, rather than suggesting, as Derrida does, that these specters disclose our interminable exile from the world and the impossibility of finding a home in it, I maintain that what is called for today is a new conception of political belonging. If we take seriously the legacy of the modern political tradition, what it means to find oneself at home in the world is to find oneself living in a haunted house, or a world that cannot be thought apart from the specters of exclusion that are necessitated by the modern paradox of remembrance. While these specters may fail to come into full presence, addressing the problem of exclusion today depends on coming to terms with the fact that we are nevertheless responsible for answering to them in the space of politics.

With this in mind, it is possible to see that citizenship is no longer enough to overcome the problem of exclusion in the modern era, as the space of politics can no longer be thought of as a space that is reserved for human beings alone. On the contrary, the legacy of the modern political tradition makes it the case that the ghosts of the immemorial violence and exclusion of the past also belong to the space of politics. By excluding these ghosts from the political arena, we fail to take shared responsibility for the legacy of the world we have inherited and, in so doing, perpetuate the forms of exclusion that have become endemic in modern life, which include, in addition to physical exclusion, the existential exile and loneliness that has become widespread in the modern era.

Perhaps the appropriate model, then, for rethinking politics in the modern world is not the Greek *polis* or the model of the revolutionary Enlightenment, but a tradition that is closer to the immemorial violence and exclusion of the past that is necessitated by the paradox of remembrance, such as Haitian Vodou. As we have already seen through the work of Jean Price-Mars, Vodou is a distinctly modern product of the legacy of European slavery and colonization. While aspects of this tradition can be traced to various religions practices of West Africa, as well as European Catholicism, it is identical to neither, containing within it a politics of resistance that is definitive of the experience of modern slavery.[585] Significantly, this tradition centers on a concern for memory and an ethics oriented by the responsibility the living have to engage with

[585] Jean Price-Mars, *So Spoke the Uncle*, trans. Magdalene W. Shannon (Washington DC: Three Continents Press, 1983), 47–8.

spirits of these ancestors.[586] For this reason, most Vodou ceremonies begin with a recitation of the history of one's lineage and conclude with a song that begins by announcing that the bones of the ancestors still walk the land.[587] The spirits of the ancestors, or *Lwa*, remind the Haitians of the legacies of the various people brought together in Haiti through colonization. They are not knowable in their entirety, but instead manifest themselves as "invisible powers" or "mysteries" who continue to inhabit the island despite no longer belonging to the living present .[588] While these spirits lack a tangible presence, those who practice Haitian Vodou nevertheless believe that they have an ongoing responsibility to serve the *Lwa* and allow these spirits, in turn, to guide their action.[589]

Though there is much to say about the practices of Haitian Vodou, it is of particular importance for the purposes of this discussion that it engages these spirits for the sake of unifying an a community that lacks a memorial legacy.[590] The name Haiti,

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[586] Mambo Chita Tann, *Haitian Vodou*: *An Introduction to Haiti's Indigenous and Spiritual Traidition*, 17.

[587] In Creole, the prayer that concludes most Vodou ceremonies begins with "*Zo li mache*, li mache, li mache," which means, "The bones, they walk, they walk, they walk."
See Chita Tann, 17.

[588] Chita Tann, 87.

[589] It is important to note that most Haitians who practice Vodou do not consider this religious practice. When asked what their religion is, most say that they are Catholic and "serve the *Iwa*" or spirits of the ancestors. In this, Haitian Vodou can perhaps best be understood, not as a religion, but instead as a cultural and political tradition, working to unify a population of transplanted and exiled people by showing reverence for the ghosts of the past and allowing them to guide their action. See Chita Tann, 14.

