

<WATCH OUT FOR SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL HERE>

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I would like to begin with a poem. It is by Erich Fried and it is called “To discuss”.

To discuss

Telling people

about peace

and thinking of you

Speaking about the future

and thinking of you

Speaking about the right to life

and thinking of you

Speaking about the fear for others

and thinking of you –

is this hypocrisy

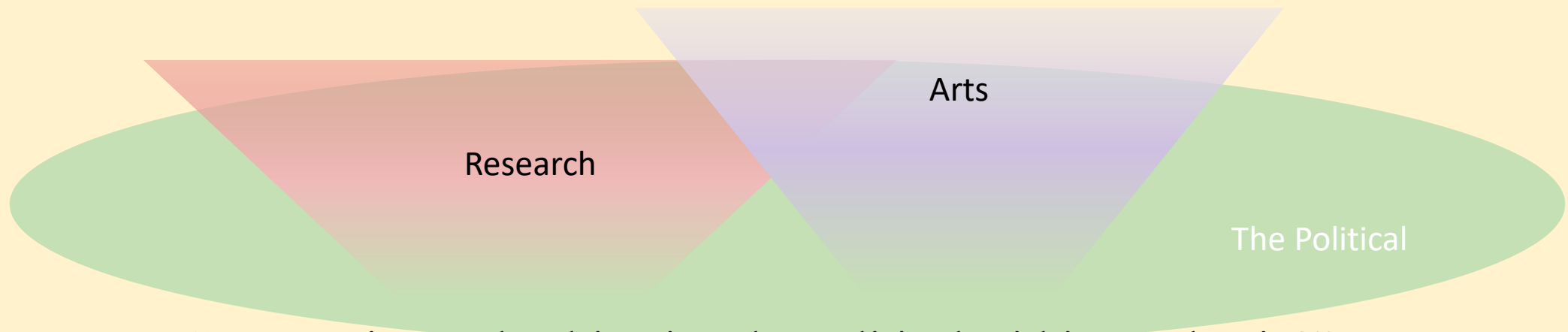
or is this finally the truth?

*Telling people
about peace
and thinking of you
Speaking about the future
and thinking of you
Speaking about the right to live
and thinking of you
Speaking about the fear for others
and thinking of you –
is this hypocrisy
or is this finally the truth?*

The poem concludes with a question. And also my talk is about a question:

Excavating and cultivating the political within academia?

Stefan E. Huber



“Excavating and cultivating the political within academia?”

Excavating and cultivating the political within academia?



The two questions may seem unrelated but I hope that I can illuminate their relation a little bit in the next few minutes.

Excavating and cultivating the political within academia?



Anyway, my aim with this presentation is only to explore some perspectives on what the question in the title could mean.

Humanistic core principles

- Right to life
- Dignity
- (Personal?) Freedom

Höffe, as cited by Weber, W. G. (2022). Some Lineages and Resources of Critical and Radical Humanist W+O Psychology. Innsbruck, 11th-13th July 2022.

The reason for this is that this community here is explicitly attempting to improve life within academia...

Some further derived principles

- Right to freedom of expression
- Freedom of movement and other freedoms
- Voting rights
- Principles of justice and equality
- Private property including the social obligation of propriety

Höffe, as cited by Weber, W. G. (2022). Some Lineages and Resources of Critical and Radical Humanist W+O Psychology. Innsbruck, 11th-13th July 2022.

...to devise boundary, work and living conditions that – at least in my current understanding – can do justice to basic humanist core principles and principles further derived from them.

Humanistic core and derived principles

- Right to life
- Dignity
- (Personal?) Freedom
- Right to freedom of expression
- Freedom of movement and other freedoms
- Voting rights
- Principles of justice and equality
- Private property including the social obligation of propriety

Höffe, as cited by Weber, W. G. (2022). Some Lineages and Resources of Critical and Radical Humanist W+O Psychology. Innsbruck, 11th-13th July 2022.

Such an endeavor is obviously in itself a political activity. And inasmuch as I can only welcome a community of academics to take up exactly that responsibility that academia has a long tradition of denying to recognize as its own...

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...I thought also that it might be a good opportunity, while still being in the beginning of it, to take a few moments to reflect on some basic premises that have once underlain an idea of academia, although we might have become unsure if they still should do so.

Humanistic core and derived principles

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- (Personal?) Freedom
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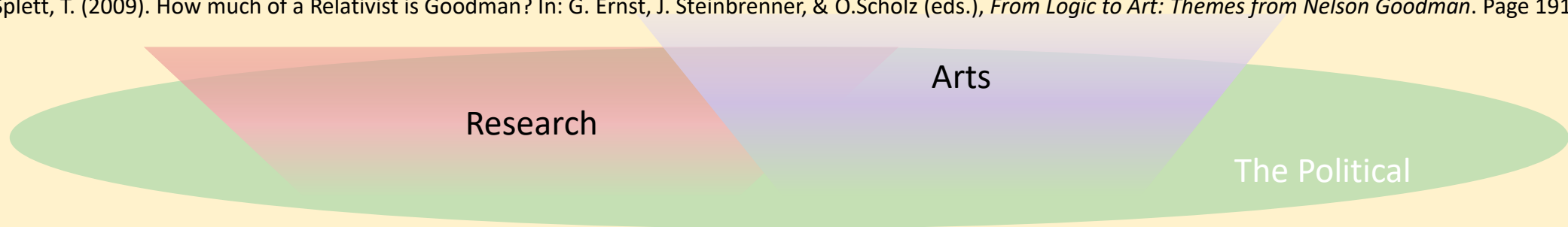
Höffe, as cited by Weber, W. G. (2022). Some Lineages and Resources of Critical and Radical Humanist W+O Psychology. Innsbruck, 11th-13th July 2022.

One of those premises is academia's intrinsic political aspects, i.e. academia as a meaningful institution only if located in the public space and remaining a matter of public importance.

Excavating and cultivating the political within academia?

“My following discussion is based on the assumption that exploring a label might help to improve the understanding of the position it is used to label.”

Splett, T. (2009). How much of a Relativist is Goodman? In: G. Ernst, J. Steinbrenner, & O.Scholz (eds.), *From Logic to Art: Themes from Nelson Goodman*. Page 191.



So in order to explore the meaning of the title of my presentation, I will primarily explore the label of “the political”. This will hopefully shed some light on how we could or should proceed with the “excavating”, the “cultivating” and the “within academia” parts of the question.

Preconceptions about „the political“?

One difficulty that is typically faced when talking about politics is the variety of opinion and also prejudice that is easily associated with this expression.



DOI: 10.36198/9783838527437



Oswald Neuberger. URL: <https://icon-online.de/personen/prof-dr-oswald-neuberger/>

When attempting to investigate the variety of what could be called “political actions”, the psychologist Oswald Neuberger came up with the following list...

Political actions?

to control, to demand, to order, to snap at, to be clear; to be friendly, modest, polite, to compliment, to make oneself (apparently) dependent, to be sensitive to mood; to support plans with plans, good reasons, **logical argumentation, information, proof of competence**; to hold out the prospect of positive or negative consequences (salary, promotion, dismissal, personnel appraisal); to offer consideration for concessions (to do favors, to offer help, to make sacrifices); involve higher superiors; **threaten, cut, blackmail, misinform**; peer pressure, secure the support of others; tease, leave aside, play dumb, bait; present a fait accompli, sharp rebuke, get on one's nerves, service by the book, block, ignore; barter; repeat reminders, objections, repeat previous actions; **explain, demonstrate, show how something is done**; demonstrate competence, perform well, wait for favorable mood, be friendly, be humble; invoke rules, invite to formal debate, set appointments; **gather supporting data**; threaten to inform an outside authority; do favors for each other; **manipulate**; promote, be promoted; build image; cope with uncertainty; persuade; intimidate; insult; build networks; ingratiate; use expertise; bring in outside experts; forming coalitions; exerting pressure; showing perseverance; personal charisma, power of attraction; consulting, agreements; invoking laws; **cultivating relationships; convincing rationally through logic, facts, data**; making an impression; inspiring, rousing, showing visions; setting deadlines; ending friendships; working more slowly; promising pay raises, withholding pay raises; **violence**, mobbing, character assassination; lying, falsifying, covering up, deleting data; **bribery**, venality, "buying" (e.g., through pleasure trips, cheating, etc.). e.g., through pleasure trips), fraud, hush payments; scare, terrorize; nepotism, favoritism; **mafia structures, cartels**, discrimination against others; hanky-panky, collusion, **intrigue; sabotage**, deterrent/exemplary punitive actions; **sucking up, kissing ass, spineless submissiveness; blackmail, exposure** (e.g., denouncing sexual orientation); etc.

