

Hannah Arendt's Trains of Thought 1951 to 1955

A memorandum on the occasion of the publication of the volume “The Modern Challenge to Tradition: Fragments of a Book” – as Volume 6 of “Hannah Arendt – Complete Works: Critical Edition”

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1. Introduction

Volume 6 is the first volume to have been published of ‘Hannah Arendt – Complete Works: Critical Edition’. It gathers published documents and, above all, unpublished manuscripts by the author from the period of June 1952 to September 1954, which the editors attribute to an unrealized book project entitled “The Modern Challenge to Tradition”.¹ The title can be found in Arendt's posthumous papers as a subtitle on a manuscript on which she hand wrote the comment “Preliminary – Palenville 53”; the main title there is: “Karl Marx and the Tradition of Western Political Thought”. This unpublished manuscript is a “preliminary” draft of the Gauss Lectures² to which Hannah Arendt had been invited by Princeton University in a letter dated April 29, 1952 from E. B. O. Borgerhof and for which she had determined the exact title presumably only a year later in a telephone conversation.³ At the bottom of a letter (dated September 17, 1952) from Borgerhoff (Director of the Christian Gauss Seminars), Arendt handwrote the title “Karl Marx and the tradition of political thought”,⁴ with the date May 13, 1953.⁵

As far as is known, Hannah Arendt and her husband, Heinrich Blücher, stayed from mid-July to mid-August 1953 in the resort of Palenville, located in the Catskill Mountains

¹ See in the bibliography: Arendt, 2018.

² Hannah Arendt, LOC Papers: Speeches and Writings File, 1923-1975; Essays and lectures; “Karl Marx and the Tradition of Western Political Thought” lectures, Christian Gauss Seminar in Criticism, Princeton University, Princeton NJ 1953; First drafts, (2 of 4), image 1; Arendt, 2018: 264 and 711f. For details on the Gauss Lectures, see Section 3.2. of this manuscript.

³ In her first response to the invitation (May 21, 1952), Arendt described the title only generally: “[...] it will be in connection with my book on totalitarian elements in Marxism.”

⁴ The date coincides with that of a letter to Karl Jaspers in which Arendt informs him that she will speak “about Marx in the tradition of political philosophy” at Princeton (Arendt / Jaspers, 1992: 216). The topic “Karl Marx” was already fixed earlier, see Arendt on “the Marx analysis itself” in the letter to Henry Allen Moe, Guggenheim Foundation, January 29, 1953. For more information on this letter and the Guggenheim application see the Section 3.1. of this memo. When the addition “Western” was inserted into the title (by Arendt or a third party) cannot be said on the basis of the documents that have survived. What is certain is that the fragment “Preliminary – Palenville 53” (from July/August 1953) already contains it.

⁵ All letters quoted in this manuscript without a reference can be checked online by consulting the Hannah Arendt, LOC Papers.

in New York State, as is referenced in the inscription on the manuscript.⁶ Immediately after, the Blüchers returned to New York City from Palenville, and visited Mary McCarthy and her then-husband Bowden Broadwater at their home in Wellfleet Massachusetts.⁷ Arendt mentions the title “The Modern Challenge to Tradition” for her current work in a letter to Gershom Scholem. The letter is dated August 16, 1953 and was written in New York, whereas the editors of the Critical Edition state that it was written in Palenville.⁸ Irrespective of that, however, there is of course a direct connection to the fragment “Preliminary – Palenville 53”. Yet it must be stated that “The Modern Challenge to Tradition” does not appear again as a title or subtitle in any of the other recorded fragments, but only in another private letter from Arendt, also dated August 16, 1953.⁹ So it can be assumed that it is more of a provisional choice of title.

In fact, Arendt's paths of thinking were much more complex at this time than is indicated by “The Modern Challenge to Tradition” and its focus on “a” book. In order to explain this thesis, it is advisable, in my opinion, not just to consider the period from June 1952 to September 1954, but also a somewhat longer period. Namely, the time after completion and release of “The Origins of Totalitarianism” in the fall of 1950 and February 1951, respectively, until the completion of the work on the German edition “Elemente und Ursprünge totaler Herrschaft“ in 1955. For this purpose, it is necessary to consider letters Arendt wrote about her own work, taking into account biographical information they contain. That will be attended to in following Section. Also, one must consider the most important documents from this period, which are kept in the Hannah Arendt Papers in the Library of Congress. They will be discussed in Section 3. Finally, in Section 4 all these threads are tied together by the concept of “Arendt’s trains of thought” during the period of 1951-1955.

2. Arendt's correspondence pertaining to her own work

“For the first time since 1933 I will only work [scientifically]”, wrote Hannah Arendt to Kurt Blumenfeld in August 1952 after her application for a study that continued “The Origins of Totalitarianism” under the working title “The Totalitarian Elements in Marxism” had “won” a one-year Guggenheim scholarship.¹⁰ She continues: “I have big plans. I thought that after the origins I would never achieve anything again. But this is not true.”¹¹

6 Arendt, 2018: 712: „from at least 13 July, 1953, until August 16.“

7 More precise dates are not known. But a letter written to Blücher on August 19 from Wellfleet has survived (Arendt / Blücher, 2000: 217f.).

8 Arendt / Scholem, 2017: 177. In Arendt, 2018: 712, the editors state the letter was written “toward the end of her [Arendt’s] residence” in Palenville.

9 Hannah Arendt to Niouta Ghosh, “Hannah Arendt, LOC Papers: General Correspondence / Ghosh, Niouta – 1949-69”, image 16.

10 Hannah Arendt to Kurt Blumenfeld, 6. August 1952, (Arendt/Blumenfeld, 1995: 62).

11 As recently as May 1952, Arendt had written to Blücher: “[...] I am also convinced that I won’t be able to accomplish anything worthwhile anymore for the rest of my life” (Arendt / Blücher, 2000: 169). Cf. Anne Weil in the answer (June 8, 1951) to a comment by Hannah Arendt: “I can perfectly understand that after the book was published you had the feeling that you could now die or become a taxi driver” (Arendt / Female Friends, 2018: 128).

Having lived in the USA from May 1941 onwards, Arendt had permanent positions from 1944, at the Conference on Jewish Relations, from 1946 to 1948 as an editor at Schocken Books and from 1949 as managing director of the Jewish Cultural Reconstruction (JCR).¹² The latter position only ended in 1952. She made a trip to Europe on March 21, 1952 on behalf of the JCR, with negotiations in Paris, Zurich, London, Heidelberg and Mainz,¹³ and also in Munich¹⁴; the scientific work was, so to speak, a secondary activity. She wrote (April 24, 1952) to Salo Baron, President of the JCR and her direct supervisor:

Paris is simply wonderful. I work in the libraries and at the Center de la Documentation Juive. [...] I am very glad I had this opportunity. I'll have to correct and to add quite a few things when my book [The Origins of Totalitarianism, U.L.] comes out in German or in a second edition.¹⁵

Obviously, the JCR activities gave her a lot of freedom and time for her own work at Libraries, for lectures and private visits, for example to Jaspers in Basel. She reports to Scholem: "I am happily swimming around the world [...]"¹⁶ She also had time to visit Lugano to take care of the Broch estate.¹⁷ Nevertheless, she apparently still felt like her "jobs" were dominating her life. It was not until February 1953 that she reported to Kurt Blumenfeld: "For the first time completely free at work."¹⁸ This was also preceded by the appointment of Heinrich Blücher as (visiting) professor at Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson New York, in the summer / autumn of 1952.¹⁹ The corresponding news, which should have alleviated Arendt's worries about the financing of the marital household, reached her in St. Moritz, where Gertrud and Karl Jaspers had invited her on their vacation. This is where the contours seem to have developed for her future research:

I'm going to have to do an incredible amount of work in the next two to three years, but am looking forward to it in the hope of not having to return to trade. This will be the main thing. It also seems that one or two nice things have come out of my Montesquieu stories, which could also lead to other things. My Stups will decide. My dearest, Nietzsche said — as Jaspers just told me — truth exists only in twos.²⁰

12 For her work for the JCR and its predecessor organization, which took her to Europe in 1949/50 and 1952, see the Arendt-Scholem correspondence and Gallas, 2013: especially 239-243.

13 See the commentary in (Arendt / Scholem, 2017: 171).

14 See her letter to Scholem dated May 16, 1952 from the city, Arendt / Scholem, 2017: 171f.

15 Quoted from Arendt / Scholem, 2017: 307f.

16 Letter from Basel, April 5, 1952, (Arendt / Scholem, 2017: 170).

17 (Arendt/Scholem, 2010: 172).

18 (Arendt/Blumenfeld, 1995: 74).