[590] Much work has been done in a variety of disciplines on the political and cultural importance of Haitian Vodou, both within Haiti and in the context of the African Diaspora more generally. For an important recent work on the history of the political and legal prohibition of Haitian Vodou and the effect this has had on popular stereotypes of it, particularly in the United States, see Kate Ramsey, *The Spirit and the Law* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011). For an earlier European sociological work on

which Dessalines gave to the island upon declaring independence from France, derives from the Taino-Arawak term, *Ayiti*, often thought to be the original name of the island, meaning "land of the mountains" or "homeland."[591] With this, Dessalines declared Haiti an independent nation that promised to unite all those who had been exiled by the European legacy of slavery and colonization. Significantly, the concept of home or belonging that emerged in this context seems to be grounded in the sentiment that such a diverse and displaced a people cannot be unified without practices of historical memory that enable individuals to take responsibility for a past that cannot be fully memorialized. In emphasizing the responsibility individuals have to engage and seek guidance from the ghosts of the past that continue to haunt the island, Vodou can perhaps be understood as precisely this kind of practice. While Dessalines vision for Haiti failed to come to fruition, this model of belonging nevertheless seems especially fitting if we are to take responsibility for the legacy of the world we have inherited. A product of the immemorial violence and exclusion of European slavery and colonization, this model points to a new conception of homecoming that does not deny the specters of exclusion that are bound up with the modern political tradition, but engages them directly.

If the world in which we find ourselves is haunted, then addressing exclusion today will depend on going beyond traditional notions of humanism and Enlightenment rationality in order to make room for the presence of ghosts in political life. That is, it

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Haitian Vodou, see Alfred Matraux, *Voodoo in Haiti* (New York: Shocken Books, 1971). For a decisive, though somewhat controversial, account of Haitian Vodou written from an African-American perspective see, Zora Neale Hurston, *Tell My Horse: Voodoo and Life in Haiti and Jamaica* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1990).

[591] Chita Tann, 18.

will involve holding open a space in politics for those immemorial histories of violence and exclusion that exceed the living present and, as such, cannot be known in their entirety, but that nevertheless continue to have an obsessive presence in the immediate reality of those who were once cast out. In order to begin taking responsibility for the legacy of the revolutionary Enlightenment as Arendt suggests we should, it is thus necessary to go beyond her concern for citizenship to begin developing an even more inclusive conception of the space of politics that is able to attend to the repetition of the immemorial violence and exclusion of the past. While this notion of politics would be oriented above all by the concern for creating a space in which humans can enact their freedom in the space of politics, it would achieve this orientation through its openness to the hiddenness of the pariah tradition and the uncanny repetition of the immemorial violence and exclusion of the past that is necessitated by the implementation of Enlightenment citizenship. Because the ghostly repetition of these histories of violence and exclusion continue to keep those who were once cast out from coming into appearance in the modern political arena, what seems to be called for today is a more expansive notion of the political sphere that exceeds the European Enlightenment and the Greek *polis* so that we are able to take responsibility for the specters of exclusion that continue to haunt the modern world. For this reason, the model of Haitian Vodou, and the hidden tradition of the pariah more generally, may provide an important point of departure for developing a post-Enlightenment politics. If we understand Vodou, not as a religious tradition, but instead as a political practice that is oriented above all by a politics of memory, then it offers an important frame for rethinking contemporary

political life in a way that has the potential to bring us into accord with the legacy of the revolutionary tradition in its entirety so as to reintroduce the possibility of a homecoming in the modern world.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

The principal aim of this project has been to intervene in current discourses concerning the problem of political exclusion in order to provide a new frame for addressing this problem in ways that are responsive to the post-Enlightenment world in which we find ourselves. To this end, I have turned to Arendt to put into relief the dangers and limits of mainstream liberal approaches to exclusion that emphasize the global expansion of liberal democracy and the forms of citizenship that sustain it. By developing Arendt's analysis of political exclusion not only in terms of her account of statelessness and the "right to have rights," but also in terms of her discourse on loneliness and the susceptibility of the structures of modern liberalism to totalitarianism, I have tried to show that she offers novel critical insights into the liberal tradition that have yet to be fully appreciated.