Neuberger, O. (2006). Mikropolitik und Moral in Organisationen. Stuttgart: Lucius & Lucius. Compare especially pages 86-105. Translated.

...which to me at least seems quite a “colorful” list, right?

From the “What?” to the “How?”

Political action, particularly in organizations (Neuberger, 2006):

- = Use of others to pursue own interests
- = Instrumentalization
- But note also: Using others does also not exclude being of use to others and other uses (German: „Andere nutzen schließt auch Anderen nutzen und anderen Nutzen nicht aus.“)

Neuberger, O. (2006). Mikropolitik und Moral in Organisationen. Stuttgart: Lucius & Lucius. Compare especially page 18. Translated.

Probably also due to the range of that list Neuberger might have realized that trying to capture the meaning of what makes an action “political” by asking “What is done?” could turn out an unfeasible task. Thus, he changed the question from the “What?” to the “How?” and concluded – although admittedly only provisionally...

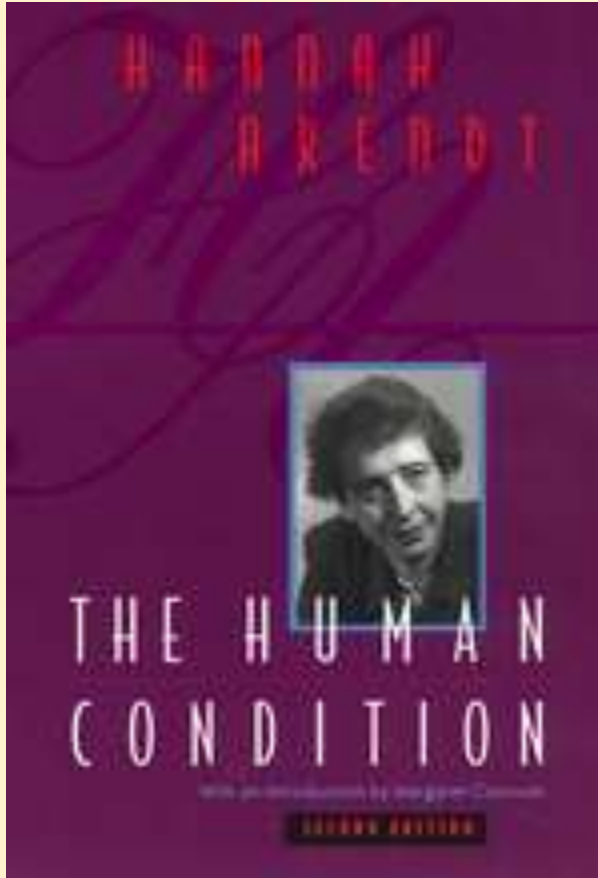
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...that for an action of someone to be labelled as political it is essential that this someone seeks by that action to exploit others for that someone's own interests. Basically, Neuberger here identified political action with instrumentalization, making a tool out of somebody or a group of people to reach some personal goals.



Portrait of the German-Jewish historian and political philosopher Hannah Arendt on a wall in the courtyard of her birthplace at Lindener Marktplatz 2, on the corner of Falkenstraße, in the district of Linden-Mitte. The picture was reproduced from a photograph by Käthe Fürst (Ramat Ha Sharon, Israel) and shows the famous portrait of the philosopher with a cigarette and her famous saying "Nobody has the right to obey". The artwork is a commissioned work by the Hanoverian graffiti artist Patrik Wolters aka BeneR1 in August 2014 in teamwork with Kevin Lasner aka koarts.



Bernd Schwabe in Hannover, CC BY-SA 3.0

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Interestingly, Neuberger noted himself that this interpretation is in crucial disagreement with Hannah Arendt's perspective on politics...

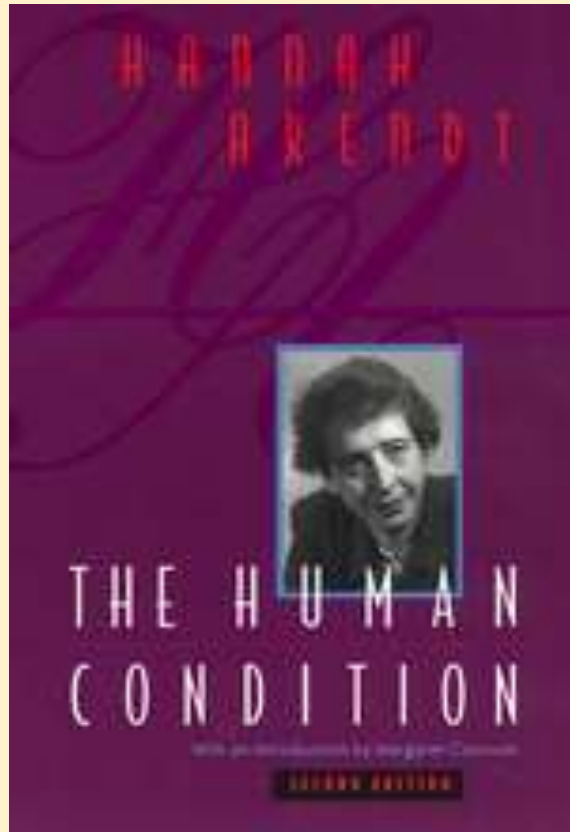


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...in which instrumentalization appears as the direct antithesis of political action by “attempting to turn people into tools of one’s own interests and to use them according to a plan. (...) [Political action understood as instrumentalization] is the (from Arendt’s perspective futile) attempt to calculate results and to produce them according to plan.”

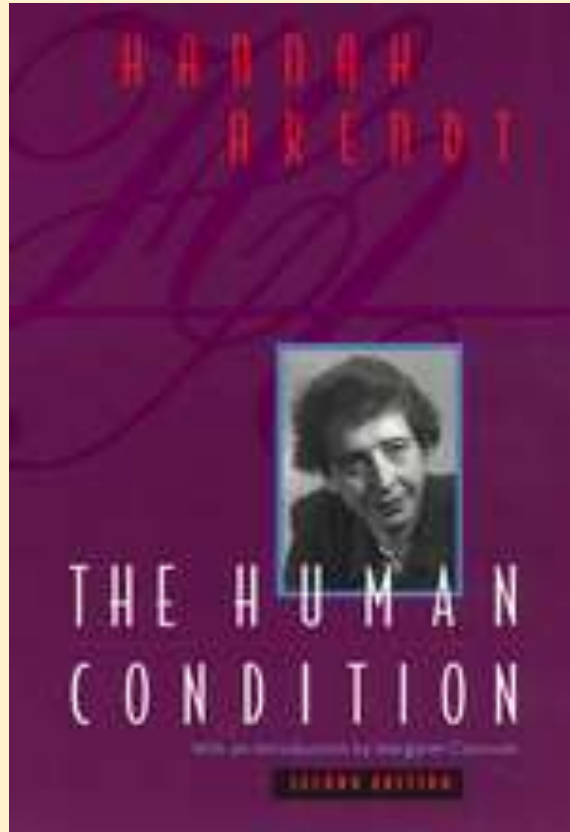
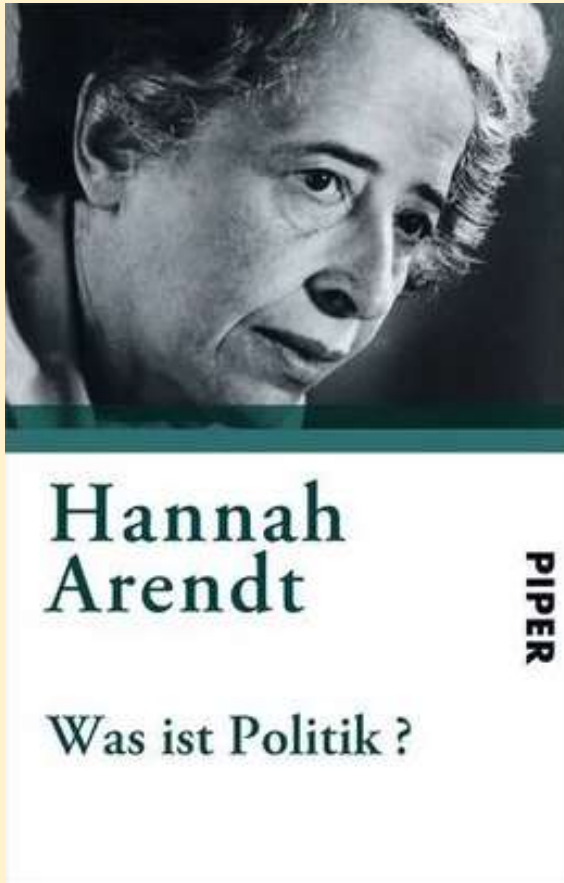


