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‘World Is at Stake’: Arendt, the Anthropocene, and “Mankind’s Earthly Immortality”

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Introduction: Arendt and the Anthropocene

Hannah Arendt never wrote about the Anthropocene. In fact, and as the call for papers for this publication correctly indicates, her work seems to avoid clearly defining and discussing the concept of ‘nature’ and issues of climate change. Thus, while there are many ways in which “nature matters”[2] in Arendt’s work, there is no single, unified, and clear definition of the concept ‘nature’ in it. This is partly due to the fact that Arendt died in 1975, well before debates on climate change, and especially the concept of the Anthropocene, received large public scrutiny. It is well-known now that while the concept of the Anthropocene traces its roots back to the 19th century[3], it was popularized only in the early 2000s, after Paul Crutzen and Eugen Stoermer used it to warn the world about the dangers of anthropogenic climate change.[4] As Arendt never took part in such debates and as her conception of nature remains undefined, some argue[5] that Arendt cannot tell us much about surpassing the nature vs. culture divide, nor about how to tackle the “wicked issue”[6] of the Anthropocene. In that sense, this plays well into the hands of those who dismiss Arendt as a marginally important, neo-Kantian, thinker for the burgeoning literature on post-humanism and the Anthropocene.

With that in mind, this article seeks to contribute to the emerging literature reconsidering the relevance of Arendt for the Anthropocene[7] debates by pointing to Arendt’s insights on entanglements of technoscience, capitalism, and anthropocentrism

1 The author would like to thank the two anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on this article.

2 See Anne Chapman, “The Ways That Nature Matters: The World and the Earth in the Thought of Hannah Arendt,” *Environmental Values* 16, no. 4 (November 1, 2007): 433–45, https://doi.org/10.3197/096327107X243222.

3 Dipesh Chakrabarty and Bruno Latour, *The Climate of History in a Planetary Age* (Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2021)

4 See *Ibid*, also Christophe Bonneuil and Jean-Baptiste Fressoz, *The Shock of the Anthropocene: The Earth, History and Us*, trans. David Fernbach, Paperback edition (London New York, NY: Verso, 2017), especially pages ix-18.

5 William E. Connolly, *The Fragility of Things: Self-Organizing Processes, Neoliberal Fantasies, and Democratic Activism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013); William E. Connolly, *Climate Machines, Fascist Drives, and Truth* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019); Jairus Victor Grove, *Savage Ecology: War and Geopolitics at the End of the World* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019). For more on dismissals of Arendt as “unhelpful”, see Ari-Elmeri Hyvönen, “Labor as Action: The Human Condition in the Anthropocene,” *Research in Phenomenology* 50, no. 2 (July 22, 2020): 243.

6 Chakrabarty, “The Climate of History”, 141. See also Roy Scranton, *Learning to Die in the Anthropocene: Reflections on the End of a Civilization* (San Franciso, CA: City Lights Books, 2015): 27-38.

and their relevance for understanding how nature vs. culture dualism emerged as a cultural and political project of the (now universalized[8]) Western modernity. Hence, it attempts at teasing out important aspects of Arendt's theorizing vis-à-vis the Anthropocene by focusing on three aspects of Arendt's thought: her conceptualization of the victory of *animal laborans* over *homo faber* in the modern world, her thoughts on "action into nature" and her ruminations about a 'new geocentrism'. As we shall see, all three allow us to position Arendt as an important interlocutor in the Anthropocene debates.

This article advances an argument that Arendt's thoughts on modernity, anthropocentrism, and Western alienation from the world and the earth offer an abundance of critical historicist and phenomenological insights into *why* it is important to politicize the Anthropocene and *how* to approach the subject, rather than relinquishing the debate exclusively to techno-scientific milieus. In fact, this article argues that Arendt's insights offer critical tools in rearticulating the importance of humankind's earthboundedness in political and scientific considerations. In order to emphasize Arendt's relevance for the debates on the Anthropocene, this article puts Arendt into conversation with Dipesh Chakrabarty, a notable postcolonial historian, whose recent work has largely focused on the Anthropocene. Before doing so, however, I want to sketch out some preliminary remarks on the Anthropocene and outline the article's structure.

The Anthropocene is a term of geological periodization that seeks to elucidate the fact that humankind has become a "telluric agent".[9] This means that humankind's interference with earthly, geologic, processes has acquired such a status as to be a geologic force. Thus, the Anthropocene as a term captures the impact humankind's

7 See Ari-Elmeri Hyvönen, "Invisible Streams: Process-Thinking in Arendt," *European Journal of Social Theory* 19, no. 4 (November 1, 2016): 538–55, also Hyvönen, "Labor as Action", and Oliver Belcher and Jeremy J Schmidt, "Being Earthbound: Arendt, Process and Alienation in the Anthropocene," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, (September 1, 2020): 1-18, also Angela Last, "Re-Reading Worldliness: Hannah Arendt and the Question of Matter," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 35, no. 1 (February 2017): 72–87. See also, Rolando Vazquez, "Precedence, Earth and the Anthropocene: Decolonizing Design," *Design Philosophy Papers* 15, no. 1 (January 2, 2017): 77–91.

8 In the chapter of *The Climate of History*, titled "The Difficulty of Being Modern", Chakrabarty draws our attention to the dynamics of the project of Western modernity and how potent they were for the modernizing tendencies of the 20th century postcolonial political leaders and thinkers (106-113). Indeed, Chakrabarty argues for how important narratives of "progress" are today (and how important it is to understand them and grapple with them), when many disadvantaged peoples, regions, and countries are seeking development and trying to reap the benefits of modernization (see page 97-98). In the process of modernizing, however, developing nations are increasingly faced with problems related to new climate change policies and the just distribution of responsibility for GHG emissions and green development aid.

9 Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Climate of History: Four Theses," *Critical Inquiry* 35, no. 2 (January 2009): 197–222, https://doi.org/10.1086/596640. See also Paul J. Crutzen, "The 'Anthropocene" in *Earth System Science in the Anthropocene*, ed. Eckart Ehlers and Thomas Krafft (Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer, 2006), 13–18, https://doi.org/10.1007/3-540-26590-2_3; Will Steffen, Jacques Grinevald, et al., "The Anthropocene: Conceptual and Historical Perspectives," *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society A: Mathematical, Physical and Engineering Sciences* 369, no. 1938 (March 13, 2011): 842–67, https://doi.org/10.1098/rsta.2010.0327; Will Steffen, Åsa Persson, et al., "The Anthropocene: From Global Change to Planetary Stewardship," *AMBIO* 40, no. 7 (November 2011): 739–61, https://doi.org/10.1007/s13280-011-0185-x; Jan Zalasiewicz et al., "The New World of the Anthropocene," *Environmental Science & Technology* 44, no. 7 (April 1, 2010): 2228–31, https://doi.org/10.1021/es903118j.

activities have had on the geo-physical environment. The Anthropocene Working Group (AWG), established in 2009, of the Subcommission on Quaternary Stratigraphy (SQS), which is a body of the International Commission of Stratigraphy (ICS), oversees the examination of "the possibility of recognizing an Anthropocene division either within the Holocene or separated from it."[10] In 2019, the AWG voted to confirm the Anthropocene as a "formal chrono-stratigraphic unit" and continues its analysis with the view of including the Anthropocene in the Geological Time Scale (GTS).[11] The AWG defines the Anthropocene as "the present geological time interval, in which many conditions and processes on Earth are profoundly altered by human impact".[12] While not yet 'formally' accepted as a unit of geological time, the concept of the Anthropocene has sparked a veritable revolution across disciplines. It has been likened to a "Renaissance"[13], with the British Geological Survey (BGS) comparing the 'discovery' of the Anthropocene to the discovery of "plate tectonics".[14]