19 Arendt / Blücher, 2000: 207ff. - The Bard College website provides information on the details of the appointment under "Blücher Archive" as follows: "Heinrich Blücher came to Bard College as a visiting professor in 1952. He was not hired by the faculty, but rather directly by James Case, who was at that time President of the College. He developed the Common Course at the college and became its director as well as the primary lecturer for the First Year section of the course, which took as its subject the history of philosophy. His First Year lectures were given in Sottery Hall, which stands just behind the administrative offices in Ludlow. Over the course of the next seventeen years he taught at Bard [...]."

20 Arendt to Blücher, August 1, 1952, (Arendt / Blücher, 2000: 213). For "my Montesquieu stories", meaning her dealings with Montesquieu see Arendt, 2002: Heft VI / 22 (Nov. 1951), p. 145; VII / 3 (December 1951), p.

On August 17, 1952, Hannah Arendt returned to New York from her second visit to Europe. Previously, she had “prepared for the Karl Jaspers Festschrift”,²¹ her essay “Ideologie und Terror”.²² As well on her agenda was the preparation for the conference organized by Carl Joachim Friedrich on “Totalitarianism”.²³ Additionally, she knew she had to work out the Gauss Lectures.²⁴ In a letter to Karl Jaspers (on December 29, 1952) she writes: “I’ve really dug into my work, and am very pleased that I won’t have to take a job in the foreseeable future.”²⁵ More information on her work program can be found in the application for an extension of her fellowship, which Arendt sent to Henry Allen Moe at the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation on January 29, 1953.²⁶ In her letter to Moe, she summarizes her readings during the first few months of the fellowship and modifies the original research topic “The totalitarian elements in Marxism” insofar as she now names her project a “study of the totalitarian elements” not only “in Marxism”, but in “in Marx and Marxism”.²⁷

The work in the context of the Guggenheim project is overlaid by self-selected assignments which in some cases were due to current events. In a long letter to Karl Jaspers (May 13, 1953)²⁸ Arendt describes the political present in the USA under the rule of the “Congressional Investigation Committees” and reports on her own dispute with the ex-communists,²⁹ mentions the Princeton Lectures (cf. above) and continues to remark: “I taught a little at the New School this spring and enjoyed it” – about “the forms of

15ff.; VIII / 7 (February 1952), pp. 184f.. And after 1952: XIV / 25 (April 1953), p. 338; XX / 9 (May 1954), pp. 482f.; XXI / 58 (July 1955), p. 545): See also the corresponding passages in “Ideology and Terror” (see the FN 21 of this manuscript) and prior to 1955, “Hannah Arendt, LOC Papers: Karl Marx and the Tradition of Western Political Thought”, lectures, Christian Gauss seminar, second draft, part III, pp. 31-35; ditto second draft, part IV, pp. 1-10; also “The Great Tradition and the Nature of Totalitarianism” (see below FN 30); after 1955: “Einleitung: Der Sinn von Politik”, fragment 3d in (Arendt, 1993: 127f., as well as *ibid.* : 163ff., (Chapter “Pluralität in den Staatsformen”). To what extent Heinrich Blücher was involved in these texts has not yet been researched. But as a first approach, see Lederman, 2017.

21 Arendt to Blücher, July 18, 1952 in: Arendt / Blücher, 2000: 205. See also Hannah Arendt to Kurt Blumenfeld, August 6, 1952: “I will send you an essay on ideology and terror (the double compulsion) in a few months time, which I cut out of a larger, somewhat philosophical treatise for the Jaspers festschrift and from which you will see that I ended up with one leg at Montesquieu and the other firmly placed in my good old Augustin.” (Arendt / Blumenfeld, 1995: 62.) The “larger, somewhat philosophical treatise” was probably the book planned as part of the Guggenheim project, see Section 3 of this manuscript; also “Ideologie und Terror” (Arendt, 2016: Titel No’s.113, 114); and (Arendt, 2018:26-88).

22 See above.

23 The conference took place from March 6-8, 1953 in Boston. For a publication with speeches by Arendt, see Arendt, 2016: Titel Nr. 121 and (not reproduced in the Critical Edition) Arendt, 2018. See also Arendt to Jaspers, January 25, 1952, (Arendt / Jaspers, 1992: 176).

24 Their exact topic, “Karl Marx and the Tradition of Political Thought”, however, was probably not decided until May 1953. See above as well as FN’s 3 and 4 of this manuscript.

25 Arendt/Jaspers, 1992: 206.

26 Details in Section 3 of this manuscript.

27 Arendt to H. A. Moe, 29 January 1953: „I feel today, after more than one year of intense work, the inadequacy of my original statement.“ (“Hannah Arendt, LOC Papers: Correspondence, 1938-1976; Organizations, 1943-1976; John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, 1952-1975, undated“, image 11).

28 Arendt/Jaspers, 1992: 209-217.

29 It is reflected in the publication “The Ex-Communists” or “Gestern waren sie noch Kommunisten“ – “Yesterday They Were Communists”, Arendt, 2016: Titel No.’s. 111, 112 (the publication is not reproduced in Arendt, 2018).

government.”³⁰ “I have just written a little essay on the difficulties of ‘understanding’.”³¹ In addition, she participated in the Summer School Conference organized by Henry Kissinger at Harvard University (July 20-27, 1953) on the subject of “Is the Struggle Between the Free World and Communism Basically Religious?” For this purpose, she prepared a paper on “Religion and Politics.”³²

As far as writing was concerned, she had already let Kurt Blumenfeld know in February 1953: “I write slowly and so carefully that I don't recognize myself. At some point everyone comes to their senses. One just has to be able to wait. You need to enjoy your work because it constantly looks darker here.”³³ After the extension of the Guggenheim fellowship was rejected (April 20, 1953), Arendt apparently shelved the project “The totalitarian elements in [Marx and] Marxism”, but continued her studies on Marx, and it was during this period that her image of Marx changed.³⁴ More important in the present context is that her overall concern expanded. She writes to Blumenfeld, on November 16, 1953: “I was planning to do a little study on Marx, but, but – as soon as you touch Marx you realize that you can't do anything without looking at the entire tradition of political philosophy.”³⁵ So Arendt makes it her business not just to track down the “Totalitarian elements in Marx and /or Marxism“ but to put the “entire tradition of political philosophy” to the test. One thought becomes recognizable, which she had described as “half-baked” immediately after the publication of the “Origins” in a letter to Jaspers: “I suspect that philosophy is not altogether innocent of this mess [of National Socialist totalitarianism, U.L.]. Not, of course, in the sense that Hitler had anything to do with Plato. [...] Instead perhaps in the sense that Western philosophy never had a clear concept of what constitutes the political and couldn't have one, because by necessity it spoke of ‘Man the individual’ and dealt with the fact of plurality only tangentially.”³⁶

30 From March, 18 to April 22. Her lectures were entitled “The Great Tradition and the Nature of Totalitarianism”. What has been preserved is a 13-page typescript and a single page (“Hannah Arendt, LOC Papers: Speeches and Writings File, 1923-1975; Essays and lectures; “The Great Tradition and the Nature of Totalitarianism,” lecture, New School for Social Research, New York, N.Y., 1953, 14 images”). On the single page (image 1) the topics of “6 lectures” are briefly outlined; also see the Critical Edition (Arendt, 2018: 116-132).

31 The essay “Understanding and Politics” appeared in the July-August 1953 issue of the “Partisan Review”, pp. 377-392; printed in the Critical Edition (Arendt, 2018: 174-187).

32 Arendt, 2016: Titel 115. See also the Critical Edition (Arendt, 2018: 223-241).

33 Arendt / Blumenfeld, 1995: 74f. See Hannah Arendt to Gershom Scholem, July 26, 1951: “I agree with your criticism [of “The Origins of Totalitarianism”] about the omission of socialism. I had my reasons for this – namely, on the one hand, not to bump into the horn of the most horribly converted Marxists and, on the other hand, to hold back a little with my opinion” (Arendt / Scholem, 2010: 348).

34 Hannah Arendt to Karl Jaspers, May 13, 1953: “The more I read Marx, the more I see that you were right: He's not interested in freedom or in justice (And he's a terrible pain in the neck.)”. (Arendt / Jaspers, 1992: 216). This snapshot contrasts with the meaning that Marx's thinking will later acquire in Arendt's work “The Human Condition” / “Vita activa”.

35 Arendt / Blumenfeld, 1995: 94. See also Hannah Arendt to Henry Allen Moe of the Guggenheim Foundation, January 29, 1953 (sourced in the application for extension to the Guggenheim Foundation in Section 3.1. of this manuscript): “Marx, in my opinion, cannot be adequately treated without taking into account the great tradition of political and philosophical thought in which he himself still stood.”