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What is called then confusingly “political action” would from this perspective be merely some form of social engineering and miss the point of the political disposition within the human condition entirely.

Complementing the view?

Although Neuberger noted that Arendt's perspective might be a fruitful corrective or complement to understand the role of political action within organizations, he did not elaborate on it any further.

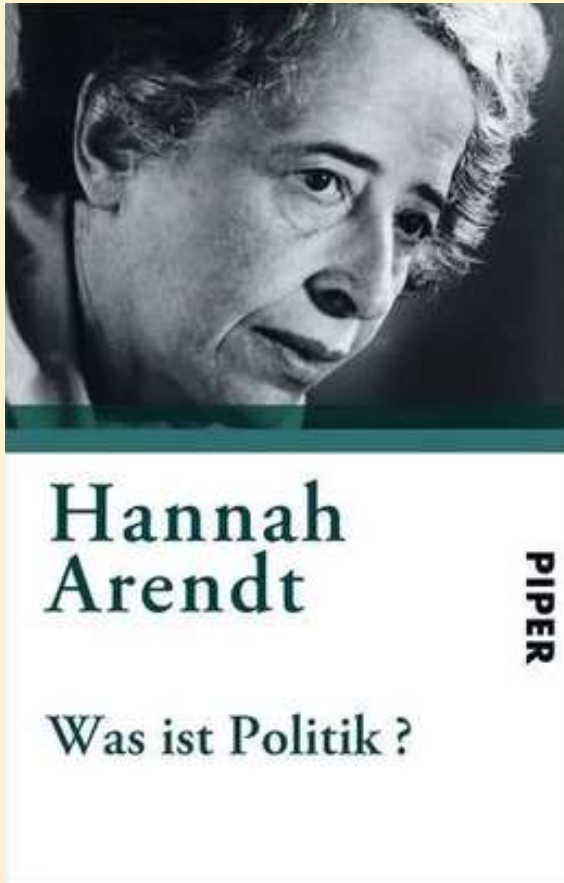


“Die Antwort lautet: Der Sinn von Politik ist Freiheit.”

Arendt, H. (2020). Was ist Politik? (7th ed.) München: Piper. Page 28.

For an English translation see “The Promise of Politics” (2005), New York: Schocken, pages 93-200.

Would we instead further follow Arendt’s thinking on politics we would make the surprising discovery that it actually labels exactly that space of human interaction which is not accessible at all for the type of instrumentalizing interaction just described.



“Die Antwort lautet: Der Sinn von Politik ist Freiheit.”

Arendt, H. (2020). Was ist Politik? (7th ed.) München: Piper. Page 28.

For an English translation see “The Promise of Politics” (2005), New York: Schocken, pages 93-200.

This becomes apparent already in her radical answer to the question “What is politics?” which comes down to: “The meaning of politics is freedom”.

Isonomia

A form of interacting with each other which realizes freedom

- Non-violence
- Recognition of each other as equal participants in interaction
- First and foremost a freedom of speech
- Note: Equality with respect to freedom, not with respect to justice

Compare Arendt, H. (2020). Was ist Politik? (7th ed.). Page 40.

This answer is based on the Ancient Greek notion that living up to the full potential of being human is only possible within a certain non-violent, cooperative form of interaction which was known in Ancient Greece as Isonomia.

Isonomia

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Being political meant to (inter)act under such conditions, and more: being political was – according to Greek thinking – only possible within an isonomous constitution, meaning without that political action could not be at all.

Denial of violence and freedom of speech

“But speaking in the form of commands and listening in the form of obeying were not counted as actual speaking and listening; it was not free speech because it was tied to a process determined not by speaking but by doing or working. The words were here only the substitute for doing, and especially for a doing that presupposed forcing or being forced.”

Arendt, H. (2020). Was ist Politik? (7th ed.). Page 40. Translated.

The importance of two aspects of such a constitution cannot be exaggerated. That is first, the denial of using violence in interaction where violence is understood in the most basic sense as “action which does not ask”. Conversely, this means that the eligible means of human interaction come down to means that allow asking, and that means free conversation, verbal communication, maybe convincing by arguments, asking and exploring questions and answers.

Denial of violence and freedom of speech

“When the Greeks thought that slaves and barbarians were "aneologou," i.e. not capable of speaking, they meant that they were in a position where free speech was impossible. In the same situation were despots who know only commanding; **to be able to speak, they needed others who were their equals.**”

Arendt, H. (2020). Was ist Politik? (7th ed.). Page 40. Translated.

However, even in verbal communication remain intrinsic elements of violence, in the sense of action that does not ask, simply due to the fact that each communication requires initiation about which there can be asked no question. For this reason, the second aspect that needs to be considered becomes even more important.

Equality

“Politics is based on the fact of the plurality of people. (...) Politics is about the togetherness and coexistence of the different.”

Arendt, H. (2020). Was ist Politik? (7th ed.). Page 9. Translated.

This aspect refers to the name of the isonomous constitution itself which basically means that different, autonomous beings, i.e. beings that give themselves (auto) laws (nomos), recognize each other autonomously as equals for free, non-violent interaction – and in that they are equal (iso) – that is the law (nomos) which they follow for their being together in the form of a polis. One obvious, pre-political prerequisite of this is the ability to recognize an other – as a different one – as an end in themselves.



“Liessmann published his critique of the current education system through the **capitalisation of the mind** primarily in *Theory of Uneducation*, *The Fallacies of the Knowledge Society* and in the polemic *Geisterstunde. The Practice of Uneducation*.”

URL:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Konrad_Paul_Liessmann#Books
Accessed at Sept. 17, 2022.



Konrad Paul Liessmann, 2014. SPÖ Presse und Kommunikation, CC BY-SA 2.0
<<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0>>, via Wikimedia Commons

The philosopher Konrad Paul Liessmann absolutely rightly identified the connection between autonomy and education as the actual political core of the humanist idea of education.

Education and autonomy

“That a society which assesses everything in terms of some immediate utility, applicability and usefulness can be successful in an economic sense does not need to be doubted at all. **That such a society, which no longer knows leisure and the muses, which can only consider beauty from the point of view of indirect profitability and truth only as a locational advantage, will be a poor society seems equally certain.**”

Liessmann, K. P. (2017). *Geisterstunde: Die Praxis der Unbildung. Eine Streitschrift* (2nd ed.). Page 179. Translated.