Arendt's analysis of loneliness provides a crucial point of departure for clarifying the nature of the problem of political exclusion today. By developing Arendt's characterization of exclusion, not just in terms of her analysis of statelessness, but also in terms of her account of the problem of loneliness, we find that the emphasis in liberal political theory on the global expansion of rights only addresses exclusion in an ontic register, failing, in turn, to capture the ontological basis of the problem of political exclusion as it unfolds in the experience of the loss of a world, or the nexus of meaningful relations, that enables human beings to come into appearance in their

singularity. In only offering an ontic solution to the problem of exclusion, Arendt's analysis indicates that liberal approaches to this problem have the potential to cover over and perpetuate this experience of worldlessness, failing to address the feeling of superfluity that arises when one no longer belongs to a world and thus becomes susceptible to totalitarian domination. Those who focus on Arendt's discussion of rights for the sake of advancing liberal political theory imply in their approach to her work that the forms of exclusion epitomized by statelessness stand outside the structures of liberal democracy. Yet, Arendt's account of loneliness suggests that the experience of no longer belonging to a world may be endemic for those who live within political structures of a liberal provenance. If political exclusion is understood as the loss of one's place in the world, then overcoming this loss involves more than simply extending the rights of citizenship to those who have yet to be integrated with the structures of liberal democracy; beyond this, Arendt's analysis suggests that what is called for is a critique of these structures and the very notion of citizenship on which they are based. In turning to loneliness, we therefore find that Arendt's notion of citizenship forms the basis for a deeper critique of the liberal tradition that remains underdeveloped in her discussion of the right to have rights, but that is nevertheless integral to her broader insights concerning the failures and dangers of politics in the modern age.

While Arendt's prescient characterization of the problem of exclusion in the modern era has been a guiding thread of this project, I have also suggested that it reveals a broader problem with the concept of modern citizenship that Arendt fails to appreciate. By expanding Arendt's analysis of exclusion beyond the European nation-state to a more

global set of concerns raised in colonial and post-colonial theory regarding the legacy of European slavery and colonization, I have attempted to put into relief, in a more pronounced way than Arendt, the stakes involved in her analysis of exclusion. In view of her critique of liberal approaches to the problem of exclusion, I have suggested that Arendt attempts to provide an ontological solution to the problem of exclusion by developing a lived and embodied conception of citizenship that emphasizes the responsibility citizens have to remember and appropriate the institutions, traditions, and values of the world they have inherited for the sake of carrying a common world into the future. On Arendt's view, this conception of citizenship has the potential to offer a remedy to the problem of exclusion so long as individuals enact their citizenship by working in concert in the space of politics to bring the legacy of the world they have inherited into appearance in the full illumination of the public realm.

By considering Arendt in light of an analysis of the Haitian Revolution, however, I have tried to show that the political tradition of the revolutionary Enlightenment that we are tasked with preserving does not admit of complete memorialization. This, I have argued, is a function of the paradox of remembrance that is necessitated by the implementation of Enlightenment citizenship. That is, in order to affirm oneself as a citizen, one must, at the same time, cover over those legacies of violence and exclusion that are incompatible with the Enlightenment narrative of universal inclusion that holds the modern political community together. Yet, insofar as the Enlightenment project demands universal inclusion through the expansion of citizenship, these histories of violence and exclusion do not stand outside of or in opposition to the legacy of the

tradition we are tasked with preserving, but are instead bound up with it. Hence, insofar as the immemorial violence and exclusion of the past is entailed by the expansion of Enlightenment citizenship, the very implementation of citizenship will always involve the covering over of a part of the legacy of the modern tradition that must be remembered if we are to bring a common world into appearance.

With this, I have attempted to give further contour to the nature of the modern political legacy to show that it is not just liberal citizenship, as Arendt suggests, but the concept of modern citizenship itself that is inadequate to the task of addressing the problem of exclusion in contemporary political life. Insofar as the immemorial violence and exclusion of the past gets repeated with each dynamic re-enactment of the space of appearance, I have therefore suggested that we are called upon to develop a more expansive frame for the concept of homecoming or belonging in political ontology that goes beyond citizenship to make room in the space of politics for the immemorial violence and exclusion of the past. That is, rather than conceiving of the revolutionary tradition of the modern age as something other to or distinct from these histories of violence and exclusion, I have suggested that taking responsibility for the world in which we find ourselves depends on coming to terms in the space of politics with the fact these histories continue to haunt the modern political arena. Hence, rather than conceiving of the space of politics as a home that promises an escape from the transgressions of the past, I have argued that this space must be understood as a haunted house. With this, I have suggested that true political belonging depends not only on the universal inclusion of human beings within the space of politics through the expansion

of citizenship, but also on the inclusion of the ghosts or specters of exclusion that continue to haunt our political traditions, institutions, and values.