Hannah Arendt has in many ways discussed the importance of thinking through the implications of moderns'[15] interference with earthly, or natural, processes. In her writings on science and technology, especially in the works such as The Human Condition (HC, 1998 [1958]) and Between Past and Future (BPF, 2006 [1961]), Arendt feared the post-WWII "sciences of progress", whose development risked "exposing the earth to universal, cosmic forces alien to nature's household".[16] The primary concern of Arendt's theorizing had always been the "world".[17] Rather than humans per se or even politics per se, the world as a particular phenomenological constellation of thingness (or thing-character, as

10 "Working Groups" *Subcommission on Quaternary Stratigraphy,* Accessed: June 21, 2021, http://quaternary.stratigraphy.org/working-groups/.

11 "Working Group on the 'Anthropocene' *Subcommission on Quaternary Stratigraphy*, accessed June 21, 2021, http://quaternary.stratigraphy.org/working-groups/anthropocene/.

12 "Working Group on the 'Anthropocene'", *Subcommission on Quaternary Stratigraphy*, Accessed June 21, 2021, http://quaternary.stratigraphy.org/working-groups/anthropocene/.

13 Stanley C. Finney and Lucy E. Edwards, "The 'Anthropocene' Epoch: Scientific Decision or Political Statement?" *GSA Today* 26, no. 3 (March 1, 2016): 4–10, https://doi.org/10.1130/GSATG270A.1.

14 "Anthropocene," *British Geological Survey* (blog), Accessed: June 21, 2021, https://www.bgs.ac.uk/geology-projects/anthropocene/.

15 In the context of Arendt's work, her diagnosis of the vita activa universalizes the notion of 'humanity' as a species-being (see below). However, her critique of modernity focuses specifically on the Western world. And while the project of modernity has expanded well beyond the West, instead of using the universal "humanity" or "we", this paper, following Bruno Latour, uses the noun 'moderns', to denote those, primarily in the West, who have adopted the project of modernization as a socio-political paradigm. Using the noun "moderns" might seem to some as unnecessarily displacing focus from Arendt's views of humanity as a fundamental framework of commonality and collective responsibility. However, I use 'moderns' to precisely indicate that in the Anthropocene, we cannot use the concept of "humanity" simply in the 'collective' sense; modernity as a socio-cultural period, and moderns as its human framework, are geopolitical and have contributed most to the Anthropocene, a notion also tackled by Chakrabarty in his work. It is also worth remembering that Arendt herself never subscribed to humanist ideas of 'humanity' as a category. Thus, humanity is a loaded term, a problematic term, which, in the present context, deserves a different noun to shift the focus (i.e., in an Arendtian fashion, a distinction) on its repercussions. I thank the 2nd anonymous reviewer of this paper for their cautious comments on the use of this terminology. Should this paper use concepts like "human" or "humanity", or "humankind", it uses them only to denote a species-being or to follow Arendt's or Chakrabarty's own writing. For "moderns", see Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1993) and Bruno Latour, *An Inquiry into Modes of Existence: An Anthropology of the Moderns* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2013).

16 Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998): 261.

17 *Ibid*, 52.

Arendt would call it[18]), shared in-betweeness[19], and appearance[20], emerges as the central issue in her political thinking.[21] This is evident not least in the fact that Arendt initially wanted to call her most notable work in political theory, HC, "Amor Mundi" or "Love of the World".[22] Because Arendt approached the world through a constellation of phenomenological and historical categories, her analysis of the threats posed to that world by human activities bears relevance for the Anthropocene debate.

This article has two main sections and four sub-sections and proceeds as follows. In the first sub-section, it interrogates Arendt's own understanding of anthropocentrism, capitalism, and technoscience in relation to modernity. Arendt's modernity is a complex phenomenon, which she splits into two parts: the modern age and the modern world. For Arendt, the modern age begins with the Reformation in the 16th century and ends in the mid-20th century. It is characterized by Cartesian dualisms (mind vs. world, nature vs. culture), the philosophic principle of "Cartesian doubt", development of modern science, and moderns' utilitarian and anthropocentric orientation to the world. The modern world, beginning after WWII, is different in that Cartesian dualisms collapsed into the process of nature and culture, due to developments that broadly fit the banner of the Great Acceleration.[23] This section focuses primarily on Arendt's thoughts on the modern age.[24]

In the second sub-section, this article engages Arendt's discussion of the fall of the ontological category of 'Being' into 'Process' and the rise of animal laborans (the laboring animal) to the highest place in the active life.[25] Here, Arendt discusses how politics during the Great Acceleration are increasingly viewed as guided by processes of moderns' action into natural phenomena. This view rests on a subtending ontological shift going from 'being' as a substantive ontic category in which nature and politics are separate realms, to 'process', a fluid albeit invisible category that flows through everything.[26] The shift from 'being' to 'process' is conceptualized by Arendt such that if anything is seen as a 'process', then it is perceived to be only a function of that process. I argue that the shift from 'being' to 'process' can also be thought of as a shift from dualisms of nature vs. culture to

18 *Ibid*, 92-96. For Arendt as an "object-oriented' thinker, see Bonnie Honig, *Public Things: Democracy in Disrepair*, first edition, Thinking out Loud (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017).
19 Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 52; 182.
20 Elena Tavani, "Hannah Arendt — Aesthetics and Politics of Appearance," *Hannah Arendt* 5 (2013).
21 See Hannah Arendt, "What Is Freedom?" in *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006e), 151, Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 52, see also Patricia Owens, "Not Life but the World Is at Stake: Hannah Arendt on Citizenship in the Age of the Social," *Citizenship Studies* 16, no. 2 (April 2012): 297–307, https://doi.org/10.1080/13621025.2012.667621.
22 Hannah Arendt et al., *Hannah Arendt/Karl Jaspers Correspondence, 1926-1969*, 1st U.S. ed (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992): 264.
23 In the Anthropocene literature, the term "Great Acceleration" denotes a post-WWII period of rapid and unprecedented socio-economic and technoscientific development in the West and beyond. For more, see Bonneuil and Fressoz, *The Shock of the Anthropocene*.
24 More on this below. If the reader should feel inclined to investigate further Arendt's distinction between the modern age and the modern world, see Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 6; 248-257; 267.
25 *Ibid*, 296.
26 Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 296-297.

processes of natureculture[27]. Arendt's insights elaborated in this section allow us to understand later how moderns' "action into nature" led to their paradoxical establishment into earthly nature as one of its (naturecultural) forces, thereby giving rise to the Anthropocene.

In the last section, this article discusses two main things: Arendt's 'new geocentrism' alongside Chakrabarty's discussion of the collapse of the difference between the human and the geological time. First, it outlines the main thrust of Chakrabarty's diagnosis of the universalization of human and geologic temporalities, which is to try to conceptualize how we are to "inhabit this second Anthropocene [the narrative of the Anthropocene which positions humans as a small part of geologic processes, as opposed to the homocentric narrative] so as to bring the geological into human modes of dwelling".[28] Chakrabarty's solution is to bring closer the concerns of responsibility for geology, framed in terms of vast geological time, to immediate political concerns by reviving the concepts of *wonder* and *reverence* for the planet.