He did so by reflecting on the importance of the arts for providing that connection by supplying the space for making the experience of encounters having their ends in themselves while being at odds with all strategic and didactic functionalization.

Education and autonomy

“It is at least as important that only an idea of education which affirms that something can be appreciated and respected for its own sake is the **prerequisite for a mutual recognition of human individuals in dignity**. The courage, the generosity, the authority and the humanity of a society could be seen in the appreciation it grants the muses in its educational policies, in its curricula and in its pedagogical and academic activities.”

Liessmann, K. P. (2017). *Geisterstunde: Die Praxis der Unbildung. Eine Streitschrift* (2nd ed.). Page 180. Translated.

Aesthetic experiences like the experience of beauty or the experience of love – just to name two in particular – thus proof that the world extends beyond the concept of value measured as the mere utility for someone or something else. The connections between autonomy and ethical considerations are probably self-evident and I will not elaborate them further.

Freedom of movement

“This freedom of movement, whether it is the freedom to go away and to start something new and unheard of, or whether it is the freedom to interact with the many and to experience the variety [of this interaction], which in its totality is the world, was and is by no means the purpose of politics - that which could be achieved by political means; **it is rather the actual content and meaning of the political itself. In this sense, politics and freedom are identical.”**

Arendt, H. (2020). Was ist Politik? (7th ed.). Page 52. Translated.

It is, however, important to note that for the Greeks recognizing each other as free equals was not a moral matter, but a mandatory requirement for acting under conditions that would allow freedom in the Greek understanding, i.e. their intention was primarily political, not moral. The motivation for that was that their understanding of freedom originated and in principle remained an understanding of freedom as being free to move.

Freedom as moving beyond violence

“The conflict between aim and goal arises from the fact that it is in the nature of the goal to degrade everything that serves it to means, and to reject everything that does not serve it as useless.”

Arendt, H. (2020). Was ist Politik? (7th ed.). Page 132. Translated.

Now we all know that as soon as violence has become a viable way of interacting in a relationship, the ways of moving on in that relationship are typically drastically limited. Just think of what happens to trust, openness, and for instance friendship when violence becomes the way of interaction. Certain pathways will be closed from there on or at least it will be very hard to make them accessible again.

Freedom as exemplification of plurality

“The more peoples there are in the world who are connected to each other in this and other ways, the more world will be formed between them, and the greater and richer the world will be. The more viewpoints there are in a nation from which the same world, equally inhabited by and equally available to all, can be seen, the more significant and cosmopolitan the nation will be.”

Arendt, H. (2020). Was ist Politik? (7th ed.). Pages 105-106. Translated.

If freedom is fundamentally understood as the question how we could proceed from here and now to there and tomorrow, as the extent of the space of viable pathways for being and living and acting together, then violence is hardly an option.

Prerequisites of freedom?

- Liberation (= freedom of) from essential needs for survival
- Liberation (= freedom of) from war or crisis
- Freedom (= freedom for) to explore the possibilities of living together (core political freedom) →
- Freedom (= freedom for) for spontaneous, individual productivity (free research and arts)



What about current “tendencies” to reduce diversity and to push back the unconventional?

← Thomas Bauer (Islamic Scholar). Essay about “The Unification of the World. On the loss of ambiguity and diversity”

From that some questions arise immediately: “How needs a community to be constituted to allow as much room for exploration of eventual relations within the community as possible? And under what conditions can such a community endure?”

The political foundation of epistemic and artistic communities?

Why this idea of politics was of such an appeal to the Free Greek, who has to be imagined in the first place a politician, is another story which I could gladly tell at another time. Why this was of such an appeal to the philosopher – or in modern terms, the researcher – that, I think, is pretty obvious; at least the basic idea, the details are, needless to say, complicated.

Politics and understanding

*Some Hindus have an elephant to show.
No one here has ever seen an elephant.
They bring it at night to a dark room.*

*One by one, we go in the dark and come out
by saying how we experience the animal.*

*One of us happens to touch the trunk.
„A water-pipe kind of creature.“*

*Another, the ear. „A very strong, always moving
Back and forth, fan-animal.“*

*Another, the leg. „I find it still,
Like a column on a temple.“*

Barks, C. (2004). *The Essential Rumi*. New York, NY: HarperCollins. Page 252. Slightly adapted.

*Another touches the curved back.
„A leathery throne.“*

*Another, the cleverest, feels the tusk.
„A rounded sword made of porcelain.“
He's proud of his description.
(This must be an academic.)*

*Each of us touches one place
and understands the whole in that way.*

*The palm and the fingers feeling in the dark are
how the senses explore the reality of the elephant.*

*If each of us held a candle there,
and if we went in together,
we could see it.*

But basically, it is because in research we deal with the unknown.

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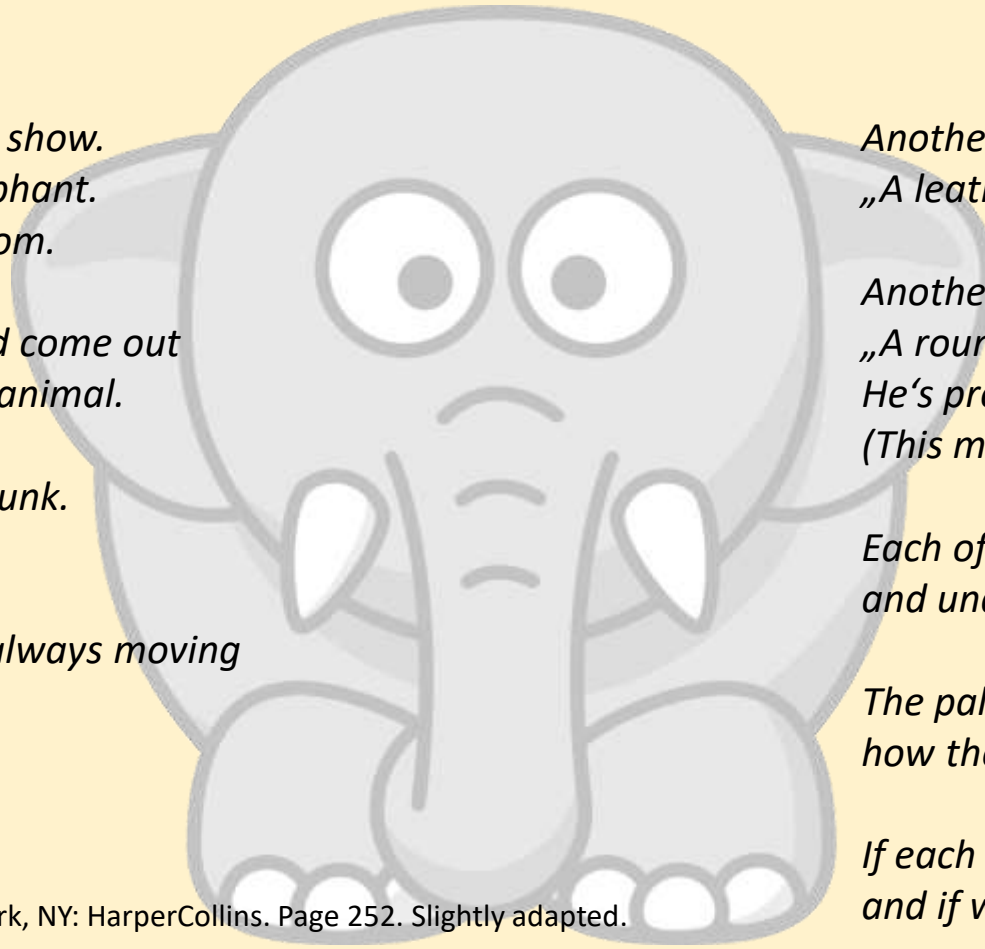
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And in principle, any perspective could reveal some insight in the one or the other respect.