By expanding the concept of political belonging or homecoming in this way, I have suggested that it is possible to open new paths to addressing the problem of exclusion today. As these ghosts are bound up with our inheritance, I have argued that it is only by allowing them to dwell with us in the space of politics, rather than denying their existence, that we can begin renewing the world we have inherited so as to address the problem of exclusion that Arendt diagnoses through her respective analyses of statelessness and loneliness.

In proposing this new concept of political belonging, whereby the space of politics is understood not simply as a home in the world for human beings, but also for the ghosts of the past that are entailed by the implementation of Enlightenment, my aim is not to propose specific policy changes or political practices for addressing exclusion today. Instead, I wish to give new orientation to the task of politics more generally so as to open new paths to addressing the distinctive character of political exclusion that has been produced by the revolutionary spirit of the modern era. It is not difficult to see that the aims of the Enlightenment project are far from being fulfilled. Indeed, with the global expansion of Enlightenment citizenship, we find that citizenship continues to remain inadequate to the task of ensuring that those who were once cast out no longer find themselves subject to the threat of a return to the violence and exclusion of the past. This, I believe, constitutes the central problematic of political life in the post-Enlightenment era and, thus, offering a new frame for the task of politics that is keyed to

the problem of historical memory entailed by the global expansion of Enlightenment citizenship is crucial if we are to begin addressing exclusion today.

One figuration of this that has been orienting for my project, though not developed at length, concerns the racialized violence and exclusion that has been carried out against African descended people in the United States since receiving the rights of American citizenship in 1868. If we insist, as Arendt does, that citizenship alone is enough to overcome the legacy of American slavery that preceded the implementation of citizenship, then political action can never address the repetition of this legacy in events such as the 2014 police shooting of African-American teenager, Michael Brown, in Ferguson, Missouri, or the 2015 white supremacist shootings at the Immanuel AME church in Charleston, South Carolina. The phenomenality of these repetitions is uncanny, which often leads to the neglect or denial of their existence. These phenomena appear not merely as what they are, but also as something past that cannot fully be accounted for in and through the phenomenon itself. In other words, Michael Brown's death appears not just as it is, but also as something out of joint with the times, improper to the world in which we find ourselves and incapable of being held together with the enlightened democratic narrative we tell of the American political community. Yet, despite the intangibility of these repetitions, they nevertheless remain obsessively present in the lived reality of those who continue to carry these immemorial histories of violence and exclusion precisely because they are bound up with the political tradition of the revolutionary Enlightenment. Hence, while these repetitions may be uncanny, we are nevertheless responsible for them and, thus, bringing the shared reality of a common

world into view so as to begin to addressing the worldlessness that has become endemic in modern political life depends on coming to understand these ghostly repetitions as properly political.

The ontological concept of political belonging that I have proposed makes it possible to understand these repetitions not merely as a consequence of prejudice, but as a deeper and more widespread failure on the part of modern political communities to take responsibility for the world they have inherited. In this, my project has the potential to contribute in three ways to contemporary discourses in political philosophy. First, by drawing attention to the responsibility we have to come to terms with the political consequences of the transgressions of the past, it has the potential to give greater contour to debates concerning democracy, demonstrating that democratic practice concerns not only citizenship and the pursuit of liberal inclusion, but also political forms of historical memory that make visible the legacies of violence and exclusion that prohibit the complete enfranchisement of those who were once cast out. By reframing the task of politics not just in terms of the living present and the knowable, but also in terms of the specters of exclusion that continue to haunt the space of politics today, my aim is to suggests that fulfilling the principle of universal inclusion set for the by the revolutionary tradition of the modern age depends on going beyond models of political practice that emphasize Enlightenment humanism and rationality. As I have suggested, the legacy of the modern world is one that will always remain, at least in part, irrational, unable to be held together consistently. Hence, rather than taking our point of departure for thinking about democratic practice and policy formation from those features of the