Second, and as this article argues, Chakrabarty's analysis generally follows Arendt's own ruminations about rethinking political thought to find ways of rearticulating humanity's earthboundedness, thus politicizing the Anthropocene and non-human geologic processes. This article suggests, however, that the main difference between the two authors and the point where Arendt could matter for Chakrabarty's writing[29] is that for Arendt we cannot accommodate the political to the new sciences, such as the Earth System Science (ESS), while retaining a sense of *wonder* and *reverence* because they had been lost due to technoscientific developments. In the final sub-section, instead of a conclusion, this article offers some remarks on what Arendt thought of crucial issues of 'progress', development and how they related to her idea of 'geocentrism'. Through a discussion of these, this article points to Arendt's insightful proposition to embrace the end of progress and move above prophesies of optimism or doom by focusing on the politics of reorientation of the moderns' communal ways of being-in-the-world. s

Action Into Nature: "Mankind's Earthly Immortality" in the Modern World

The Age of Anthropocentrism: Arendt and Modernity

27 By 'natureculture', this article understands a fusion of modernist dualisms of mind and world, nature, and culture, into a hybrid of natureculture. The hybridization of the two has been popularized most famously by Bruno Latour and Donna Haraway. For Latour, the point of emphasizing the hybridity of natureculture is to emphasize a shift in the ontological understanding of humanity's positionality within the world, where nature and culture do not exist. Haraway does not deny the existence of these categories but presents political alternatives to maintaining their onto-epistemological divide. For more on this concept, see Bruno Latour, "We Have Never Been Modern" and Donna Jeanne Haraway, *Manifestly Haraway*, Posthumanities 37 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016): 91-199.

28 Chakrabarty, *The Climate of History*, 178.

29 Chakrabarty engages Arendt frequently, even naming his Tanner Lectures "The Human Condition in the Anthropocene" and, most recently, in his book *The Climate of History*. However, Chakrabarty never engages Arendt as a thinker of technoscience and progress, but rather constricts his analyses of Arendt's work to her views on politics and action. One of the reasons why this article puts Arendt and Chakrabarty together is to demonstrate how fruitful Arendt could be for Chakrabarty's own project.

Modernity for Arendt is a difficult period. In fact, it is so difficult, complex, and dynamic that she must split it into two parts to neatly capture the impact of the events that make it. Thus, as aforementioned, Arendt's modernity is split into the modern age (from mid-16th century until mid-20th century) and the modern world (from mid-20th century onwards). This periodization serves Arendt's project of situating the recalibration of humanity's activities in the world, or humanity's being-in-the-world, and is characterized by two developments, or conditions: world alienation and earth alienation. World alienation is a condition of moderns' alienation from the "space in-between" that "separates and relates" individuals from one another and from nature.[30] It refers to places, institutions, laws, practices, and customs in which politics takes place.[31] Earth alienation is the condition of moderns' resentment of the planet, that is – their alienation from the existential condition that makes them "earthbound creatures."[32] To world and earth alienation correspond feelings of isolation, loneliness, and worldlessness.

Arendt's modernity, insofar as it hinges on the human being-in-the-world, is determined by three events that describe entanglements of science, technology, and capital so crucial to understanding her critique:

> The discovery of America and the ensuing exploration of the whole earth; the Reformation, which by expropriating ecclesiastical and monastic possessions started the twofold process of individual expropriation and the accumulation of social wealth; the invention of the telescope and the development of a new science that considers the nature of the earth from the viewpoint of the universe.[33]

These three events underpinned the shift in humanity's orientation to the planet and nature. To understand the reorientation of humanity's being-in-the-world as a political process, we must understand Arendt's conceptualization of the active life (or *vita activa*), since it is its subtending referent.

30 Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 52.

31 As Canovan has argued, Arendt's conceptualization of politics in the HC does not define politics *per se* but focuses rather on spaces "necessary for its practice" (see Margaret Canovan, *Hannah Arendt: A Reinterpretation of Her Political Thought* (Cambridge [England] ; New York, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press, 1992: 99-154, cited in Waseem Yaqoob, "The Archimedean Point: Science and Technology in the Thought of Hannah Arendt, 1951–1963," *Journal of European Studies* 44, no. 3 (September 2014): 208).

32 Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 3.

33 Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 248. It is interesting to note that in the German translation of the HC, Arendt refers to the three events as giving rise to the "Neuzeit" (modernity in general) as opposed to the English translation, in which they give rise to the "modern age". This article understands that the three events give rise to modernity in general and not just the modern age, but that, as will be shown below, the crucial difference between the modern age and the modern world is not in the events, which for Arendt always follow entanglements of capital, science, and technology, but rather in the way they affect the ordering constellation of the vita activa, which in her telling shifts from the mid-20th century. For the German version, see Hannah Arendt, *Vita activa oder Vom tätigen Leben*, Ungekürzte Taschenbuchausgabe, 19. Auflage, Piper 3623 (München Berlin Zürich: Piper, 2018): 318.

Arendt's active life is composed of three activities, which have three corresponding mentalities. These activities are labor, work and action and their mentalities are *animal laborans*, *homo faber* and "man of action", respectively.[34] When humans (or 'men', as Arendt would put it) labor, they are animal laborans, merely "one [...] of the animal species which populate the earth"[35], when they work, they are homo faber, or the sovereign "lord and master of the whole earth"[36] and when they act, they start novel processes in the world, thereby "show[ing] who they are" in the public, which for Arendt is the condition for the manifestation of humanity's freedom, worldliness and, ultimately, politics.[37] An ideal-typical ordering of the vita activa is such that action takes the highest place, followed by work and then labor. The active life is an 'ordering constellation' which "orders their [humanity's] mutual relationships" and can "change historically".[38] Since the active life is an ideal-typical 'ordering constellation', it is affected by humanity's being-in-the-world, thus being characterized by fragility. In that sense, the ordering of these activities does not form a "static phenomenology of human activity"[39], nor "human nature", but a fluid and historically shifting hierarchy of human activities that make up the human condition.