36 Hannah Arendt to Karl Jaspers, March 4, 1951 in: Arendt / Jaspers, 1992: 166. See also Section 4.1. of this manuscript: “Towards a political science of human plurality”.

Back to the year 1953: The “little study on Marx” has not been carried out. But Arendt goes on to write in the aforementioned letter to Blumenfeld: “At the moment I am still trying to shorten the matter, at least in an external sense. I don't want to write another big book under any circumstances.”³⁷ This communication, written just days after the Gauss Lectures finished on November 12th, might indicate that Arendt was already thinking of an eventual publication. In other words: the five manuscript parts digitized by the Library of Congress under “second draft” and the “preface” of the Karl Marx lecture would not correspond to the text presented, but would be revisions of the (no longer existing) actual speech manuscript.³⁸ This thesis is corroborated by the fact that Arendt sent Gershom Scholem the publication “Tradition and the Modern Age” (1954)³⁹ with the comment: “It is the beginning of a series of lectures that I gave in Princeton last fall.”⁴⁰ What Arendt's plans for the other parts of the lecture were, or whether “Tradition and the Modern Age” is to be seen as a preprint chapter of a planned book, (according to the pattern that she had followed in earlier years with many chapters of the “Origins”) is not indicated in the surviving papers. But a passage in a letter to Karl Jaspers dated November 15, 1953 may lead a little further:

“[...] the Princeton Lectures were what is customarily called a success. I tried to show what is actually going on in the political sphere and to what extent the traditional definitions of concepts which I illustrated using the definitions of governmental forms as a model are not sufficient. All very tentative, but I've made a little progress anyhow.”⁴¹

That doesn't sound like a specific book project. The year 1954 then begins mainly with “another” series of lectures (topic: “Philosophy and Politics”⁴²) for Notre Dame University that had to be moved forward from May to March. In the context of this lecture series, she prepared a further lecture (“Concerning Politics in Recent European Philosophical Thought”⁴³) for the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association in

37 Arendt / Blumenfeld, 1995: 95. “Writing books”, so she says in the previous letter, “for me is to go to prison voluntarily. Whatever voluntarily may mean!”

38 Possibly including individual pages from the (otherwise destroyed) lecture version, which would explain the many numbering of the pages, the pasted and handwritten additions and improvements that can be found in the manuscripts that were left behind. The editors of the Critical Edition publish everything that belongs to the Gauss Lectures as “draft” versions, see (Arendt, 2018: 245-436).

39 Arendt, 2016: Titel Nr. 120; reproduced in: Arendt, 2018: 484-503.

40 Arendt to Scholem, July 8, 1954, in: Arendt / Scholem, 2010: 180f. In this letter, there is no mention of “The Modern Challenge to Tradition” neither as a title nor as a prospective book. A comparison of the LOC manuscript “Karl Marx ...”, second draft, part I, with the printed version in “Partisan Review” gives as good as complete agreement. The manuscript contains proofreading marks which were taken into account in the publication and before going to press, an “editor” has apparently improved Arendt's English.

41 Arendt/Jaspers, 1992: 230.

42 Arendt/Jaspers, 1992: 239. See also Hannah Arendt to Alfred Kazin, January 26, 1954: “I accepted lectures in Notre Dame on Philosophy and Politics and am pretty busy (but happy)” – (Arendt / Kazin, 2005: 134). Arendt's letters to Kazin are at the New York Public Library. See “Hannah Arendt - Alfred Kazin Correspondence” by Helgard Mahrtdt for an overview (Researchgate, Sept 2020).

43 Unpublished in Arendt's lifetime. The relevant material at the Library of Congress is detailed in Section 3 of this manuscript. See also: Arendt, 2016: Titel Nr. 294; Arendt, 2018: 560-592.

September to present her own ideas about a new political philosophy / science⁴⁴ to a specialist audience for the very first time.

During that same time, the 'thick book' Arendt believed she had left behind, almost five hundred pages in the first American edition, had once again claimed her full attention. She writes to Karl Jaspers (May 9, 1954):

"I'm in the process of translating my book and at the moment a bit at sea because the Europäische Verlagsanstalt has all at once offered to publish the whole book and not just an abridged edition, as Rentsch [the originally interested publisher] wanted to do. Now I have to make a quick decision. It's a pretty big job either way, and annoying, because it is more an interruption for me now than it would have been a few years ago."⁴⁵

How serious the "interruption" was can be seen in a note in the "Denktagebuch" also from May 1954. There she outlines a "book" that should contain three "essays" – under the keywords: (1) Forms of government; (2) Work; (3) Philosophy and Politics⁴⁶ – a book that shows how her world of thought had developed beyond the Guggenheim project and the Marx lectures and in which the later collections of essays "Fragwürdige Traditionsbestände im politischen Denken der Gegenwart" (1957) and "Between Past and Future" (1961) are announced as well as the book "The Human Condition" / "Vita activa" (1958/1960), and "Einführung in die Politik" ("Introduction into Politics") which exists only in fragments.⁴⁷

However, first off, Hannah Arendt decides on the German edition of the book on totalitarianism. In the coming months she rewrites the rough translation commissioned by the Europäische Verlagsanstalt (EVA)⁴⁸ and makes a general revision – not just updating her theoretical and methodological findings but also including, among other things, new material that she will find later in the library of the Hoover Institution during her stay in California. The book is given a different title, which the author justifies in a

44 Corresponding considerations had already been announced in the "Denktagebuch"; see the January 1953 entry "Experimental Notebook of a Political Scientist" (Arendt, 2002: Heft XIII / 2, 295ff.). On the APSA paper also see: Arendt / Jaspers, 1992: 243. In one of the manuscripts published by the editors of the Critical Edition under "Gauss Material Part II" – the "Summary" which in my opinion cannot be assigned (see FN 66) – there is a remarkable and unusually personal reference to her own theoretical approach. Against "psychologism" and "spiritualism", Hannah Arendt asserts as "my advantage": "Not the darkness of the human heart but on the contrary a field where everything appears in full day light, through speech and action and events, and which we have in common because we inhabit it together" (Arendt, 2018: 419).

45 Arendt/Jaspers, 1992: 235; see also 243.

46 Arendt, 2002: Heft/ 9, p. 482f. Explanations in the sense of a book project can also be found in the letter to Martin Heidegger dated May 8, 1954 (Arendt / Heidegger, 2004: 120f.). It should be noted that this "Denktagebuch" note is presented differently in the context described here than in the "Afterword" of the Critical Edition by the editors, see Arendt, 2018: 831f.

47 Posthumously published under the title Hannah Arendt, "Was ist Politik?" (Arendt, 1993).

48 On January 17, 1955, Arendt informed the editor Hans Riepl, who was responsible for her at the EVA: "I literally couldn't use a sentence from the rough translation. It would be misleading the audience to say that the book is 'translated'. Unfortunately, unfortunately it has been rewritten." In: Hannah Arendt LOC Papers: Mixed Correspondence, 1938-1976; Publishers, 1944-1975; Europäische Verlagsanstalt; 1954-1955", image 25.

new "Foreword (June 1955)" as more appropriate than the original American one: Instead of "The Origins" it says "Elemente und Ursprünge" (Elements and Origins), and what was called "Totalitarianism" is now "totale Herrschaft" ('total Domination'). In addition, Arendt replaces the original "Conclusion" with the revised essay "Ideologie und Terror" from 1953 and adds the subtitle "eine neue Staatsform" ('A new form of government'). In doing so, she subsequently gives the book a theoretical conclusion in a certain sense. The "totalitarian elements in Marxism" remains a deficit, as the later prefaces to the individual parts that Arendt will write in 1967 make clear; but "Elements and Origins of Total Domination" and the unchanged title of "The Origins of Totalitarianism" from 1958 (second, enlarged edition) maintain their stature as the work not only of a historian, but of a political theorist. As such, Hannah Arendt is invited by the Political Science Department of the University of California at Berkeley for Spring Term 1955 and gives three courses there: "History of Political Theory", "Contemporary Issues and Political Theory", "European Political Theory".⁴⁹ The approximately eight hundred page work "Elemente und Ursprünge totaler Herrschaft" appears later in the year, in November 1955, in the Europäische Verlagsanstalt.

3. The most important documents from the estate

In what follows, the most important documents from the Hannah Arendt Papers in the Library of Congress that are of interest will be analyzed in more detail. As previously mentioned, they are (1) the application and extension application to the Guggenheim Foundation, (2) the Gauss Lectures, (3) the lecture "Philosophy and Politics" and (4) the APSA lecture "Concern with Politics in Recent European Philosophical Thought". The analysis focuses on Arendt's "trains of thought" and in Section 4 (for the years 1951 to 1955) one main path and various secondary paths.