modern political tradition that are consistent with this narrative, it seems that a more adequate approach may involve working from out of those features of it that are inconsistent with this narrative. In the context of the United States, for instance, this may mean taking an alternative approach to reading the Constitution. Rather than interpreting the Constitution solely in terms of those aspects of it that are consistent with the Enlightenment narrative, we might instead take our point of departure from features of it such as the three-fifths clause that highlight these inconsistencies and bring into view the transgressions of the past that may escape our collective memory, but that nevertheless continue to reappear in the racialized violence and exclusion that is carried out against diasporic peoples today. Such a conception of democratic practice would thus be predicated on a notion of political responsibility that does not end when citizenship is granted, but rather extends interminably even after those who were once cast out become enfranchised, thereby providing a platform for developing political practices of historical memory that enable the transgressions of the past to come into appearance in the space of politics.

Second, the frame I have proposed for understanding the modern political arena also has the potential to contribute to discourses in Africana philosophy, critical race theory, and post-colonial theory. By challenging and deepening Arendt's notion of citizenship in light of discourses concerning the memory of slavery and colonization in the African diaspora, my project provides a frame for capturing the political significance of race and racism in ways that Arendt fails to appreciate. With this, however, it also takes seriously her concern for conceiving of the space of politics as a realm in which

human beings can come into appearance, not as members of a particular group, but rather in their unrepeatable uniqueness as individuals. As I have suggested, holding open a space for human plurality in the modern world depends on addressing the repetition of the immemorial violence and exclusion of the past. Hence, by keying the problem of exclusion to the limits of historical memory in the modern era, my project makes it possible to conceive of race and racism as political issues without doing so in terms of identity politics and, in this, avoids reducing human plurality in the way that Arendt, in her own analysis of totalitarianism, rightly warns against. Hence, while this project does highlight Arendt's blindness to issues concerning the political significance of race and racism, it also deepens her insights into the problem of exclusion and, in so doing, brings one of the most important political philosophers of the last century into the global context of colonialism, thereby introducing a new voice to the discourse on exclusion in colonial and post-colonial theory.

Finally, this project has the potential to advance discourses in political ontology, shifting the concept of belonging so as to renew the possibility of finding a home in the modern world. As I have argued, the reality of the world in which we find ourselves is one that will always be haunted. For this reason, addressing the problem of exclusion will depend not simply on citizenship, as Arendt suggests, but rather on developing a more expansive account of the responsibility citizens have to care for this space, requiring of us that we remain open to the ghostly repetition of the immemorial that is necessitated by the very implementation of Enlightenment citizenship. By conceiving of the modern political arena as a haunted house, I wish to rehabilitate the notion of

homecoming in a way that is responsive to post-modern critiques developed by figures like Derrida, who suggests that these ghosts of the inappropriable leave us in a condition of interminable exile. In contrast to Derrida, I maintain that while they may be bound up with the existential conditions of human existence, these ghosts and specters do not point to exile, but rather to an overcrowding in modern life, whereby we find ourselves overwhelmed by the presence of more than we can grasp. In light of this, the problem of political exclusion can perhaps be framed in ontological terms as a failure to stand in an authentic relation to this condition of overcrowding.

Conceiving of the notion of homecoming this way thus allows for a deepening of the concept of thrownness, such that authentically being-in-the-world means being at home with ghosts. While these ghosts may not be knowable in their entirety, they are nevertheless bound up with the political existence of the modern individual and, thus, overcoming the problem of world-alienation depends on standing in an authentic relation to them in the space of politics. This, in turn, opens up the possibility for a new understanding of the political virtue of courage that echoes Arendt’s but goes a step further. If we conceive of the modern political arena as a haunted house, then rising above the necessity of one’s particular existence in order to care for the world depends on having the courage to come to terms with the presence of the uncanny in modern political life. Hence, the political virtue of courage may be understood on the basis of this notion of homecoming in terms of overcoming our fear of ghosts by working in concert in the space of politics to make them a meaningful part of the shared reality of the common world.

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