The three events described above have for Arendt shifted the locus of human activities such that political action was demoted in modernity to the lowest position in the active life and work was promoted to the highest. Arendt's philosophical anthropology of modernity starts after the end of Christian primacy over socio-political life in the European societies. With the Reformation and secularization came the transition from feudalism to capitalism, which Arendt terms "the rise of the Social".[40] Capitalism destroyed the stability and permanence of familial and private social structures into which the pre-industrial European societies were organized. These were replaced by the 'society' in which the accumulation of "social wealth" liberated the "labor power"[41] of multitudes. The liberation of labor power indicates the birth of workforce and waged labor. Since the laboring masses had to live "from hand to mouth"[42], their condition was marked by the profound need to satisfy the exigencies of life such as finding shelter, food, and securing their rudimentary existence. In that sense, the liberation of laboring multitudes resembled the "sheer natural abundance of the biological process"[43] which kept on expanding itself with the rise of society and ultimately the regulative state. Thus

34 Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 7-17.
35 *Ibid,* 84.
36 *Ibid,* 139.
37 See *Ibid*, 175-179, also Bhikhu C. Parekh, *Hannah Arendt and the Search for a New Political Philosophy* (CHAM: Palgrave Macmillan, 1984). 131-154.
38 Hannah Arendt, "The Concept of History: Ancient and Modern," in *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006c), 75.
39 Dana Richard Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger: The Fate of the Political* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1996): 174.
40 Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 37-49.
41 Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 255. See also James Barry Jr., "Expropriation: The Loss of Land and Place in the World," in *The Bloomsbury Companion to Arendt* (London; New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020), 576–83 and Onur Ulas Ince, "Bringing the Economy Back in: Hannah Arendt, Karl Marx, and the Politics of Capitalism," *The Journal of Politics* 78, no. 2 (January 15, 2016): 411–26.
42 Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 254.
43 *Ibid.*

"the social realm emerged [...] as the domain in which the life processes of ever-larger populations were administered by the state in the interests of order and capital accumulation".[44] Crucially, because laborers were preoccupied with the exigencies of life, they could not tend to the public sphere, or that space in-between them that makes the politics and the world. Instead of being 'worldly', the early moderns were thrown "on themselves"[45], thus setting off the process of world alienation.

The 'discovery of America', or colonial voyages, was an event that had both furthered the development of capitalism (thus exacerbating world alienation) and simultaneously instigated the development of earth alienation. Arendt's description of the 'discovery of America' as a colonial endeavor starting in the 15th century denotes a long-term process of objectification of the planet that had only ended in the 20th century, at the end of the modern age, when "man [has] taken full possession of his mortal dwelling place and gathered the infinite horizons [...] into a globe whose majestic outlines he knows as he knows the lines in the palm of his hand".[46] The exploration of the planetary distances opened Earth's vast spaces to capture by colonial explores. In the process, however, of exploring the planetary boundaries came the simultaneous shrinkage of the planetary "into a ball,"[47] or a globe which could be possessed. For Arendt, the earth is the Ur-condition (root condition) of humanity's existence. With modernity, this Ur-condition was sidelined as the moderns learned that earth can be conquered, measured, and possessed. The notion of earthboundedness was supplanted by the process of objectification by which the earth was made into an object to be transcended.

Arendt writes that since "it is in the nature of the human surveying capacity that it can function only if man disentangles himself from all involvement in and concern with the close at hand and withdraws himself to a distance from everything near him", the objectification of the planet indicates that:

> the decisive shrinkage of the earth [...] is like a symbol for the general phenomenon that any decrease of terrestrial distance can be won only at the price of putting a decisive distance between man and earth, of alienating man from his immediate earthly surroundings".[48]

With that in mind, while the colonial voyages expanded the reach of the "social", or capitalism[49], they have more importantly underpinned the rise of the phenomenon of earth alienation as a specific condition of resentment the moderns have for their earthly existence. By completing the planet as an object, the moderns could set themselves as apart from it, thus subverting the conditionality planetary boundaries had imposed on

44 Patricia Owens, "Not Life but the World Is at Stake: Hannah Arendt on Citizenship in the Age of the Social," *Citizenship Studies* 16, no. 2 (April 2012): 298.
45 Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 253.
46 Arendt, *The Human Condition,* 249.
47 *Ibid.*
48 *Ibid*, 251.
49 See George Kateb, *Hannah Arendt: Politics, Conscience, Evil* (Oxford: Robertson, 1984). Maurizio Passerin d'Entrèves, *The Political Philosophy of Hannah Arendt* (London; New York: Routledge, 1994).

them historically. The condition of 'distancing', or earth alienation, culminated in the 1957 Sputnik satellite mission, with Arendt expressing concern at "the immediate reaction" of reports to the event, which was relief "about the first 'step toward escape from man's imprisonment to the earth.'"[50]

The third event, Galileo's confirmation of the Copernican heliocentric system, symbolizes a double shift in moderns' perceptions of themselves and the role of science in the world. First, this shift portended the rise of 'doubt' in the adequacy of moderns' senses to detect phenomena. For Arendt, the philosophical and political reaction to Galileo's discoveries was not "exultation" but "Cartesian doubt by which modern philosophy [...] was founded."[51] By empirically confirming what were before him 'speculations' on heliocentrism, Galileo had "put within the grasp of an earth-bound creature and its body-bound senses what had seemed forever beyond his reach".[52] And yet, despite doing this great service to humankind, reactions to Galileo's discoveries were shock and disbelief in humanity's capacity to understand the natural world using their 'body-bound' senses. Because "the telescope deprived the senses of their reliability", by bringing "their insufficiency to light,"[53] it positioned practices of experimental science as the only reliable gateway to understanding the (natural) world.[54] Thus, the moderns realized that they could only know "what they make"[55], which means that they could only know what they could produce in experiments or measure with their instruments.

Second, Galileo's discovery marked an onto-epistemological shift in the role of science from Aristotle's *wonder* at the unraveling of Being, which in turn necessitates "ordering, interpretation, and explanation of observed phenomena,"[56] to "*scienza activa et operativa*" ("an active and operating science"), that re-created phenomena with the aid of instruments.[57] With this, Arendt describes the rise of 'universal science' that came about with the collapse of the Aristotelian 'natural science'. Universal science is characterized by a distancing of the scientific observer to a freely chosen point of reference[58] for scientific observation, wherefrom they "look upon nature from a universal standpoint and thus acquire complete mastery over her"[59]. After the distancing is accomplished, the distanced observer seems to 'complete' the object and its inner processes. These are the first steps in what Arendt called the development of the "Archimedean point" of universal science.

50 Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 1.
51 Arendt, *The Human Condition,* 260.
52 *Ibid*, 259.
53 Pieter Tijmes, "The Archimedean Point and Eccentricity: Hannah Arendt's Philosophy of Science and Technology," *Inquiry* 35, no. 3–4 (September 1992): 394.
54 Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 261-263.
55 *Ibid*, 281.
56 Arendt, *The Human Condition,* 281. Arendt's analysis here is very similar to Whitehead's, who influenced her formulations in the HC, see Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (Newburyport: Open Road Media, 2021): 38.
57 *Ibid*.
58 Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 263.
59 *Ibid,* 267.

Arendt's interpretation of Archimedes' "Give me a place to stand and I shall move the earth" was such that it stressed "that our power over things grows in proportion to our distance from them".[60] Just like the colonial voyages during which the moderns distanced themselves from the earth in order to explore and, ultimately, complete the 'planetary', the Archimedean point marks a removal into a distant point from which the moderns started acting into earthly processes. Thus, Galileo's discovery marked a shift from Aristotle's wonder and reverence for nature and a "veritable return to Archimedes"[61] by inaugurating modernity's orientation towards "acting into nature" as if humans were outside it, such that "only we [the moderns] have come to live in a world thoroughly determined by science and technology [...] derived from cosmic and universal, as distinguished from terrestrial and 'natural', laws".[62] Acting into nature is Arendt's term for the collective reorganization of humanity's scientific activities. Science in modernity was no longer focused on categorizing phenomena but on (re)creating them in laboratory conditions, which necessitates action 'into' conditions of their possibility.