Politics and understanding

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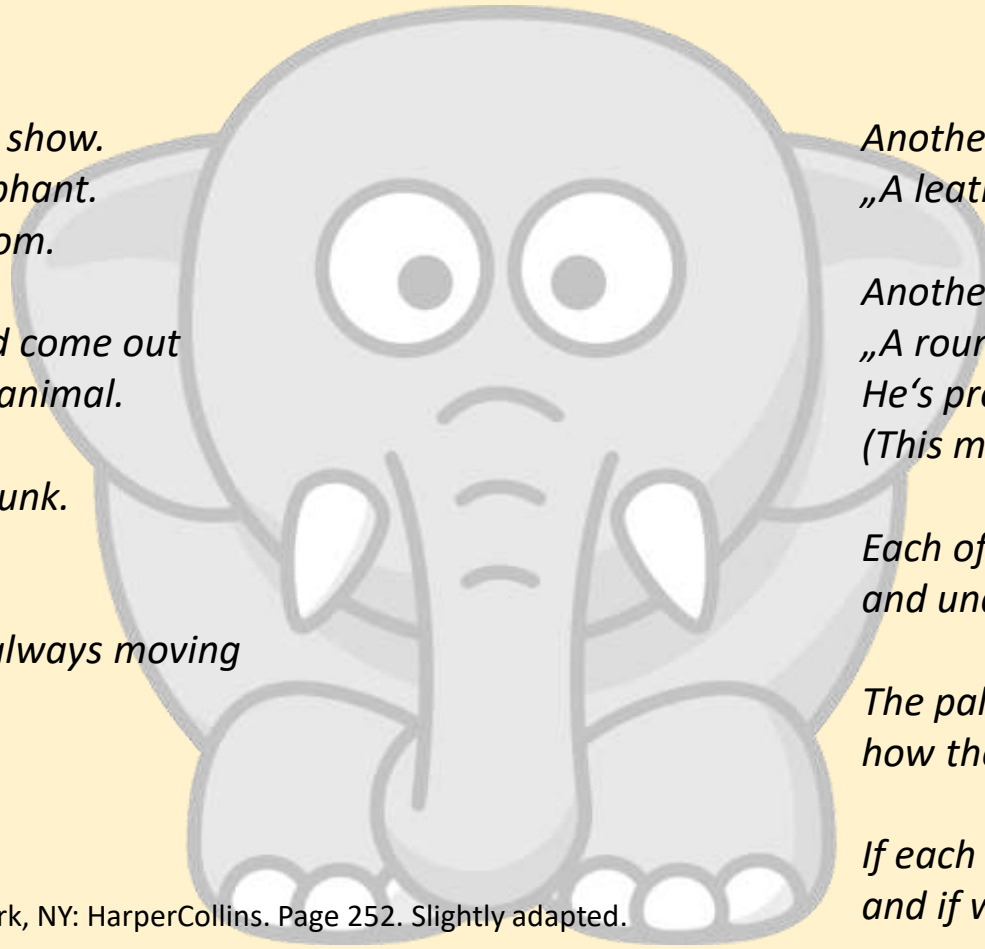
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*If each of us held a candle there,
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we could see it.*

And we cannot know beforehand which of those perspectives may yet turn out crucial for our understanding.



Politics and understanding

“In »The Way the World Is« I asserted that the world is in as many ways as it can be correctly described, seen, depicted, etc., and that there is no such thing as *the way the world is.*”

Goodman, N. (2019). *Sprachen der Kunst. Entwurf einer Symboltheorie* (9th ed.). Page 18. Translated. [For the original English version, see Goodman, N. (1976). *Languages of Art. An Approach to a Theory of Symbols* (2nd ed.). Indianapolis: Hackett]



We cannot not even know, although we might assume so provisionally and for good reasons maybe, that by all means legitimate perspectives will always turn out reconcilable with each other.

Politics and understanding

“It has been suggested that one can arrive at the way the world is by connecting all the different ways. This overlooks the fact that the connection itself is characteristic of certain systems; for example, a passage of text and a picture cannot be connected.”

Goodman, N. (2019). *Sprachen der Kunst. Entwurf einer Symboltheorie* (9th ed.). Page 18. Translated. [For the original English version, see Goodman, N. (1976). *Languages of Art. An Approach to a Theory of Symbols* (2nd ed.). Indianapolis: Hackett]

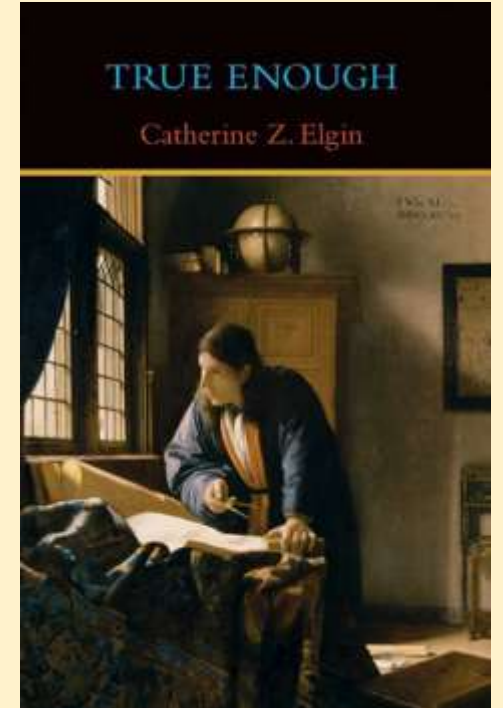


Hence not appealing to a fundamentally pluralistic and inclusive stance would simply leave us epistemically deficient.

Politics and understanding

“To perform their function, legislating members of a realm of epistemic ends must be, in a suitable – political sense, free and equal. Agreement among free and equal inquirers enhances the epistemic standing of a claim; coerced agreement does not.”

Elgin, C. Z. (2017). *True Enough*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. Page 114.



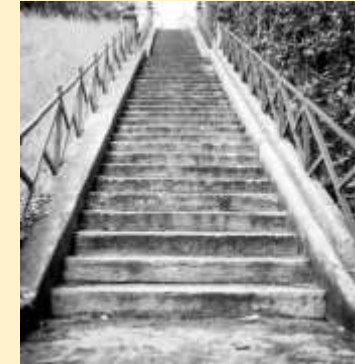
So although not bound by the walls of a city or the borders of a state, the epistemic norm of aiming for understanding serves in the same way as nomos, i.e. law, as did the polis for the Greeks: it demands an isonomous constitution, i.e. autonomous beings building their relationships upon non-violent means.

Politics and understanding

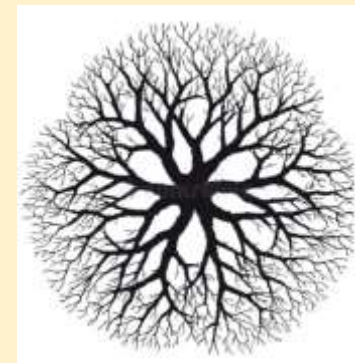
“To understand a topic involves knowing how to wield one’s commitments to further one’s epistemic ends. (...) Because the commitments that comprise an understanding are mutually supportive, understanding must be construed holistically. I show how the mutual support of independently doubtful items can increase their credibility.”

Elgin, C. Z. (2017). *True Enough*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. Page 3.

The constitutional importance of such a practice for epistemic communities, i.e. communities which choose this practice for the sake of understanding or truth, is up to this day the reason that as soon as free research and its teaching cease to be free they cease to be at all.



Progress?
Knowledge?
Truth?