3.1. The Guggenheim application and renewal⁵⁰

Arendt probably submitted the application to the Guggenheim Foundation, the date of which we do not know, at the turn of the year 1951 and 1952; it was approved on April 9, 1952. The application outlines her endeavor to update the historical and philosophical aspects of her first book with additional studies on Marx, Marxism-Socialism and Communism under the working title "Totalitarian Elements in Marxism". It is noteworthy how precisely Arendt describes the part of the project dealing with Marx (= Part I). For part II, she plans "an historical analysis of Marxism and Socialism [...] – 1870-1917", for part III the preoccupation with Lenin, Stalin, Communism and Bolshevism. At that point

⁴⁹Among the papers for the Berkeley course there is a three-page typewritten "Conclusion" in which Arendt uses the metaphors "desert" and "oases" to summarize the thoughts that determine her political theory. See "Epilogue", in: Arendt, 2005: 201-204; also Arendt, 1993: 180-187.

⁵⁰All documents discussed in this section are available from "Hannah Arendt, LOC Papers: Correspondence, 1938-1976; Organizations, 1943-1976; John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, 1952-1975" (images 1-48). In the Arendt Critical Edition, 2018, the relevant documents are included in the "Comment", yet unfortunately not printed.

in time she believes she will be able to bring this mammoth program into book form within one and a half to two years. However, over the course of the research she must have realized that the plan was too extensive. Already in her application for extension, transmitted in the letter to Henry Allen Moe of January 29, 1953 (see FN 50, images 9-11), which we discuss below, she distances herself from what she had set out in the original application: "I feel today, after more than one year of intense work, the inadequacy of the original statement." Subsequently, she does not pursue "Totalitarian Elements in Marxism" in the form that had been previously planned.

In the extension application, Arendt sketches a new approach to the project with partly precise, partly unclear outlines:

Chapter I: "I explain [...] the particular difficulties of understanding which the rise of the totalitarian systems has brought with it." This methodological path of thought is treated as a first byway in Section 3 below.

Chapter II: "I go on to a preliminary examination of the Great Tradition in order to find the precise point on which it broke. I show this in a first analysis of Marx in the second chapter." This chapter is probably a preliminary version of the 1954 essay "Tradition and the Modern Age",⁵¹ which had accompanied the application but has not survived. The projected chapter refers to the main path presented below.

Chapter III: "Law and Power" – "I then go [...] to an examination of the two conceptual pillars of all traditional definitions of forms of government. This chapter ends with an analysis of Montesquieu, who provides me with the instruments of distinguishing totalitarianism from all – even the tyrannical – governments of the past." In my opinion, these notes are to be understood as one path under the title "Doctrine of Forms of State".

Chapter IV: "Ideology and Terror" – Arendt sends two versions of this chapter: an English version probably in manuscript form (but not preserved), of which she writes that it will appear shortly (July 1953) in the "Review of Politics",⁵² and a German one for the Karl Jaspers Festschrift (February 1953).⁵³ An exact description of the content is missing; however, the letter to Moe contains the following comment:

The last section of this [i.e., the German version ("Ideologie und Terror"), U.L.] on Solitude and Loneliness will be enlarged and both versions [i.e., the English version ("Ideology and Terror"), U.L.] and the German combined in order to be incorporated into the book.

⁵¹ Arendt, 2016: Titel Nr. 120; Arendt, 2018: 484-503. See also the letter to G. Scholem cited above (FN 40 of this manuscript).

⁵² „Ideology and Terror: A Novel Form of Government”, in: Arendt, 2016: Titel Nr. 114, Arendt, 2018: 68-88.

⁵³ Arendt, 2016: Titel Nr. 113, Arendt, 2018: 26-51. See also FN 21 above.

Therefore, it seems to me Chapter IV refers to a second alternative path that can be distinguished from the first.

In the course of the letter to Moe, Arendt refers to chapters I to IV as "opening chapters", but then speaks of six instead of four "opening chapters", which might be attributed to a careless mistake.⁵⁴ Four or six "opening chapters": Apparently Hannah Arendt seems to be describing something like the first part of the planned book, to which she wants to add a second part consisting of "the Marx analysis itself". The latter specifically consists of the six lectures she intends to prepare for her Gauss Lectures in the fall of 1953.

As imprecise as the application for extension is (which is why the refusal by the foundation is not particularly surprising), one thing can be inferred from it without further ado: Compared to the original application, the question has shifted. Arendt is now primarily interested in the "totalitarian elements in Marx", and even changes the working title to "a study of the totalitarian elements in Marx and Marxism". Furthermore, at the end of the letter she writes: "These opening chapters [...] will contain an examination of the most important political concepts of the past together with a confrontation of what happened to them within the totalitarian systems." The letter to Moe already indicates that she has in mind a critique of the "entire tradition of political philosophy" (see above in the letter to Blumenfeld, November 16, 1953) – a notion that is further supported by the title "The Modern Challenge to Tradition". A little later, however, efforts to develop a separate political theory of plurality and ideas about a new political science come to the fore. In my opinion, here are the first concrete steps in the direction of the thought path that culminates in the Gauss Lectures.

3.2. The Gauss (Princeton) Lectures⁵⁵

As previously mentioned, a manuscript for the actual lectures delivered by Hannah Arendt as part of the Christian Gauss seminar at Princeton in October / November 1953⁵⁶ has not been preserved. The assumption that the folders stored in the Library of Congress as "second draft" represent an adaptation of the lectures themselves, made with a view

⁵⁴ In the case of the Guggenheim documents in Arendt's hand, it should be taken into account that they may only be carbon copies or draft versions. It is not known what the actual applications sent to the foundation looked like. See also the publisher's announcements in Arendt, 2018: 660 and FN 6.

⁵⁵ "LOC Arendt Papers : Essays and lectures / Karl Marx and the Tradition of Western Political Thought, lectures Christian Gauss Seminar in Criticism, Princeton University, Princeton, N.J". A total of 11 individual manuscripts that can be viewed on the Internet are recorded under this rubrum, four of them as "First drafts", the rest as "Second drafts". In the following, the various parts of the "Second draft" are taken as a basis. The Critical Edition (Arendt, 2018) includes the Gauss Lectures in a different order in Chapter II ("The Modern Challenge to Tradition [July - December 1953]"), pp. 243-436, and Chapter III ("Eine Art Buch - A Book That Can't Be Written [January - September 1954]"), pp. 463-503.

⁵⁶ As far as can be seen from her correspondence with Princeton University, Arendt gave a total of six lectures at weekly intervals from October 8 to November 12, 1953, each of which she traveled to from New York.

toward a book publication, is discussed in detail in Section 2.⁵⁷ The broad outline is presented below⁵⁸:

The plan can be found in the "Preface" (p. 05) [of Second Draft, folder 2], which is then divided into six parts [in the remaining folders], each of which is assigned to different divisions of the manuscript that are numbered consecutively. However, only two of the parts (I and IV) [Second Draft, folders 4 and 7] begin with page 1; Part II [Second Draft, folder 6] begins on page 9,⁵⁹ which is followed by Part III [Second Draft, folder 3] on page 21; Part V [Second Draft, Folder 5] begins with page 15 [since Part IV has 14 pages].⁶⁰ [As indicated,] the beginning of each part is marked by a Roman numeral, typed or handwritten, in the middle of a page. It is certain that the parts were not written down in one sitting. This is indicated by the many deletions, insertions, rearrangements in the text and the renumbering of the pages. Nevertheless, the parts that have been preserved are continuous in themselves; there are no places where the text breaks off.

"My procedure will be as follows", Hannah Arendt writes in the "Preface": "I shall begin in the first lecture with the three great challenges to tradition in the 19th century, Kierkegaard, Marx and Nietzsche to place Marx's turning point (what he called standing Hegel on his head) in its proper perspective." Part I (pp. 1-22) is concerned with the three great challengers of the tradition. They corresponds to the publication "Tradition and the Modern Age" (1954)⁶¹ or the later German version "Tradition und die Neuzeit" in the volume of essays "Fragwürdige Traditionsbestände im politischen Denken der Gegenwart" (1957).

In Part II, Arendt says: "I shall then proceed to show in three examples that our tradition of political thought never comprehended all actual political experiences of Western mankind. I shall use the pre-polis experience of Greece and its sense of action, the Roman experience of foundation which lays the ground for our concept of tradition, and the early Christian experience of forgiving." Part III (pp. 9-20) deals with working through the defects in traditional political thought; here, "the defectiveness of our tradition", as Arendt writes, is reflected in lost political experiences. These are illustrated by three "examples" using three key words: "acting" in the Greek thinking of the pre-Polis period, "founding" in Roman thought and "forgiving" in the Christian way of thinking.