Arendt summarizes her diagnosis of the modern age as "man's two-fold flight from the earth into the universe and from the world into the self".[63] With the rise of capitalism, underpinned by processes of expropriation and secularization, the moderns were thrown back on themselves qua subjects. The fight for securing the exigencies needed for life overrode political concerns with the world. With the making of the planet "into a globe"[64] and the discovery of the telescope, the moderns were at the same time inspired to overcome and 'complete' the planetary while growing increasingly distrustful of the phenomenal, or disclosive, reality, preferring instead only to pursue knowledge through making[65]. And in order to 'make', or know, better, they had to find an Archimedean point from which they could act into planetary processes.

Descartes' "cogito, ergo sum", which was predicated on the construction of phenomenal reality as being a "Great Deceiver", became a cultural, philosophical, and political norm of the modern age. The "Great Deceiver" tricked 'men' who, becoming aware of his masterful deception via instruments of science (e.g., Galileo's telescope), could no longer rely on their senses but had to doubt them(selves) first.[66] In so doing, Descartes transferred the "locus of experience"[67] from nature to human "inner consciousness"[68] while keeping science's Archimedean point firmly outside of terrestrial limits. Since the moderns had to make in order to know and because the world had meaning insofar as it fit their measuring devices, experiments and understandings, *homo faber* ascended to the highest position in the *vita activa*.

60 Hannah Arendt, "The Archimedean Point" in *Thinking without Banister: Essays in Understanding, 1953-1975*, ed. Jerome Kohn, First edition (New York: Schocken Books, 2018): 432.
61 Arendt, "The Archimedean Point", 432.
62 Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 267.
63 *Ibid*, 5.
64 *Ibid,* 249.
65 d'Entrèves, *Hannah Arendt*, 43.
66 Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 273-279.
67 Yaqoob, "The Archimedean Point", 213-214.
68 *Ibid*. Arendt also refers to this "inner alienation" as complementary to world alienation, see *Ibid,* 209, also in *The Human Condition* see 261-264.

From Being to Process, Or the Great Stone Book of Nature

The rise of *homo faber* to the highest position in the active life was, as we have seen, spurred by the entanglement of technology, science, and capitalism. For Arendt, the mentality of *homo faber* is visible in the process of fabrication or making, which "has a definite beginning and a predictable end: it comes to an end with its end product."[69] In the context of the *vita activa,* if humans think of themselves only in terms of *homo faber*, without thinking about the world (politics and action) or life (labor and nature), they instrumentalize both**.** This is because the mentality of homo faber is utilitarian, so they cannot distinguish between "utility and meaningfulness" which is distinguished "linguistically" by the use of "in order to" as opposed to "for the sake of", respectively.[70] Moreover, since the relationship of means-ends categories is like "a chain whose every end can serve again as a means in some other context", the problem with the rise of *homo faber* to the highest point in the active life is that the utilitarian experience is generalized on to the world and nature, such that "man" sees himself as "the measure of all things."[71] In that sense, the modern age saw modernized humans as makers of worlds, or, to put it differently, as agents of History á la Hegel.

And yet, despite their "sovereignty"[72], strength and utilitarianism, *homo faber's* rule in the active life undermined itself. The shift in Arendt's theory of modernity from the modern age to the modern world unveils *animal laborans* as the victorious mentality of the *vita activa*. Arendt develops this shift by arguing that the principle of utility characterizing *homo faber* is inherently unstable because of two reasons. First, Arendt historicizes the shift from capitalism of the modern age to the one in the modern world by referring to the development of consumer societies in which the principle of "the greatest happiness of the greatest number"[73] had followed rapid socio-economic developments. In consumer societies, "exchange value" triumphed over "use value"[74], thus relativizing the importance of fabricated objects for the world of consumers. Second, in a consumerist world, *homo faber* lost their footing since the otherwise limited fabrication process had got exacerbated, so that the chain of means-ends reconfigured itself into an endless process.[75]

The substance of *homo faber's* activities is such that they fabricate things for the world of 'men', as Arendt would say. Thus, *homo faber*'s activities are ontologically limited to creating the human world of artifice. With the shift from *homo faber* to *animal laborans*, however, this liminality had got extended, in a sense that the whole of the world became a commodity. In doing so, the instrumental chain of production became mass production, limited fabrication was sacrificed for endless consumption, and substance of craft became

69 Hannah Arendt, "The Concept of History" in *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006c): 71.
70 Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 154.
71 Arendt, *The Human Condition,* 306.
72 Arendt, *The Human Condition,* 305.
73 *Ibid*, 307.
74 *Ibid, 306.*
75 *Ibid,* 155-157, also 305-312.

process of production/consumption. Thus, with endless process taking primacy over the limited fabrication process, Arendt argues that *animal laborans* came to dominate the *vita activa.*

The shift from the modern age and into the modern world is described by Arendt as a shift from "Being to Process"[76], *homo faber* to *animal laborans*, that symbolizes the collapse of the Cartesian "opposition of man as a *res cogitans* [mind] to a surrounding world of *res extensae* [world]."[77] It is a shift by which utilitarian processes intensify moderns' "action into" the world and nature via science and technology. Arendt's process framing describes a shift in understanding of how far humans can go with "acting into nature".[78] In the Arendtian sense, with the victory of *animal laborans* and the shift from the modern age into the modern world began the moderns' interpolation into natural, or geologic, strata. Arendt's description of this phenomenon is similar to how we understand the Anthropocene today, as I discuss below.

Animal laborans as a distinct mentality of the activity of labor has at its core the idea of "life". Because laboring is for Arendt contained to maintaining necessities of life, it is something that can never end. Thus, laboring is "literally about consumption - the metabolism we need to sustain our biological bodies [and lives] and their eventual and inevitable decay."[79] The process of life is conceptualized by Arendt as a cycle similar to the cycle of nature.[80] In that sense, since life "uses up durability" of its products, it is a process that is, like the process of nature, "endlessly repetitive" because it constantly needs to re-do the activities it has done before (e.g., eating).[81] Hence, the activity of *animal laborans* as the cycle of life transposed onto nature is the activity that reveals humans as a species-being that, with the addition of work and action, can transcend its own natural condition. It is only within the objective reality of the world, which provides the space for political action, that humans can fully actualize themselves as humans, or become more-than their own species-being. And since the 'ordering constellation' of human activities is fragile, *vita activa* must be constantly tended to and cared for, which includes caring for the world, understood in both non-human and human terms.[82] Thus, modernity's shift from understanding nature as something substantive and separated to be categorized and ordered (being) to understanding nature as something that can be (re)created in experimental processes (process) threatens to destroy the world by replacing it as the central condition of the *vita activa* with processes of "life".[83] What does this mean in the context of the Anthropocene?

76 Arendt, *The Human Condition,* 295.
77 Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 312.
78 See Hyvönen, "Invisible Streams" and Belcher and Schmidt, "Being Earthbound".
79 Chakrabarty, *The Climate of History*, 9.
80 Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 96.
81 *Ibid,* 98.
82 See Hannah Arendt "The Crisis in Culture: Its Social and Its Political Significance" in "Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006g): 184-209.
83 Arendt, "The Concept of History", 75-81.