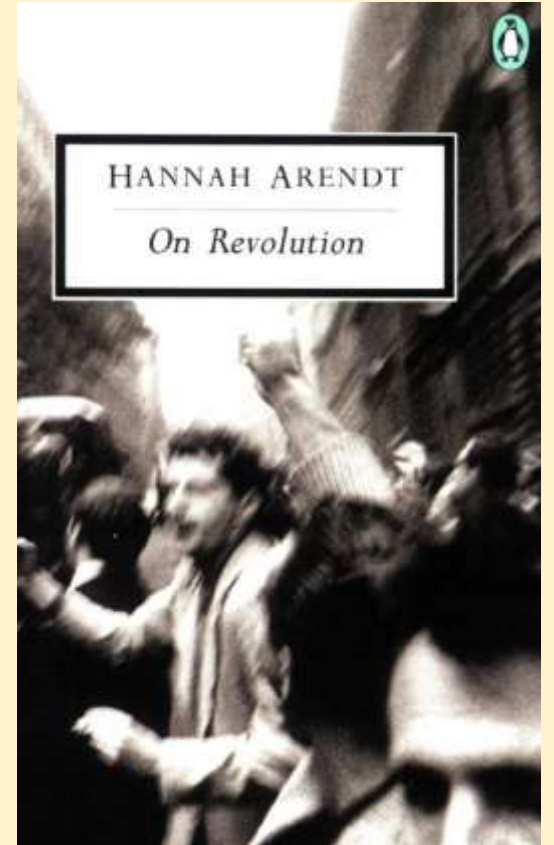


Understanding?

Politics and understanding

“Wherever knowing and doing have parted company,
the space of freedom is lost.”

Arendt, H. (1990). *On Revolution*. London: Penguin. Page 264.

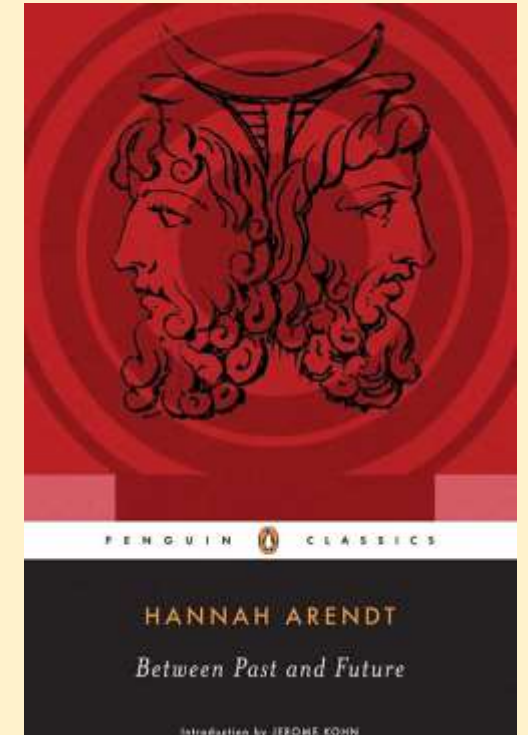


Or quoting Arendt: “Wherever knowing and doing have parted company, the space of freedom is lost.”

Politics and culture

“Politically speaking, beauty is the guarantee that even the most elusive and ephemeral, the deeds and words of mortal people, can be given an earthly home in the human world.”

Arendt, H. (1990). *Zwischen Vergangenheit und Zukunft Übungen im politischen Denken I*. München: Piper. Page 296.
Translated. [For an English version see: Arendt, H. (2006). *Between Past and Future*. London: Penguin.]

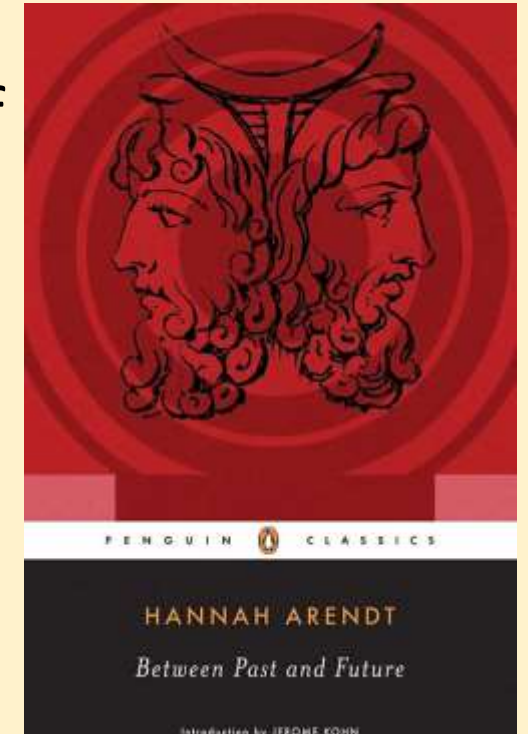


Since the same holds, although for other reasons, for the arts, they also cannot be, where freedom cannot be.

Politics and culture

“But culture is no less dependent on politics than politics is on culture. Beauty needs the public sphere of a political space secured by acting people, because the public sphere is the place of **appearance** par excellence.”

Arendt, H. (1990). *Zwischen Vergangenheit und Zukunft Übungen im politischen Denken I*. München: Piper. Page 296.
Translated. [For an English version see: Arendt, H. (2006). *Between Past and Future*. London: Penguin.]

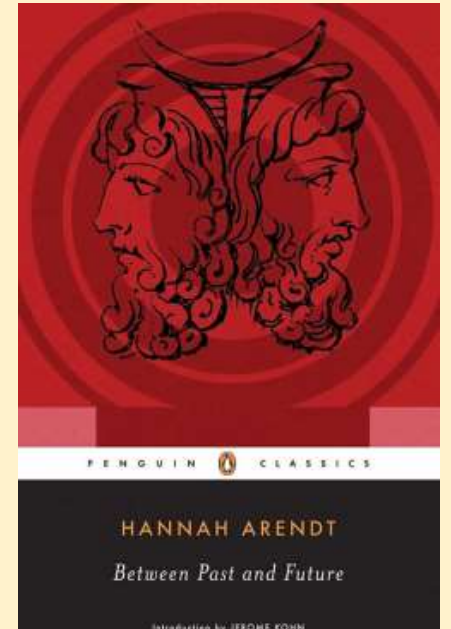


Artistic communities, in contrast to epistemic ones, are, however, not aspiring to understanding or truth in the first place, but to aesthetic experience, i.e. basically any experience that calls for being remembered.

Politics and culture

“The judgment here springs from the subjectivity of a location in the world, but at the same time it invokes the fact that this world, in which everyone has a location unique to them, is objectively given, something that is common to us all.”

Arendt, H. (1990). *Zwischen Vergangenheit und Zukunft Übungen im politischen Denken I*. München: Piper. Page 300.
Translated. [For an English version see: Arendt, H. (2006). *Between Past and Future*. London: Penguin.]

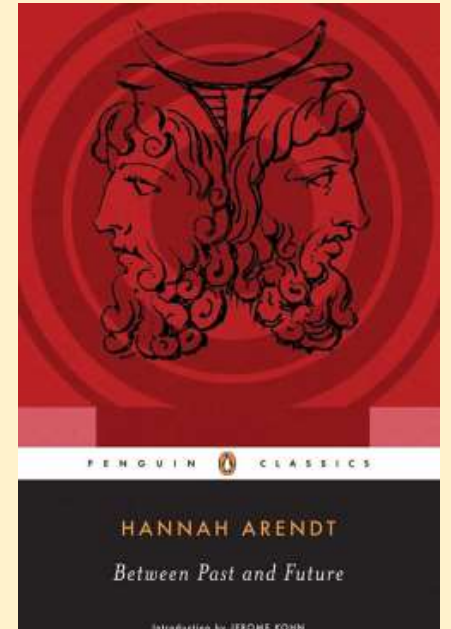


By exploring this experiential space, highly sensitive to idiosyncratic and subjective views and hence so elusive often for the scientific approach, the arts form a complement to science by exploring the human condition from different points of departure and by different guiding principles to the different end of providing the particular a lasting home in the human world.

Politics and culture

“Furthermore, the judgment of taste has in common with the political judgment that it cannot force anyone and that it, unlike the decisions of cognition, cannot prove anything compellingly. The judge can always only, as Kant so beautifully says, »solicit approval from others« and hope to come to terms with them.”

Arendt, H. (1990). *Zwischen Vergangenheit und Zukunft Übungen im politischen Denken I*. München: Piper. Page 300.
Translated. [For an English version see: Arendt, H. (2006). *Between Past and Future*. London: Penguin.]