⁵⁷ In addition, it should be taken into account what Lotte Koehler reported in a conversation, namely that the employees of the Library of Congress originally followed an order when cataloging the files in Arendt estate that Arendt herself had given with the help of a secretary (Ingrid Scheib-Rothbart). What can be called up on the Internet under "Karl Marx and the Tradition of Western Political Thought" (second draft) would therefore correspond to the manuscript that Arendt had kept as a Gauss Lecture. The "first draft" cataloged in the Library of Congress received the handwritten reference "Preliminary - Palenville 53" from Arendt, it was probably written down in July / August 1953, but was subsequently discarded, see also above in Sections 1 and 2 of this manuscript.

⁵⁸ Square brackets added by the editors.

⁵⁹ That could indicate that the original version of Part I comprised eight pages, which were expanded to 22 pages when it was revised for the journal "Partisan Review".

⁶⁰ For Part IV see below.

⁶¹ This has already been pointed out in the Section 2 of the memo.

For Part III (pp. 21-48) of the "Preface" she writes: "After these three examples for the defectiveness of our tradition, which could be multiplied, I shall try to show in one outstanding example its [the tradition's, U.L.] transforming and conceptualizing power in the traditional definition of governments." In other words, Arendt uses the example of the theory of forms of government to show how a transformed tradition was able to influence, over centuries, (up to and including Montesquieu), a concept of the state, not as a coexistence of plural peoples, but as an instrument of "rule", "power" and "law".

Following "these two aspects of tradition, its defectiveness and its transformative power with respect to actual experiences", she observes in Part IV (pp. 1-14) "that in all those experiences", dealt with in parts II and III, "the experience of action is somehow eliminated. This observation leads us to question the attitude of philosophers towards politics and to examine the political experiences which in the beginning gave rise to that attitude." In these reflections on acting as "the lost treasure", the thought path from the Greek "archein" to "prattein" is announced, which at this point should still be viewed as a pathway. Soon afterwards – with the Walgreen Lectures and "The Human Condition" – it will become determinate and merge with the main path described later in this memo. "Philosophy and Politics" will occupy Arendt's thinking for the remainder of her life.

Part V (pp. 15-33) is also conceived in connection with thoughts about action: "This will bring me back to one of my fundamental problems, the problem of labor seen in the light of tradition and in the light of conditions prevailing after the industrial revolution." At the same time, Arendt draws a link back to Part I, in which the importance of Marx as the one who "completes" the tradition in the 19th century is emphasized. "The occidental tradition of political thought", as she recalls later at the beginning of the essay volume "Fragwürdige Traditionsbestände im politischen Denken der Gegenwart", "has a clearly date-able beginning. It starts with the teachings of Plato and Aristotle. I believe it found an equally definitive end in Karl Marx's theories."⁶²

"This finally", she says about Part VI in the Preface "leads to a re-examination of the fundamental activities of man seen from the viewpoint of his living-together and sharing a common world with his fellow men." A corresponding Part VI, however, is not available in the "folders" for the Gauss lectures in the Library of Congress. Instead there is a manuscript section preceded by a Roman VI, under: Speeches and Writings file / "Philosophy and Politics: The Problem of Action ...", lecture / 1954 [folder 4 of four folders].⁶³ This part of the manuscript (pp. 1-16) could very well be a revision of the last lecture of the Gauss series, as it is preoccupied with the theory of forms of government coupled with reflections on the concept of action. Thus Arendt is led to the observation: „This materialism, the conviction that all action is basically motivated by material needs,

⁶²Hannah Arendt, "Tradition und die Neuzeit", in: Arendt, 1957: 9-45, 9.

⁶³Hannah Arendt Papers: Speeches and Writings File, 1923-1975; Essays and lectures; "Philosophy and Politics: the Problem of Action and Thought after the French Revolution," lecture, 1954; hereafter cited as "Manuscript Part VI". The editors of the Critical Edition assign this manuscript to the "Gauss Material Part II" (see pp. 423-436) but connect it in the commentary (pp. 762f.) with a "Summary" (see FN 66), whose affiliation with the Gauss Lectures I find questionable.

has remained a continuous feature of traditional political thought up to and including Marx" [Gauss Manuscripts, Second Draft, Part V, folder 5, pp. 27, 28f]. Arendt refers to this idea at the beginning of the manuscript, "Part VI." There it says: "From this materialism, inherent in our political tradition since Aristotle, and the relegation of politics to the strictly material sphere of life and the resigned acceptance that politics is as necessary for the good life as the fulfilment of the needs of the human body is necessary for life itself, we now turn to the corresponding idealism, that is to the concomitant notion that the living together of man must be ruled by those ideas whose shining reality the philosopher perceives outside the cave of human affairs."⁶⁴

If the assignment of manuscript part VI made here is correct, then Hannah Arendt might have ended the Gauss Lectures with the following thoughts:

It is no accident that when Marx had concretely to define what human nature was he could fall back only on the animal laborans, upon man's metabolism with nature and on his natural needs. Paradoxically, one may say that it lies in the condition of man not to have any nature. His nature is either that natural part of his biological life which he shares with animal life or it is defined as some supra-natural goal to which all human life must strive but which man, because of some defect in his nature, can never fully attain. Such definitions, whether they insist on the „natural" or on the „supranatural," can only proceed from man in his singularity with the result that single men then are related to the defined human nature in the same way as the multitude of concrete things is related to the One-ness of Plato's idea. Taken in its philosophical implications, Marx's socialized mankind, unlike Plato's Republic whose ideocracy was meant to conceal and justify the rule of the philosopher, would be a real ideocracy in which some idea of the nature of man would rule mercilessly over all men. The conflict between politics and philosophy, or between men who live and act together in the condition of plurality and man who thinks in solitude and is shocked by the miracle of being in his singularity, would [be] resolved in a socialized mankind in the sense that men would neither act, nor think nor speak (except for the purposes of communication) nor work in the sense of making themselves at home in the world into which each of us is born as a stranger; they would only function in accordance with their nature. Under such conditions of a universalized functionalism, we would indeed be so much at home in this world that we would no longer have to make ourselves at home in it. We would have become part and parcel of the natural universe. In this case, if we may once more recall Augustine, who said that man was created that a beginning be made – *initium ut esset homo creatus est* – we would have eliminated in ourselves the faculty and the urge to begin, to be beginners and to establish on the earth and surrounded by the universe a specifically human world into which new men, beginners, constantly are born. The „metabolism with nature" which is inherent in the human condition ends with death; the body politic and the human artifice which we erect on the earth on the contrary, always begins anew,

⁶⁴Manuscript part VI, p. 1, [cf. above].

because it is ultimately related to *the fact of natality*, as opposed to mortality, to the fact that we are born into the world, that with each of us the world in a sense begins anew. Socialized mankind and socialized man might indeed be the end of humanity and the end of man, because it would have organized men in such a way that it would no longer matter that new men are born into it; they would not be „beginnings” but only the most recent specimens of an old species – –.⁶⁵

This also marks the conclusion of Arendt's analysis of Marx. It can be seen that mentally the coordinates have shifted – towards a path of thought that is named with the terms “philosophy” and “politics”. So it is not surprising that Arendt chooses “Philosophy and Politics” as the subject for her lectures at the University of Notre Dame soon after the Gauss Lectures.

3.3. “Philosophy and Politics”

The Committee on International Relations at the University of Notre Dame invited Hannah Arendt to give a series of lectures in January 1954, which was originally supposed to take place in May 1954, but was brought forward to the beginning of March (a total of three events on March 3rd and 4th). The title of the series was “Philosophy and Politics: The Problem of Action and Thought After the French Revolution”.⁶⁶

The “problem of action and thought” is addressed within the context of the beginning of political philosophy in ancient Greece (Part I) and in the epoch of the Christian Middle Ages up to Hegel, Tocqueville and Marx (Part II); both parts take into account the experiences of the French Revolution and the wars and revolutions in the first half of the 20th century. Part III on the trial and condemnation of Socrates is about “the birth of political philosophy”, i.e. methodologically speaking, on the “determination of the origin” of political philosophy as a “determination of its essence.”⁶⁷ At the end of the lecture series, as in the beginning, Tocqueville comes to the fore. There are two sentences from Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* that Arendt uses as a guide: “A new science of politics is needed for a new world” and “As the past has ceased to throw its light upon the future, the mind of man wanders in obscurity”.⁶⁸ They allow her to conclude the series of

⁶⁵ Manuscript part VI, p. 15f.; Emphasis U.L.; see Arendt, 2018 under “Gauss Material Part II. Drafts”: 435f.