The period of the Great Acceleration, which had started at the time when Arendt's 'modern world' began, has been marked by unprecedented growth of humanity's technoscientific capacities and their intervention into nature, both terrestrial and non-terrestrial (or cosmic). With "action into nature", "mankind", Arendt writes, has established itself in a kind of "twofold infinity of past and future"[84], whereby "the history of mankind reaches back into an infinite past to which we can add at will and into which we can inquire further as it stretches ahead into an infinite future."[85] This development indicated to Arendt that the moderns had moved beyond thinking themselves as Hegelian agents of History,[86] to thinking of themselves as one among many processes of life on the planet. The significance of this is such that humanity's activities are no longer confined to the objective world humans make, as in the case of *homo faber*, but have expanded themselves to include all earthly processes, insofar as we understand them as 'living'. Thus, the moderns have interpolated "new material", or human action, into the "stone book of nature", which is understood as a textual representation of geological stratigraphic layers.[87] Therefore, Arendt's description of the merging of "res cogitans" with "res extensae", can be seen as the culmination of the moderns' interpolation into the geological strata, or their becoming a geo-natural force. Thus, and to an extent, her reflections anticipate the problems of the Anthropocene today.

As we shall see in the next section, Arendt's understanding of this shift is similar to Chakarbarty's diagnosis of the three historical temporalities that have merged in the Anthropocene. For Arendt, the "always already [technoscientifically] mediated"[88] world is a rendering of the world situated in the post-totalitarian age of 'universal' and 'cosmic' sciences, automated technologies, and rampant consumerism. Mankind's establishment into the "infinite past" and the "infinite future" is a description of the effect technoscientific growth has had on the way the age of the modern world "[speaks] about itself and imagines [what] it is."[89] Arendt wants us to think about alienation, removal, and distance as conditions of a particular political and socio-cultural constellation of activities events, and moments that sideline the 'world'. The political question is how to imagine ways of reconfiguring the *vita activa* such that the constellation of relations becomes worldly again? As we shall see below, it is precisely because of such concerns that Arendt's analysis also offers a way through the complexities of the Anthropocene, without presuming an answer to its future challenges (or the nearly "infinite future" geological feedbacks of the past activities of the Anthropos). After all, the "world is at stake".

84 For our purposes, the "twofold flight" indicates the following: in the first sense, the fact that human activities are now recorded in "deep" geologic history; we can think of traces ranging from radionucleotides to plastic. In the (second) sense of the future, it indicates that the changed geo-physical patterns, or the Anthropocene as a geologic epoch, may outlive humanity's physical existence as such – the geological future of the planetary has been altered.

85 Arendt, "The Concept of History", 79.

86 *Ibid.*

87 Bronislaw Szerszynski, "The End of the End of Nature: The Anthropocene and the Fate of the Human," *Oxford Literary Review* 34, no. 2 (December 2012): 165–84. See also Bronislaw Szerszynski, "The Anthropocene Monument: On Relating Geological and Human Time," *European Journal of Social Theory* 20, no. 1 (February 2017): 111–31.

88 Belcher and Schmidt, "Being Earthbound", 3.

89 Hannah Arendt, "Religion and Politics", *Essays in Understanding, 1930-1954: Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism* (New York: Schocken Books, 2005ii): 375.u

Arendt and Chakrabarty: Towards a New Geocentrism

Anthropocene Problems

Dipesh Chakrabarty, in his most recent work titled *Climate History in the Planetary Age* (2021), presents the following outline of the crisis of the Anthropocene: "we can say that it is only very recently that the distinction between human and natural histories—much of which had been preserved even in environmental histories that saw the two entities in interaction—has begun to collapse."[90] Chakrabarty's statement is not a novelty in his work, nor is it at this point a revolutionary proposition, since his essay from 2009[91], a "classic"[92] in the literature on the Anthropocene, already posits this hypothesis in the context of an arresting discussion on temporality and the Anthropocene.

Chakrabarty's 'classic' thesis[93] is two-fold. First, the collapse of the distinction between the human and the geologic time is a specific development unveiling the planetary against the discourses of the "globe". With this, Chakrabarty posits that part and parcel of the nature vs. culture distinction was a binary of the human and the geologic time. This binary represented the geologic time as a hidden process, flowing in the background of humanity's[94] activities, that was largely irrelevant for humans since it had unraveled itself on an inhuman timescale of thousands, millions or even billions of years. In the Anthropocene, we witness the collapse of this binary due to humanity's telluric activities and the ensuing phenomenon of climate change. Second, the collapse of the aforementioned binaries has an effect such that both climate change and humanity's awareness of itself as a geologic agent necessitate mid-term to long-term thinking in politics and a wholescale shift of the locus of the political, which had hitherto been the human. Thus, Chakrabarty argues, humans now must think in three historical timescales: geologic history and history of human life on the planet, in addition to the history of "life" in general, which emerges "as one of the main concerns" in the climate change literature.[95]

Throughout his work, Chakrabarty argues that faced with the existential questions of the Anthropocene, thinkers have generally thought in homocentric as opposed to zoecentric terms. Thinking the Anthropocene in homocentric terms means presenting it as an issue of "intrahuman justice" and an issue of capitalism, colonialism, and

90 Chakrabarty, *The Climate of History*, 31.
91 Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Climate of History: Four Theses," *Critical Inquiry* 35, no. 2 (2009): 197–222.
92 Mustapha Kamal Pasha, "After the Deluge: New Universalism and Postcolonial Difference," *International Relations* 34, no. 3 (September 2020): 355.
93 See also Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Anthropocene and the Convergence of Histories," in Clive Hamilton, Christophe Bonneuil, and François Gemenne, eds., *The Anthropocene and the Global Environmental Crisis* (London; New York: Routledge, 2015).
94 In this part, I adopt Chakrabarty's own vocabulary of referring to humans as humans. This is to stay true to his own writing since one of the main points of Chakrabarty's work is that we must think of humans qua species-being.
95 Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Human Condition in the Anthropocene", The Tanner Lectures in Human Values, *Yale University Press* (February 2015): 142.

exploitation.[96] Zoecentric view, coming from the Ancient Greek for *zoe* or "natural, reproductive life,"[97] is for Chakrabarty a preferable way of thinking the Anthropocene, since in this way "we acknowledge that anthropogenic climate change affects life beyond human life and impacts on the inanimate world as well."[98] Thinking in zoecentric terms presents humans as merely a species-being, one of many species inhabiting or dwelling on the earth, thereby decentering "the human by subordinating human history to the geological and evolutionary histories of the planet" and enabling visions of humans as "a part of the history of life on this planet."[99] Thus, Chakrabarty sees the Anthropocene as an opportunity to 'provincialize the human' (of Humanities)[100] and center the Anthropos (of Geology)[101], or the species-being, as the 'universal' category that may allow us to develop a political and planetary "epochal consciousness".[102] With that in mind, Chakrabarty argues that "the crisis of climate change, by throwing us into the inhuman timelines of life and geology, also takes us away from the homocentrism that divides us."[103] It takes away the "homocentrism that divides us" by presenting to humans qua species-being the universal problem of survival, which for Chakrabarty necessitates a "new universal" history and a new "global politics".[104] Therefore, for Chakrabarty, this is the moment in which both to reckon with climate change and its consequences for politics by asking the crucial question of bringing "the geological into human modes of dwelling."[105]

Chakrabarty proposes concepts of *reverence* and *wonder* to help us bring 'the geological into human modes of dwelling' and to reorient humanity's relationship to the planet, i.e., the Earth System. These two concepts rest on the subtending balance of the globe (homocentrism) and the planet (zoecentrism).[106] Reverence, which Chakrabarty understands as "a relationship of respect mixed with fear and awe,"[107] had been lost in modernity while (Aristotelian) *wonder*, or curiosity, had been retained, such that the moderns acted into nature out of wonder, but without fear and awe, ultimately thinking that nature was made for them to understand and possess it.[108] Chakrabarty argues that the Anthropocene problems, bringing the possibility of largescale ecological collapse, and the awareness of humanity's responsibility to themselves (globe) but also to the whole planet, to fore, challenge humans to think in terms of curiosity (wonder) mixed with fear and awe (reverence), and to become more humble in their dealings with nature. This humility would reflect a translation of the immensity of geological time and the inhering burden of responsibility for the planet into human terms and the subsequent balancing thereof vis-à-vis homocentric political and developmental concerns.

