

Horst Mewes

Arendt-Conference in Boulder, Colorado

Horst Mewes published an article on Arendt and the Principles of Action in the *Festschrift für Jürgen Gebhardt*; co-edited a volume of conference papers on Hannah Arendt and Leo Strauss (Cambridge University Press); edited a volume of essays on Thomas Hobbes and Modern Liberalism (University of Chicago Press) and is finishing a book on *The Illusions of Modern Citizenship*.

A conference on the subject of "Freedom and the American Founding: Hannah Arendt and the Federalist Papers" was held on May 20–23, 1999 at the Hotel Boulderado in Boulder, Colorado. It was organized and directed by Horst Mewes (University of Colorado, Boulder). The conference was sponsored by the Liberty Fund.

The format of a Liberty Fund sponsored conference is two days of extensive discussion of texts designated prior to the conference rather than listening to prepared conference-papers. The broad subject of discussion was the question as to the extent to which Arendt and the writers of the Federalist Papers agreed or disagreed on the essential facets of the American constitutional founding. Much of the discussion focussed on Arendt's and the Federalist's understanding of the nature of power, as well as the authoritative foundations of constitutional founding. Of great interest was the Federalist's emphasis on the "novelty" of the American constitutional founding and its connection with Arendt's notion of action as a "new beginning." Very controversial was Arendt's depiction of the relation between a founding act as such, and its relation to the "principles of action" guiding such an act. Finally, of great interest was the possible affinity between Arendt's emphasis of action as public "self-disclosure," and Hamilton's praise of the "love of fame" as the "ruling passion of the noblest minds." All of these points were viewed in conjunction with Arendt's general critique of representative government and her alternative of a self-selecting elite of political activists. Finally, it was agreed that Arendt's *On Revolution*

is one of the most important texts on the nature of modern politics. The book's recent role in the reassessment of the relative significance of the American and French Revolutions by mainly European political thinkers was also stressed.

Invited participants were either individuals well-versed in Arendt's work, or experts on the Federalist Papers, or persons with background in both. The participants were Lance Banning (University of Kentucky), James Ceaser (University of Virginia), Richard Cox (CUNY Buffalo), Robert Eden (Hillsdale College), David Epstein, (Washington, DC), Antonia Grunenberg (Carl von Ossietzky University, Oldenburg), Lewis Hinchman (Clarkson University), Timothy Fuller (Colorado College), Sandra Hinchman (St. Lawrence University), Suzanne Jacobitti (S. Illinois University), Jerome Kohn (New School for Social Research), Anne Norton (University of Pennsylvania), John Seery (Pomona College), Colleen Sheehan (Villanova University), Jean Yarbrough (Bowdoin College). Papers originating from the conference will be published individually.