⁶⁶ The lecture manuscript is kept under this title at the Hannah Arendt Papers in the Library of Congress in the “Speeches and Writings File 1923-1975; Essays and lectures; Philosophy and Politics: the Problem of Action and Thought after the French Revolution (4 folders)”. In “folders” 1 and 2 is a typewritten manuscript numbered from 1 to 55 with many inserted subpages and handwritten improvements (Arendt, 2018: 504-559). “Folder 3” contains an uncorrected copy; “Folder 4” a text “Summary”, which in my opinion cannot be assigned to this lecture (and also to the Gauss Lectures), as well as the “Manuscript Part VI” considered above for the Gauss Lectures. In the 55-page Manuscript three parts are marked, which roughly corresponded to the following: on page 1, a Roman “I” in typescript; on page 16, a Roman “II” in handwriting and a Roman “III” (also handwritten) on page 32. In the case of this lecture, the final topic was determined in letters between Arendt and the representative of the organizing committee, M. A. Fitzsimons; LOC Arendt Papers under: Correspondence, 1938-1976; Universities and Colleges, 1947-1975; University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, Ind.; 1953-1958, Images 1-40.

⁶⁷ See Hannah Arendt, “On Imperialism”, in: Arendt, 1976: 12-45, 26.

⁶⁸ See Arendt, 2002 “Denktagebuch”: XIX / 27, p. 465, and Notes 1 and 2 on p. 1047f.

lectures: "[...] the problem of philosophy and politics, or the necessity for a new political philosophy from which could come a new science of politics is once more on the agenda" (p. 54). At the same time, this reference serves, albeit in outline form, a positioning towards her own political philosophy/theory:

Philosophy, political philosophy like all its other branches, will never be able to deny its origin in *thaumadzein*, in the wonder at that which is as it is. If philosophers, despite their necessary estrangement from the everyday life of human affairs, were ever to arrive at a true political philosophy, they would have to make the plurality of men, out of which the whole field of human affairs in its grandeur and misery arises, the object of their *thaumadzein*. Biblically speaking, they would have to accept – as they accept in speechless wonder the miracle of the universe, of man and of being – the miracle that God did not create Man, but ‘male and female created He them’. They would have to accept in something more than resignation about human weakness the fact that ‘it is not good for man to be alone.’⁶⁹

3.4. “Concern with Politics in Recent European Philosophical Thought”

Hannah Arendt had been invited to give a lecture at the 1954 annual meeting of the American Political Science Association (APSA) "which would have been stupid to refuse".⁷⁰ She uses the opportunity to introduce herself as a political scientist (“we political scientists”) under the title mentioned above to plead for a “new political philosophy” or “authentic political philosophy”.

”Crucial for a new political philosophy will be an inquiry into the political significance of thought, that is, into the meaningfulness and the condition of thinking for a being that never exists in the singular and whose essential plurality is far from explored when an I-Thou relationship is added to the traditional understanding of human nature. [...] Like all other branches of philosophy, it [an authentic political philosophy, U.L.] can spring only from an original act of *thaumadzein* whose wondering and hence questioning impulse must now (i.e., contrary to the teaching of the ancients) directly grasp the realm of human affairs and human deeds. To be sure, for the performance of this act the philosophers, with their vested interest in being undisturbed and their professional experience

⁶⁹Arendt, Manuscript „Philosophy and Politics“, p. 55, in: Arendt, 2018: 558f.

⁷⁰Arendt to Jaspers, May 9, 1954, in: Arendt / Jaspers, 1992: p. 240. Arendt prepared the lecture in writing.

There are two folders in the LOC Papers in the “Speeches and Writings File, 1923-1975; Essays and lectures; “Concern with Politics in Recent European Political Thought, lecture, 1954” . The manuscript in folder 1 consists of 20 typewritten pages and bears the title “The Concern With Politics in Recent Philosophical Thought” with a hand written note at the upper right hand corner of page 1 “first draft, 1954”. In folder 2, there is a tightly typed manuscript of 14 pages (with the numbers 02348-023261), that could be the version Arendt submitted to the organizers for her lecture. Both folders have many additional pages, some with typewritten and handwritten improvements, while folder 2 has comments not from Arendt, but probably Mary McCarthy. Jerome Kohn has published a version in his collection “Essays in Understanding, 1930-1954” (see Arendt, 1994: 428-447) – “primarily based on what appears to be the last draft, incorporating additions and corrections” –which is quoted below.

with solitude, are not well equipped. But who else is likely to succeed if they should fail us?"⁷¹

What is being formulated here as a request to philosophers should pretty much reflect the position that Hannah Arendt took for herself at that time in the context of American political science. Perhaps she didn't want to expose herself too much in February 1953, for what does the letter to Kurt Blumenfeld quoted above really say? "I write slowly and [...] carefully."

4. The main thought path, two side paths

The years 1951 to 1955 in Hannah Arendt's work were largely dominated by her book "The Origins of Totalitarianism". As has been shown, Arendt identified deficiencies immediately after the book was published, while others (on which we cannot report here) were brought to her attention through various kinds of criticism. She also repeatedly presented and justified her views in lectures that she selected from those that had been offered her. At the same time, she has "made a little headway" in her own thought efforts (see above in the letter to Jaspers, November 15, 1953). In my opinion, a main path of thought and various side paths can be identified at this time. They are, briefly summarized, as follows.

4.1. Towards a political science of human plurality

At the turn of the year 1952/53, Hannah Arendt entered onto the main path of her own, non-totalitarian – but on the contrary – pluralistically-oriented political and philosophical theory while at the same time searching out the totalitarian elements she had considered in "The Origins of Totalitarianism".⁷² The entry "Experimental Notebook of a Political Scientist", which she makes in January 1953 in her "Denktagebuch", also refers to this. There she records, among other things: "The establishment of political science demands a philosophy for which men exist only in the plural. Its field is human plurality."⁷³ "Human plurality" – that is the thought that Arendt throws into the debates of political scientists and philosophers in recognition of the inadequacy of tradition. As a theorist of plurality, she will go down in the history of political thought. Margaret Canovan was the first to work this out convincingly, arguing closely from Arendt's published work and unpublished manuscripts in the Library of Congress. In the "Conclusion" to her book "Hannah Arendt: A Reinterpretation of Her Political Thought" she summarizes:

⁷¹ Arendt, 1994 "Concern with Politics...", 445f. The quoted passage, except for small editorial improvements, also in Arendt LOC Papers: Speeches and Writings File, 1923-1975; Essays and lectures: "Concern with Politics in Recent European Political Thought," lecture 1954 / Folder 2 (of 2), image 14; see also Arendt, 2018: 590f.

⁷² The debate as to whether Hannah Arendt is a political "philosopher" or a political "theorist" (which she herself fueled by bringing it up at the beginning of the Gauss interview in 1964) is irrelevant in our context. Therefore, we have refrained from dealing with it.

⁷³ Arendt, 2002 "Denktagebuch": Heft XIII / 2 (January 1953), p. 295. Underlining in the original.

Lecturing in 1955 on the history of political thought [at the University of Californiam], she [Arendt] remarked that each of the key political thinkers of the past 'has thrown one word into our world, has augmented it by this one word, because he responded rightly and thoughtfully to certain decisively new experiences of his time'. After following her thought trains we must, I think, concede that in the course of her own response to the experiences of her time, Arendt also 'augmented' the world by one word: the word 'plurality'.⁷⁴

As the documents discussed in Section 3 have shown, the "paths of thought" under the single keyword "plurality" were not straightforward for her. Whereas at the beginning, Marxism, Leninism and Bolshevism were in the foreground of her orientation, soon only Karl Marx was the one Arendt chose to deal with. This discussion, while reading the works of Plato in particular, led to the critical questioning of the "entire" Western philosophical tradition, which was finally dealt with by juxtaposing "philosophy" and "politics". But Arendt recorded her background thoughts on all the questions in this context much earlier. In August 1950, she entrusted to the "Denktagebuch" this dictum: "Politics is based on the fact of the plurality of people", thus expressing her opposition to the philosophy and theology of the Western tradition, that "always deal with people" in the singular.⁷⁵

Hannah Arendt continued on this main path of thought after the creative work discussed here and, as before, took a variety of secondary paths. Taking the metaphor further, one could say there were always intermediate stops marked by publications. However, Arendt never reached a final "goal" and there are many indications that she did not intend to. She did not systematize or even canonize her findings nor permitted their canonization. Although she never opted for an educational effect, until the end of the 1950s, she consistently worked out of the "Fragwürdige Traditionsbeständen im politischen Denken der Gegenwart",⁷⁶ running parallel as "trains of thought which had lain dormant at the back of my mind" to her preoccupation with the *vita activa* and the concept of action.⁷⁷ Finally, towards the end of her life, she publicly acknowledged this fundamental orientation of her thinking: "I have clearly joined the ranks of those who for some time now have been attempting to dismantle metaphysics, and philosophy with all its categories, as we have known them from their beginning in Greece until today."⁷⁸

⁷⁴ Canovan, 1992: 280f. Insertions U.L.