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96 *Ibid,* 165.
97 *Ibid,* 142.
98 *Ibid,* 165.
99 Chakrabarty, "The Human Condition in the Anthropocene*,* 173-174.
100 Pasha, "After the Deluge," 364.
101 *Ibid.*
102 Chakrabarty, "The Human Condition in the Anthropocene"*,* 183-184.
103 *Ibid*.
104 Chakrabarty, *The Climate of History,* 45.
105 *Ibid*, 178.
106 *Ibid,* 203-204.
107 *Ibid,* 198.
108 Chakrabarty, *The Climate of History,* 198-200.

With *wonder* and *reverence*, Chakrabarty offers us a way of retaining technology and science, especially the Earth System Science (ESS), while regaining the lost sense of belonging to the planet. As we shall see below, Chakrabarty's diagnosis, while similar to Arendt's (Chakrabarty also borrows from thinkers like Karl Jaspers and Martin Heidegger, both of whom influenced Arendt deeply) differs from Arendt's in that for her both the sense of *wonder*, in addition to the sense of *reverence,* are 'always already' lost in modernity, without any possibility of retrieval. Thus, for Arendt, we must "think without a banister", without anything to hold on to, even if that "anything" is proposed by Arendt,[109]and try to articulate anew the political experience in the Anthropocene.

A New Geocentrism?

As we have seen earlier in this article, Arendt's story of modernity (taken as a whole) is very difficult and dark. Modernity devours everything through the inexorable progress of the entanglements of technology, science, and capitalism. For Arendt, the moderns live in a world profoundly shaped by technoscience, where the products of technoscience, from small gadgets to cars, telescopes, and data servers, look "as inescapable a part of ourselves as the snail's shell is to its occupant."[110] The Anthropocene, as an event[111] that grew out of modernity's processes, forces the moderns to reckon with consequences of their activities while struggling to retain the general features that characterize modernity (capital, technology and science). The modern world depends on technoscience, progress, modernization and it depends on exploitation of nature; this, to a large extent, is an irreversible process. Most importantly for an Arendtian analysis, however, the Anthropocene entrenches life as the central concern of sciences, something echoed by Chakrabarty's diagnosis. The history of life is now of central concern and with it, *animal laborans* keeps on hovering above *homo faber* and the man of action as the victorious activity in the constellation of the *vita activa*.

However, Arendt offers the moderns an opportunity to avoid the total submergence of the *vita activa* to the life process. Because the moderns are still "perilously close to that point"[112] in which everything gets consumed by the biological process, where the infinite past truly breaks into the infinite future, there may be a moment of realization that it cannot go on like this. This point, in the "non-time-space"[113] of now, in the moment between past and future, is the space in which the moderns can still manage to think and act, even if under the aegis of *animal laborans*, and preserve the habitability, or the

109 Hyvönen, "Labor as Action", 245.

110 Arendt, "The Conquest of Space", 254, quoting from Heisenberg Werner, *The Physicist's Conception of Nature*, trans. Pomerans Arnold J. (London: Hutchinson Scientific and Technical, 1958).

111 I follow Hyvönen in treating the Anthropocene as an event in an Arendtian sense, in which it is "a new and challenging experience that brings to light its own history and forces us to critically reassess our pre-given categories.", see Hyvönen, "Labor as Action", 244.

112 Arendt, "The Conquest of Space", 254.

113 Arendt Hannah, "Preface: The Gap Between Past and Future," in *Between Past and Future*, ed. Kohn Jerome (New York: Penguin Books, 2006a): 34. See also, Jana Lozanoska, "Temporality, Technology and Justice in Hannah Arendt: A Critical Approach" in Anu Valtonen, Outi Rantala, and Paolo Davide Farah, eds., *Ethics and Politics of Space for the Anthropocene* (Cheltenham Northampton: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2020): 175-197.

dwelling capacity of the planetary. When the "world is falling apart", Arendt teaches us that "not everything is lost."[114]

Arendt's helpful hint at the end of "The Conquest of Space" in *Between Past and Future* presents a possibility of a "new geocentrism", which is a:

> new world view that [is] likely to be once more geocentric and anthropomorphic, although not in the old sense of the earth being the center of the universe and of man being the highest being there is. It would be geocentric in the sense that the earth, and not the universe, is the center and the home of mortal men, and it would be anthropomorphic in the sense that man would count his own factual mortality among the elementary conditions under which his scientific efforts are possible at all.[115]

After the loss of *wonder* and after the turning of the planet into the 'globe', moderns' removal into the Archimedean point of 'universal science' and 'action into nature' culminates in the Anthropocene with humanity's 'earthly immortality', which Arendt narrates as a collapse of the infinite past into the infinite future due to the progress of modernity's forces. Humans as a species are geologic now. And yet, the awareness of this culmination, pace Chakrabarty, cannot open a way back to *wonder* because the moderns are "clearly fallen"[116] Thus, for Arendt, the moderns are merely aware that they have already fallen, or that they are forces of the Anthropocene; they are stuck in the space of the present, hurtling towards a completely uncertain future. The opportunity that arises, however, from this 'non-time-space' is such that it allows the moderns to push through the condition of *animal laborans* and start reconsidering their own action. Here, this article argues, with Arendt, for something opposite of nostalgia[117] for *wonder* or *reverence*. Arendt offers the moderns a space and time in which to think, act, and recognize the boundaries of modernity's unnatural growth.

Arendt writes that if "man" "recognizes that "there might be absolute limits to his search for knowledge", he "would only take possession of what is his own, although it took him a long time to discover it."[118] As a thinker of the political always situated in some place and space, Arendt argues that these places and spaces need to have boundaries vis-à-vis to what is outside of them. As we have seen, the 'ordering constellation' of the *vita activa* has its own boundaries, its own composition which, fragile as it is, must be tended to and cared for. Thus, Arendt always points to limits, but more importantly she also always points to how those limits are mediated by their interstices. What Arendt advances

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114 Author's translation from Daša Duhaček, *Breme Našeg Doba: Odgovornost i Rasuđivanje u Delu Hane Arent* [*The Burden of Our Time: Responsibility and Judgment in Hannah Arendt*], Biblioteka Circulus (Beograd: Beogradski krug; Centar za ženske studije i istraživanje roda, 2010): 225.

115 Arendt, "The Conquest of Space", 253.

116 Villa, "Arendt and Heidegger", 201.

117 See, for example, Arendt's statement in the *Origins of Totalitarianism* that: "all efforts to escape from the grimness of the present into nostalgia for a still intact past, or into the anticipated oblivion of a better future, are vain." from *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (London; Penguin Random House, 2017): 11.