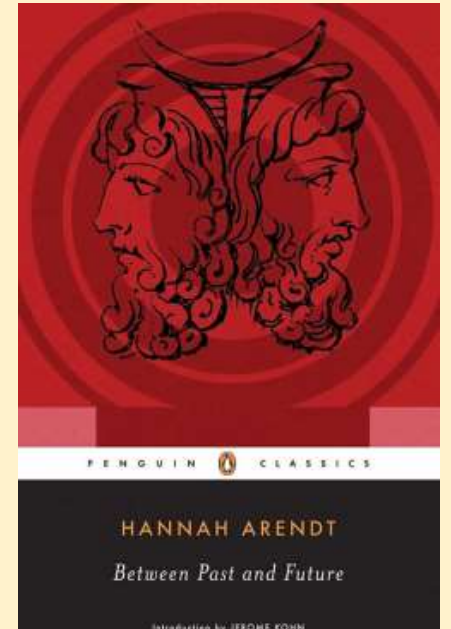


In the study of Immanuel Kant’s primary question, i.e. what it means to be human, the arts and research must come together. No understanding could be complete which excludes the arts.

Politics and culture

“In the cultural and in the political, i.e. in the whole area of public life, it is neither about knowledge nor about truth, but about judging and deciding, about the judging examination and discussion of the common world and the decision about how it should continue to look like and in which way action should be taken in it.”

Arendt, H. (1990). *Zwischen Vergangenheit und Zukunft Übungen im politischen Denken I*. München: Piper. Page 300.
Translated. [For an English version see: Arendt, H. (2006). *Between Past and Future*. London: Penguin.]



This is up to this day a still legitimate reason why universities are called universities. From this point of view, the question of excavating and cultivating the political within academia means also to ask ourselves if this shall remain so.

Conclusions?

Understanding politics in this way suggests also to direct our attention on the ways how relations to ourselves, to each other and to our environment are built and sustained within academia.

Conclusions?

Get over yourself and get used to

surveillance, proletarianization

precaritization, flexibilization,

micro-management, litigation, and alienation

from labour, from authorship, from ownership, from self

You will find wisdom in the fact that

academic autonomy is over-rated

tenure is a redundant luxury

insolence is professional suicide

having a job is a blessing

do you know how many people

would give everything to be in your place?

Vanessa Andreotti D'Oliveira. In: Brunila, K., & Valero, P. (2018). Anxiety and the making of research(ing) subjects in neoliberal academia. *Subjectivity*, 11, 74-89.

What kind of relationships result from the employment of all kinds of academic performance measures, an overwhelming amount of competition, an ever-growing apparatus of formal evaluation and monitoring? What social character does this foster? How could this ever be in line with the epistemic and moral principles and political requirements of an epistemic community?

Conclusions?

“We, the authors of this article, have often found ourselves as two middle-age, grumpy women, sharing the last events in our work-places: more demands, benchmarks, pressure for funding, retrenchments, insecurity, feeling of insufficiency, and anger, beaten in fighting battles that could not have been won...”

Brunila, K., & Valero, P. (2018). Anxiety and the making of research(ing) subjects in neoliberal academia. *Subjectivity*, 11, 74-89.

The question posed by the title then also means to excavate the elements of direct, individual, societal or structural violence in the present ways of interaction within academia...

Conclusions?

“Conversely, it is possible to enumerate exactly what processes, practices, procedures and policies stymie or degrade that which is worth caring about. We can aggregate them as ‘neoliberalism’, but doing so seems an unproductive smudge. They have extremely specific manifestations and are in many cases explicit and accountable artefacts of modes of administration and governance. These require enumeration and the production of evidence as to their real effects. And these too should be enunciated, as a means also to refuse and reject them.”

Whelan, A. (2015). Academic critique of neoliberal academia. *Sites: a journal of social anthropology and cultural studies*, 12(1), 130-152.

...ranging from universities fighting over scarce positions at the top of rankings over scholars fighting over scarce positions in high impact journals to doctoral students fighting over scarce chances to merely remain somehow in the system.

Conclusions?

“Conversely, it is possible to enumerate exactly what processes, practices, procedures and policies stymie or degrade that which is worth caring about. We can aggregate them as ‘neoliberalism’, but doing so seems an unproductive smudge. They have extremely specific manifestations and are in many cases explicit and accountable artefacts of modes of administration and governance. These require enumeration and the production of evidence as to their real effects. And these too should be enunciated, as a means also to refuse and reject them.”

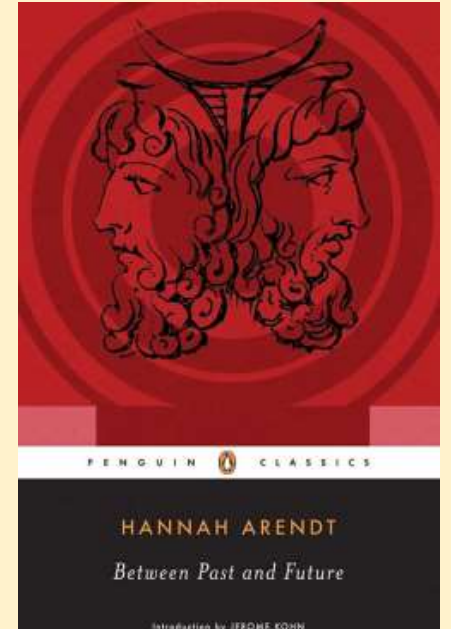
Whelan, A. (2015). Academic critique of neoliberal academia. *Sites: a journal of social anthropology and cultural studies*, 12(1), 130-152.

One might get the impression that good scientific practice has become less natural to academics than a practice of fighting, in especially over abstract points in abstract value systems.

Conclusions?

“»Amicus Socrates, amicus Plato, sed magis aestimanda veritas.« Against this deeply apolitical and inhumane principle, by which, as it were, persons and friendship are sacrificed to truth, stands a much less well-known saying of Cicero, who once said in a disagreement: »Errare ... male cum Platone ... quam cum istis [Pythagoraeis] vera sentire.«”

Arendt, H. (1990). *Zwischen Vergangenheit und Zukunft Übungen im politischen Denken I*. München: Piper. Page 302.
Translated. [For an English version see: Arendt, H. (2006). *Between Past and Future*. London: Penguin.]

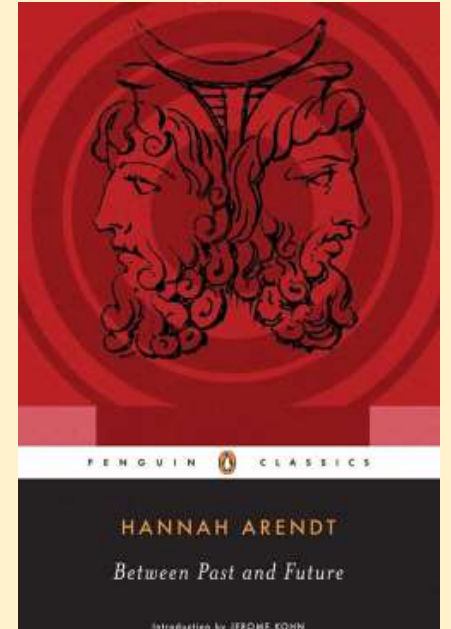


Cultivating the political within academia would finally mean to make space for exploring other ways of building and structuring relationships. Just to see – out of curiosity – if fighting over abstract value systems really gets one closer to a truth; and what kind of truth that would be?

Conclusions?