⁷⁵ Arendt, 2002 "Denktagebuch" I/21 (Was ist Politik?), p. 15; See also Heft II/ 30 (January 1951), p. 53f.: "Der Mensch, die Menschen". See also the above-cited letter to Karl Jaspers, March 4, 1951.

⁷⁶ In the German book of the same name (1957) and the essays in "Between Past and Future" (1961/1968).

⁷⁷ Arendt made this focus of her thinking public with a certain delay at the APSA annual meeting in 1960 in her lecture on "Action and the Pursuit of Happiness" (the "pursuit of happiness" which the Declaration of Independence asserted to be one of the Inalienable human rights has remained to this day considerably more than a meaningless phrase", in: Hannah Arendt Papers: Speeches and Writings File, 1923-1975; Essays and lectures; "Action in the Pursuit of Happiness," lecture, American Political Science Association, New York, NY., 1960 Image 1, p. 1. "The Human Condition" was published in 1958.

⁷⁸ Arendt, 1978: Vol. I, 212.

4.2. Reflections on the method

For the period 1951 to 1955, a first side path should be distinguished from her main route. In coming to terms with the methodological deficiencies that critics accused Arendt of in her book on totalitarianism and that she herself recognized, Hannah Arendt dealt with the “method of the historical sciences” in general and turned to the specific difficulties of historical understanding.⁷⁹ This line of thought is documented in the essay “Understanding and Politics” published in the *Partisan Review* in 1953⁸⁰ as well as two postponed manuscripts, which were probably written in advance: “On the Nature of Totalitarianism: An Essay in Understanding” (38 pages) in the holdings of the Library of Congress together with another undated and incomplete manuscript of 23 pages.⁸¹ In the last two manuscripts mentioned, Arendt pursues the problem of understanding, especially with regard to “the nature of totalitarianism”,⁸² traced back to its historical origins and analyzed in the third part in a crystallized form. These reflections are to be distinguished from those formulated in her “Denktagebuch”, applied to the “event and element theory”, which she outlines as a counter-concept to the theory of causality. The result of these considerations will prompt Arendt to publish the German version of her book on totalitarianism under the title “Elemente und Ursprünge totaler Herrschaft” and to justify this decision in the foreword from 1955 as follows:

The origins lie in the decline and disintegration of the nation state and the anarchic rise of modern mass society; the elements that are set free in this process of decay are already in the first two parts [of the book] and analyzed in their totalitarian form of crystallization in the third part.⁸³

The methodological path of thought can thus be seen as closed.

4.3. The formation of states

From the point of view of plurality, the most important question arises: How do people live together? Arendt defines speaking and acting as fundamental for this. She also considers it fundamental that political coexistence takes place in a delimited space – an

⁷⁹ There are three contemporaneous entries in the “Denktagebuch” on the “Methode in den Geschichtswissenschaften”: (Arendt, 2002: Heft IV / 18 (May 1951), p. 89; Heft IV / 23 (June 1951), pp. 96f.; Heft V / 5 (June 1951), p. 105. For “understanding” see above in the Guggenheim extension application, chapter I.

⁸⁰ Arendt, 2016: Title No. 117; published in the Critical Edition (Arendt, 2018: 174-187). The original title was probably “The Difficulties of Understanding”, “Hannah Arendt, LOC Papers: Speeches and Writings File, 1923-1975; Essays and lectures; “The Difficulties of Understanding,” essay, 1953, carbon copy images 1-21. Also published in the Critical Edition Arendt, 2018: 159-173.

⁸¹ Hannah Arendt, LOC Papers: Speeches and Writings File, 1923-1975; Essays and lectures; “On the Nature of Totalitarianism: An Essay in Understanding, two typescripts”, images 1-68. Reprint of the former in Arendt, 2018: 133-158. The second untitled typescript (images 42-68) is assigned the title “Ideology and Terror” by the Critical Edition’s editors (Arendt, 2018: 52-67, 603).

⁸² In addition, with regard to the problem of understanding, Arendt’s “Reply” to Eric Voegelin’s criticism of “The Origins of Totalitarianism” must be taken into account, (Arendt, 2016: Titel No. 116).

⁸³ „Foreword” in (Arendt, 1986: 13-14, 14).

assumption that focuses on the doctrine of the forms or rules of government from the book “De l’Esprit des lois” by Montesquieu “the last political thinker to concern himself seriously with the problem of forms of government.”⁸⁴ In corresponding statements in published works and unpublished manuscripts, Arendt introduces her definition of totalitarianism as a “new form of government”.⁸⁵ In doing so, she focuses on the deficiencies of the traditional theory of the forms of the state that concerns itself with ruling and being ruled, and from which plurality is excluded. With regard to totalitarianism, Arendt brings this path of thought to a close in the chapter “Ideology and Terror: A New Form of Government”, which she places at the end of “Elemente und Ursprünge totaler Herrschaft” and later in “The Origins of Totalitarianism”.⁸⁶ On the other hand, she will continue to occupy herself with the question of how pluralism is present in the doctrine of the forms of government,⁸⁷ without ever having published her corresponding thoughts in a systematic form.

5. Conclusion

At the beginning it was pointed out that the title “The Modern Challenge to Tradition” chosen by the editors of the Critical Edition only appears once and, at that, in a subordinate place in Arendt's manuscripts, and shortly afterwards is mentioned in only two letters written on the same day. From Arendt's point of view, its expressiveness is therefore limited in terms of time and content. The fact that the editors nevertheless selected it for their edition and focused their attention on “a” book shows that they are pursuing these matters from a different perspective. This impression of an approach that is external and not “Arendt-intrinsic”, is reinforced if one consults the table of contents of the volume as well as Arendt's publications and manuscripts from the period 1952 to 1954. They are arranged in three chapters: “The Great Tradition (June 1952-July 1953)”, “The Modern Challenge to Tradition (July-December 1953)”, “A prospective book – a book that can't be written (January-September 1954)”. Most of the manuscripts from the “Gauss Lectures” have been brought together under the title of the second chapter, which was also chosen as the overall title of the volume. However, the editors do not follow the order in which they are kept in the Library of Congress – and how, as far as we know, they were left in Arendt's apartment. They have been rearranged, based on the material-philological criteria (“by the material features”) of the manuscripts, especially the assignment to the typewriter used in each case.⁸⁸

84Arendt, 1989: 202. See also FN 20 in this manuscript.

85See above in the Guggenheim extension application, chapters III and IV; Gauss Lectures, Part III; Arendt, and the discussion of “Ideologie und Terror” / “Ideology and Terror” (FN 21 of this manuscript).

86See Section 2 of this manuscript.

87For example, for her incomplete “Introduction to Politics”, she has provided a chapter “Plurality in the Forms of Government”, see Hannah Arendt, LOC Papers: Speeches and Writings File: Speeches and Writings File, 1923-1975; Essays and lectures; “Einführung in die Politik,” lecture, undated – Document 1 [folder 7 of 7]; also in Arendt, 1993: 191-197, 196.

88Arendt, 2018: 701ff. A portable typewriter (also indicated as the “Palenville typewriter”) is distinguished from a different typewriter (also indicated as the “New York typewriter”) and, as far as can be seen, not taken into account that Arendt could have used the portable typewriter in New York as well.

There are now four categories of “drafts”, three of which have the ‘Karl Marx’-title and one “Palenville Fragment Draft”, which is not identical to the bundle marked by Arendt as “Preliminary – Palenville 53”.⁸⁹ In the fourth category, a distinction is made between a “First New York Fragment” and a “Second New York Fragment” as well as “Gauss Material Part I” and “Part II”, whereby “Tradition and the Modern Age” (the publication that Arendt mentioned to Scholem as the “beginning” of lecture series two⁹⁰) and a “draft” are separated and assigned to the third chapter (“A kind of book”). In my opinion, this new presentation of the manuscripts makes it more difficult for the reader to recognize and follow Hannah Arendt's trains of thought in the period under consideration.⁹¹

It was these perceptions and considerations that led to the drafting of this memorandum. Like “The Modern Challenge to Tradition”, it is intended to direct our attention to Arendt's path of thought at the time, but also to broaden it and focus it in terms of content. With regard to the most important manuscript bundle from this period, the Gauss Lectures, the third section is based on the same manuscripts as the Critical Edition volume. However, we have taken the order as handed down in the LOC Papers as a basis, because with it – contrary to the opinion of the Critical Editions editors – a self-contained bundle has been handed down. This broadens the view insofar as a larger period of time – from the completion of the “Origins” (1951) to the publication of “Elemente und Ursprünge” (1955) – is taken into account; thus, this focus allows for consideration of the author's abundant historical statements as well as documents handed down in the estate and the texts in terms of their content-related references to Arendt's ways of thinking at the time.