118 Arendt, "The Conquest of Space", 252.

above is a possibility of finding a political space in which to act such that the planetary becomes the focus of cultivating efforts for the humankind, while at the same time opening a space for the humankind to realize the limits of its own mortality and earthboundedness. The "earthly immortality" of which Arendt speaks pushes against worldly plurality by radicalizing the moderns' intervention into nature (and geologic-natural feedbacks formed as a reaction to this intervention). However, the 'non-time-space' of this push allows the moderns to rearticulate notions of geocentricity, of not coming "back down to Earth"[119], since they are "always already" in the Archimedean point of 'universal science' but seeing themselves as earthly and thinking themselves as infinitely bound to the planetary.

Instead of Conclusion: Responsibility

As this article has argued, Arendt's thoughts on the shift between the modern age and the modern world offer a fecund critical ground to situate the Anthropocene in the intrusion of the entanglements of technology, science, and capital into nature. Arendt forces us to remember that the specific entanglements of science, technology and capitalism often go overlooked as such in the literature on the Anthropocene, with either science, technology or capitalism being favored as the main 'cause' of the Anthropocene. With Chakrabarty, to meet the Anthropocene's challenge we cannot only focus on issues of "intrahuman justice" presupposed by concepts such as Capitalocene[120] and in the works of Marxist thinkers like Andreas Malm.[121] However, pace Chakrabarty, we must not allow science and technology, via ESS, exclusive rein over concerns of 'intrahuman justice' á la "new universalism"[122]. Nor can we allow ourselves to think the Anthropocene as just another crisis, a business cycle, or even a problem that can be fixed. It fundamentally behooves political theory to respond to challenges of not just the Anthropocene, but crucially of the entanglements of capitalism, science, and technology while at the same time making sure it does not forget it is situated in and underpinned by late modernity.

One may think with Arendt the Anthropocene as an event and as a breaking point in modernity's consistent technological, scientific, and capitalist "Progress". The Industrial Revolution and the Great Acceleration have taught the moderns that "happiness" is found in "abundance". But, burdened by the Anthropocene and largescale ecological destruction, the moderns are increasingly aware that abundance and happiness seem to be "recipes for catastrophe"[123] since the search for them is never-ending, which is to say

119 Bruno Latour, *Down to Earth: Politics in the New Climatic Regime*, English edition (Cambridge, UK; Medford, MA: Polity Press, 2018).

120 Jason W. Moore, eds., *Anthropocene or Capitalocene? Nature, History, and the Crisis of Capitalism*, Kairos (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2016): 1-14.

121 Andreas Malm, *The Progress of This Storm: Nature and Society in a Warming World* (London Brooklyn, NY: Verso, 2018).

122 For a cogent appraisal of Chakrabarty's new universalism, see Pasha, "After the Deluge." See also Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Politics of Climate Change Is More Than the Politics of Capitalism," *Theory, Culture & Society* 34, no. 2–3 (May 2017): 25–37. For another interesting reflection on Chakrabarty, see Dan Boscov-Ellen, "Whose Universalism? Dipesh Chakrabarty and the Anthropocene," *Capitalism Nature Socialism* 31, no. 1 (January 2, 2020): 70–83.

123 Hyvönen, "Labor as Action", 253.

unlimited. Arendt's hopeful remark that in this moment, in the 'non-time-space' between the infinite past and the infinite future, the moderns may realize that their actions cannot go as usual, that unlimited progress finds its limits, even in nature, is not just hopeful but fundamentally based on her idea of the political as worldly action. Arendt's thesis on geocentrism opens the space for the moderns to go about the current predicament in the way that stresses their inborn capacity for action, for the fact that "not one man but men inhabit the earth,"[124] their responsibility for the world around themselves (which is the substance of the political), and gratitude for the "free gift from nowhere"[125], that is 'human existence' on the planet "as it has been given."[126]

Thus, with geocentrism, Arendt envisages a new orientation to the planetary, such that it behooves a reorganization of moderns' "collective existence."[127] In that sense, Arendt's claim is that "progress", "will die as a predominant idea."[128] Naturally, Arendt could not have predicted that 'progress' will be endangered by earth's natural limitations, or the Anthropocene, but her point really is that in the face of the dwindling progress, the moderns will have to find ways of politically existing without it. And this 'dwindling progress' is not "doom"[129], the dichotomy between pessimism (apocalypse) and optimism (as in narratives of the "good Anthropocene"[130] or geoengineering) is a false one for Arendt, a "delightful ground of mythology"[131] of progressive political culture.[132] The apocalyptic tone[133] of the Anthropocene literature would not work for Arendt because she fundamentally believed in humanity's capacity to change things, including its political systems. With Hyvönen:

> there are always initiatives to which we can respond—ideas, experiments, policies that can be picked up and amplified. What is required, in any case, is something more than moral or factual preaching—new ways of world-building in the mode of cultivating the Earth rather than imagining ourselves as its masters or entertaining dreams of escaping. Fortunately, although we are forced to witness the piling up of debris, we are not Klee's angel made famous by Walter Benjamin, helplessly blown by the wind of progress towards our demise. We have not lost the capacity to change the world. The time for political action has not passed for good.[134]

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124 Arendt, "The Great Tradition" in Hannah Arendt, *Thinking without Banister: Essays in Understanding, 1953-1975*, ed. Jerome Kohn, First edition (New York: Schocken Books, 2018): 94.
125 Arendt, *The Human Condition,* 2.
126 *Ibid*.
127 Hyvönen, "Labor as Action", 259.
128 Arendt, "Values in Contemporary Society", in *Thinking without Banister*, 463.
129 Arendt, "A Reply to Eric Voegelin", in *Essays in Understanding*, 404.
130 See Clive Hamilton, "The Theodicy of the 'Good Anthropocene,'" *Environmental Humanities* 7, no. 1 (2015): 233–38 and John Asafu-Adjaye, Linus Blomqvist, Stewart Brand, Barry Brook, Ruth de Fries, Erle Ellis et al., "An Ecomodernist Manifesto."Accessed June 30, 2021, http://www.ecomodernism.org/manifesto-english.
131 Arendt, "The Ivory Tower of Common Sense", in *Essays in Understanding,* 196.
132Arendt understands progress much like Walter Benjamin, as the wind carrying the "Angel of History," "with the pile of ruins before him", see Arendt, "Franz Kafka: A Revaluation" in *Essays in Understanding*, 74-75.
133Jairus Grove, "Of an Apocalyptic Tone Recently Adopted in Everything: The Anthropocene or Peak Humanity?" Theory & Event 18, no. 3 (2015).
134 Hyvönen, "Labor as Action", 260.

Therefore, the 'dwindling progress' is the opportunity to embrace the slowdown. To do so, the moderns must start rethinking their relationship to the planet and to each other anew, taking into consideration, crucially, their responsibility to and for the planet while cherishing the fact that they qua humans are "earthbound creatures". Finally, this is not a nostalgic endeavor, meaning that it is not an endeavor that imagines a technoscientifically advanced world with the hope of resuscitating a pre-industrial orientation to nature. Rather, it is an endeavor that seeks to reorganize the contemporary political experience, the way it 'imagines what it is' and in so doing recenter that space 'in-between', the world and the planet, as the condition of human existence.