“»Amicus Socrates, amicus Plato, sed magis aestimanda veritas.« Against this deeply apolitical and inhumane principle, by which, as it were, persons and friendship are sacrificed to truth, stands a much less well-known saying of Cicero, who once said in a disagreement: »Errare ... male cum Platone ... quam cum istis [Pythagoraeis] vera sentire.«”

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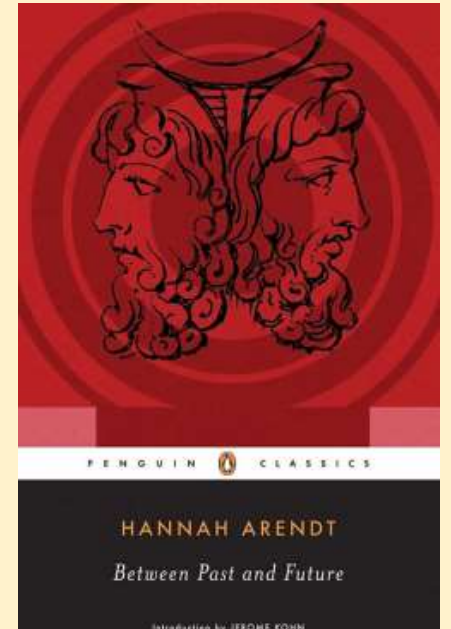


Maybe it is also not so much the value systems which need adjustment. Maybe it is also the idea that people's lives can be engineered by measuring values and adjusting numbers.

Conclusions?

“»Amicus Socrates, amicus Plato, sed magis aestimanda veritas.« Against this deeply apolitical and inhumane principle, by which, as it were, persons and friendship are sacrificed to truth, stands a much less well-known saying of Cicero, who once said in a disagreement: »Errare ... male cum Platone ... quam cum istis [Pythagoraeis] vera sentire.«”

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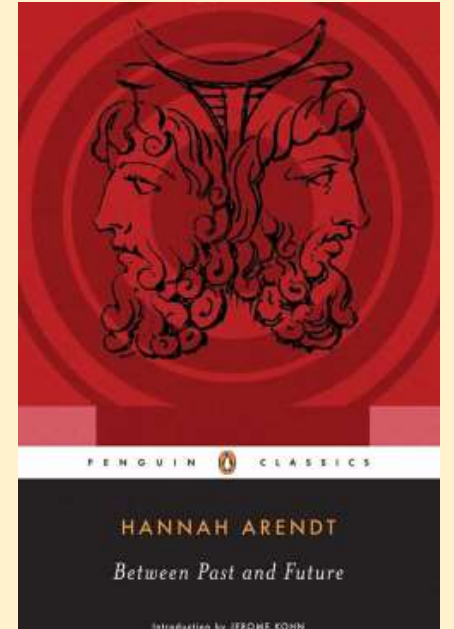
Maybe it is less space for formal, abstract systems that we need, and more physical space and time for people taking care – of, with and for each other.

Conclusions?

“[Then this would mean:] It is a matter of taste to prefer the company of Plato to that of other people even if one should remain astray by that. Assuming the latter interpretation to be correct, we can say: This is certainly not the way a scientist speaks and hardly a philosopher. But it is the speech of a man thoroughly political and cultivated in the sense of the Roman expression »humanitas«.”

Arendt, H. (1990). *Zwischen Vergangenheit und Zukunft Übungen im politischen Denken I*. München: Piper. Page 302.
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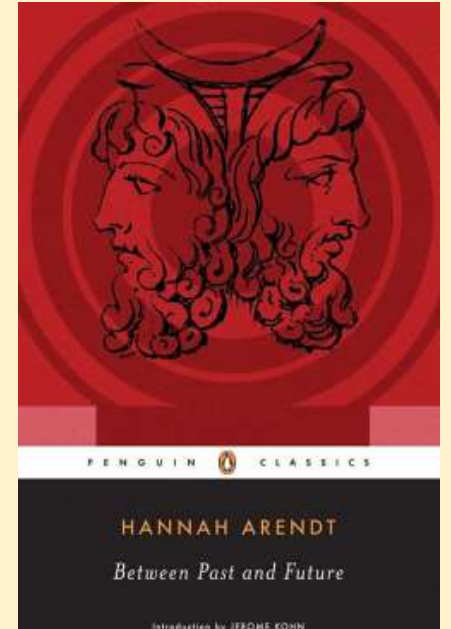
Maybe we should not invest or let invest so much into artificial intelligence and formal routines of any kind in the hope that they will solve our problems and invisibly tailor and design our lives and relationships in a hopefully healthy and sustainable way.



Conclusions?

“[Then this would mean:] It is a matter of taste to prefer the company of Plato to that of other people even if one should remain astray by that. Assuming the latter interpretation to be correct, we can say: This is certainly not the way a scientist speaks and hardly a philosopher. But it is the speech of a man thoroughly political and cultivated in the sense of the Roman expression »humanitas«.”

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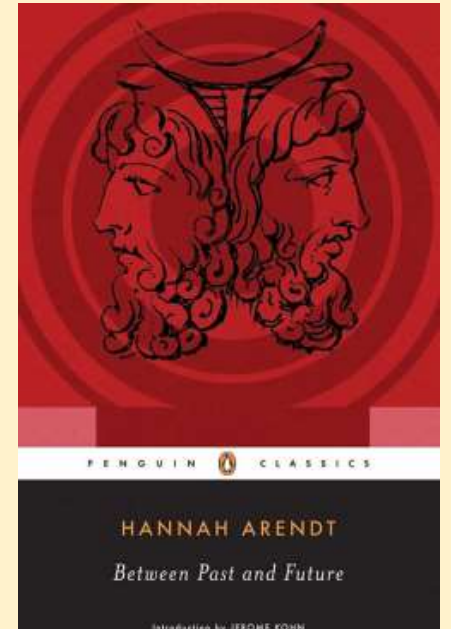


Maybe these are aspects that should remain ours to decide and judge upon, even if it turns out less efficient and actually more prone to error and mistake.

Conclusions?

“In any case, it is the speech of a man who is free in every respect and for whom, even in the question of philosophy, the question of freedom is the decisive one. He says: I will not be forced, not even by the truth, in my relations with people and things.”

Arendt, H. (1990). *Zwischen Vergangenheit und Zukunft Übungen im politischen Denken I*. München: Piper. Page 302.
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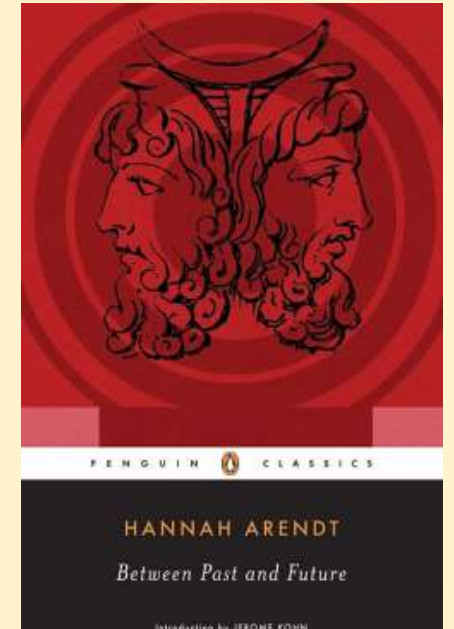


Maybe to live responsibly means also choosing to live under a constitution that allows to fail responsibly.

Conclusions?

“In any case, it is the speech of a man who is free in every respect and for whom, even in the question of philosophy, the question of freedom is the decisive one. He says: I will not be forced, not even by the truth, in my relations with people and things.”

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Maybe what we could need – even in academia – is more of that faulty, deficient, unreasonable humanity, and not less of it.

Fabels

*»Beauty was once a guest
of the ugly*

There beauty felt ugly

Because it could not help the ugly

To be beautiful like itself«

But they also tell:

»The ugly

was a guest of beauty

There it felt so good

that it was ugly no more«

Both I will believe

when in all countries

hunger

was a guest of satiety so often

that it is no more

But I

was asked by a child:

»Does satiety then satisfy

the hunger's hunger

or does it eat it up?«

Fried, E. (2018). *Es ist was es ist* (18. Aufl.). Berlin: Wagenbach. Translation of „Reden“, p. 90.

But maybe it is too late for that already. And then again, how could we find out?
Well, here is another poem for those who like reading poems. Thank you.