As a result, it should be noted that Arendt's ways of thinking can be determined more precisely in the period being considered than the title “The Modern Challenge to Tradition” and the volume of the Critical Edition suggests. Her endeavor to redefine political science in the sense of a political theory of human plurality, owed in large measure to the 20th century's experiences with totalitarian systems but also her own efforts to understand, denotes the main path of thought. From a methodological point of view, Arendt's examination of the problem of understanding and its considerations in the sense of an “event and element theory” also play a role that cannot be overlooked. Furthermore, it can be seen as an application of her own findings in a specific area⁹² of political science, the preoccupation with the traditional theory of the forms of government

⁸⁹These changes are justified on p. 711ff. Furthermore, the changes constituting the third category of drafts under the title and subtitle of the typed original “Karl Marx and the Tradition of Western Political Thought” are justified on p. 264ff. of „The Modern Challenge to Tradition”.

⁹⁰See Section 2 and FN 39 and 40 of this manuscript.

⁹¹In addition, there is the difficulty of relating the new text arrangement with the traditional one that is also the basis for many works in the secondary literature; some of which have been published by Jerome Kohn (in: Arendt, 2005). Although the editors did document the page numbers in the Arendt originals in square brackets in the margin when reproducing the manuscripts, they did not consider it necessary to add a concordance to their volume.

⁹²Arendt will turn to other areas in the following years, see above all her publications “Fragwürdige Traditionsbestände im politischen Denken der Gegenwart”(1957) and “Between Past and Future” (1961, 1968).

and, within this framework, the elaboration of a “new form of government” determined by ideology and terror. To put it more generally: The texts published in the Critical Edition volume testify to Arendt's *thaumadzein*; her sense of wonder that impels her to search for and discover how it came to be that the great tradition failed – an effort that was not an end in itself; because “there will be no way out until we know why no path could be paved from the great tradition”.⁹³ In the essay that Arendt placed at the end of the German edition of her book on totalitarianism, “Elemente und Ursprünge totaler Herrschaft”, her efforts come to a certain conclusion. One could also say, changing the perspective; that on her way to “The Human Condition” / “Vita activa” she threw off ballast.

As imprecise as the title “The Modern Challenge to Tradition” is with regard to Hannah Arendt's concrete ways of thinking in the years 1951 to 1955, the concern expressed in it remains generally applicable for the entire work. In the latter sense, Hannah Arendt was quoted above: “I have clearly joined the ranks of those who for some time now have been attempting to dismantle metaphysics, and philosophy with all its categories, as we have known them from their beginning in Greece until today.”⁹⁴ But it is difficult to imagine a book project with a title given by the editors for the time period under consideration.⁹⁵ In this respect, “The Modern Challenge to Tradition”, as it is called in a subchapter of the volume, may actually have been “a book that cannot be written”. However, it does not seem helpful to present Hannah Arendt's writings from the early 1950s and manuscripts that were left behind at the same time as “fragments” of this book. Since what does that say? To the extent that the publisher does not fulfill their stated intention⁹⁶ to provide a clear interpretative specification, a view of the concrete Arendtian ways of thinking is hindered rather than encouraged. This memorandum, though taking an opposing position, is a reminder that the writings and manuscripts published in Volume 6 of the Critical Edition reveal ways of thinking that provide information about Hannah Arendt's intellectual biography from 1951 to 1955 – information that is closer to Arendt's texts than the concept of a book called “The Modern Challenge to Tradition”.⁹⁷

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93 Arendt, 2002: Heft III / 22, p. 69.

94 See FN 78 in this manuscript.

95 This assessment would have additional plausibility if it turned out that the LOC manuscript part “Preliminary – Palenville 53” (Arendt, 2018: 264 ff.; see FN 89 of this manuscript) had been rejected by Arendt – an assumption that arises when the LOC manuscripts of the Gauss Lectures under “Second Drafts” (see FN 55) are compared with the content of that part of the manuscript.

96 “The edition wants to make reading possible and not pretend to make it possible”, c.f., editorial principles of “The Modern Challenge to Tradition”, (Arendt, 2018: 596).

97 The impression of the reviewer Dieter Thomä that this volume documents Arendt's “failure” may be justified in view of the presentation of the documents in the Critical Edition volume (Thomä, 2018). However, given the context presented in this memorandum, it can hardly be confirmed. Arendt's intellectual development between “The Origins of Totalitarianism” and “Elemente und Ursprünge totaler Herrschaft” is an intermediate phase, but one that was productive for the author and that led to “The Human Condition” and continued with “On Revolution”.

Editorial Notes and Acknowledgements

Early In January 2022, I began work with Ursula Ludz on a revision and translation of her text “Hannah Arendts Denkwege 1951 bis 1955 Ein Memorandum anlässlich der Veröffentlichung des Bandes ‚The Modern Challenge to Tradition‘ im Rahmen der kritischen Hannah-Arendt-Gesamtausgabe“ (Politisches Denken. Jahrbuch 2018, Bd. 28, 2020, 55–80). Although I had produced a very rough translation several months earlier, it was not until December 2021 we decided to work together. There were several reasons for this. In 2021 she had been diagnosed with cancer, and had both surgery and chemotherapy. At first, her treatment seemed to go well but as time progressed things changed. During this period, both by email and phone, we edited her manuscript. From the very beginning, she did not want this to be a verbatim translation of the German original, but rather a revision and translation, reflecting not only the reorganization of Arendt’s Archives at The Library Congress but as well issues that arose as a result of the original publication. To that end she gave detailed corrections not just to the translation but to the content of the text itself, crossing out some passages, inserting others. These were done in installments. By the time of her tragic death, approximately half of the manuscript was corrected, and/or revised. It is in that spirit and with the help and guidance of a number of people, that the remainder was completed.

The present manuscript represents the form and content of the document that existed at the time of her death, but there are some minor differences and editorial additions (in square brackets).

[1] With respect to the Gauss Manuscripts in the Library of Congress, because the parts of the second draft are not contiguous with the folders they are in, i.e., (Part I, Roman Numeral I is not in folder 1) particular parts are indicated in [] by the specific folders they occupy.

[2] Several footnotes, especially those with many caveats have been streamlined to more accurately reflect the provisional and/or speculative nature of the thoughts they represent.

There is also an issue raised by both the Critical Edition and this manuscript of which I have personal knowledge. Early, in my work with Hannah Arendt on her late husband Heinrich Blücher’s tapes and manuscripts, my typewriter broke. In a letter, containing the latest installment of my work, I informed her about this. On June 9, 1972 she sent me the following letter (Image 39 of Hannah Arendt Papers: Family Papers, 1898-1975; Blücher, Heinrich; Writings; Publication of Blücher's manuscripts and correspondence; Bazelow, Alexander, 1970-1975).

Dear Alex,

Thanks for your letter and thanks for the fine work on the manuscript. I think I can help you with the typewriter. There is an old typewriter in my office, which is not very satisfactory but it will do. You can have it by contacting my assistant, Robert Bland. It may even be possible to find office space at the New School. This, too, talk over with Mr. Bland.

To talk all these matters over, I would suggest that you come on June 20, Tuesday, or if you prefer, Wednesday the 21st. Let me know which date you prefer and when you would like to come.

Cordially,

Hannah Arendt

So not only was there a second typewriter as the Critical Edition emphasizes but also Arendt appears to have used it in New York (as Ursula hypothesized), and in fact kept it because it was still usable decades later. And this is important for several reasons. First, because it opens up the possibility that content from the Second Draft of the Gauss manuscripts had been written earlier, but also because the various other drafts might also then be discontinuous in either time or content? Lacking a final version of the delivered Gauss lectures, we cannot know for certain, but isn't that why having the reading made available by the Critical Edition is important for us? It forces us to think about that question, a question that might have gone unconsidered had the editors of the Critical Edition not curated the manuscripts in the way that they did.

Having new readings of scholarly works is important if for no other reason than it makes us think in ways we are unaccustomed to, and can be the inspiration for new and valuable insights, even where the preponderance of evidence points in a different direction. We cannot know, had Ursula lived to see the completion of this task, whether or not she would have revised any of her conclusions based upon the information that has become public thus far. Nor can we make up her mind for her now, but it does remind us that although we cannot change what has happened in the past, we can at least make the consequences more bearable by talking about them.

I want to thank Jerome Kohn for devoting more time to this than I had any right to ask; Wolfgang Heuer for his encouragement and support; and most especially Maximiliane Kind, for both her editorial assistance and corrections to the translation. Their help is gratefully acknowledged.

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Hannah Arendt Papers at the Library of Congress:

<https://www.loc.gov/collections/hannah-arendt-papers/about-this-collection/>