

BORN AGAIN: NATALITY, NORMATIVITY AND NARRATIVE  
IN HANNAH ARENDT'S *THE HUMAN CONDITION*

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Submitted to the University of Hertfordshire in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

June 2012

To Norm.

For BT, BB, REL, JHT and AMGT.

In memory of Lindie.

Under any and all circumstances tell yourself often and mean it—I don't believe in defeat.

—Norman Vincent Peale

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

If I had my druthers, my acknowledgements would fill at least as many pages as those used to discuss the works of Hannah Arendt. Since that is not a possibility, I will name just a few faculty, friends and family members without whom I would not have been able to complete this dissertation. I do so, however, with the caveat that there are many, many more amazing people whom I love and appreciate for the beauty, richness and warmth they bring to my life. I will trust that they know who they are, and that they understand their importance to transcend any words I could ever put on a page.

With that said, let me begin by offering my deepest and most profound gratitude to Shaun Gallagher. I marvel every single day at the fact I am mentored by a scholar of his renown. Not only does he possess an unparalleled intellect, which he employs to prolifically produce the brilliant scholarship which is reshaping the way we think about the mind and the body, he is also a kind and gentle man. He has generously given me his time and attention, calmed me in my more neurotic and high-strung moments, pushed me when he knew I could produce better work, always believed in my ability and respected my voice, and has been immeasurably generous in offering me amazing professional opportunities to supplement my studies. I know with absolute certainty that I will never be able to repay Shaun for all he has done, but I will strive to at least be worthy of the gifts he has given to me.

I must also thank my other two Supervisors, Danièle Moyal-Sharrock and Daniele D. Hutto. Both Danièle and Dan are scholars of the highest caliber, and my work has been greatly influenced by their attention to detail, academic rigor and insightful feedback. I am privileged to have had their guidance. Furthermore, this dissertation has benefited greatly from the involvement of Jonathan Tennis, who remained steadfast in his commitment to read and comment on my work even when the process proved itself to be a test of mental strength and endurance. Additionally,

I would like to acknowledge the copyediting and formatting skills of Lee Davidson. The Sixteenth Edition of *The Chicago Manual of Style* is 1026 pages long and, therefore, something I was grateful not to have to tackle without her expertise.

Beyond the excellent academic and technical advisement I received, I simply would not have survived writing this dissertation without an immense amount of moral support and encouragement. I would like to especially acknowledge my parents, Stephen and Rena, who raised me to believe that the pursuit of knowledge and of understanding are worthy ends in and of themselves. I am also grateful to Jim and Anna Annarelli, and Norman Smith. Jim always took the completion of my dissertation to be an absolute and unquestionable given, which, in darker hours, provided necessary motivation. Anna unfailing made me feel as though writing this paper was akin to hanging the stars in the sky, and I will never cease to appreciate how smart and special she believes me to be. For a dozen years now, Norm has offered advice and encouragement at crucial decision-making points, and I shudder to think how lost I would be without his well-reasoned opinions.

I would be absolutely remiss if I did not acknowledge my indebtedness to Sarah Kay, Liz Kicak, Angelina Garcia Tennis, Brianna Day, Jaya Eeten and Bryan Thompson who were, without a doubt, my front-line dissertation ground troops. Sarah understood with absolute clarity the power of an encouraging card, text, call or email. Liz possessed an uncanny ability to know just when to check in and make sure everything was all right, which, at the moment she would call, it almost never was. In the course of writing the paper, Angelina gave me a graduate education in what it means to be a family and, in the process, even coined the phrase, "See you later, dissertator!" Brianna reminded me that there is nothing more powerful than finding the courage to face our deepest fears in order to build a better future for ourselves. Jaya, as she has for the past 20 years, centered my universe, and I know without question how much of this project is owed to her. Finally, anything I could say about Bryan, my beautiful, brilliant, kind and soulful husband, would be woefully insufficient.

He is my blue sky, my best friend, my heart, my home and my reason for being. He sees me for “who” I am and, like a miracle, he loves me anyway. I cannot thank him enough for helping me fulfill my dream of becoming a doctor (although not the kind that helps people!).

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## ABSTRACT

Within the text of *The Human Condition*, Hannah Arendt circumscribes the concept of natality in ways that tend to conflate its biological, historical, institutional and phenomenological dimensions. This dissertation seeks to clarify this concept and the conceptual territory that surrounds it. Specifically, it is argued that Arendt's construction of the concept of natality is inherently dual. Each person is delivered into a worldly environment through her primary, biological birth. As soon as she is born, she begins to be conditioned to the accepted normative standards of her community. A gap necessarily exists, however, between the person she is socio-culturally conditioned to be, and who she is explicitly, uniquely and authentically. When deeds and words are employed in service of revealing someone's individual identity or essence, and thereby showing her to be more than simply a mirror of her cultural conditioning, it heralds a second birth, one which is existential instead of biological. According to Arendt, this existential natality must take place in the presence of other existential agents, and also may be witnessed by a spectator who then seeks to express the significance of what has occurred to those removed from the original event either by space and/or time. This expression takes the form of artifactual objects, including works of art, architectural monuments and various forms of narratives. Arendt's theory concerning the creation of these objects contains two major problems that are critically addressed within this project. The first problem concerns the spectator's capacity for making judgments. Works written after *The Human Condition* are shown to demonstrate Arendt's attempts to address this issue. The second problem concerns the way in which Arendt portrays the issue of embodiment. This issue must be reconciled both by appealing to work from within her canon, as well as through the introduction of recent scholarship from the field of social cognition. The project concludes with the presentation of a concrete, historical example intended to be illustrative of the preceding theoretical material.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Hannah Arendt died unexpectedly of a heart attack in her New York apartment on December 4, 1975. Two months later, a tribute written by Hans J. Morgenthau, her friend and colleague at the New School for Social Research, was published in the journal *Political Theory*. Therein, Morgenthau stated that she was “propelled forward by a passion whose object was thinking itself. As others enjoy playing cards or the horses for their own sake, so Hannah Arendt enjoyed thinking. The analogy is, however, correct only with the important qualification that she did not play games with thoughts but was deadly serious about them.” He then added, “To tell the truth as she saw it or at least to demolish error parading as truth was for her a high vocation.”<sup>1</sup> Of course, errors parading as truths are not limited to any one discipline or domain of thought, and it is therefore not surprising that Arendt published works of journalism, literary criticism, history, political theory and, of course, philosophy.<sup>2</sup> No matter the subject, Morgenthau stated in summary of her work, “Familiar concepts and issues looked different after her mind had worked them over.”<sup>3</sup>

In her 1958 text *The Human Condition*, Arendt engaged just the sort of familiar concepts and issues Morgenthau referenced, including what she termed “action.” Arendt’s formulation of the concept was, however, so complex and multi-faceted—encompassing birth and death, words and deed, the public and private, the individual and the plurality—that, even before *The Human Condition* was published, she had started writing another book which would have offered needed clarification.<sup>4</sup> In a grant application submitted to the Rockefeller Foundation seeking support for the project, Arendt stated that *The Human Condition* “actually is a kind of prolegomena to the book which I now intend to write. It will continue where the other book ends. In terms of human activities, it will be concerned exclusively with action and thought.”<sup>5</sup> Arendt went on to detail how this new book, which she had tentatively titled

*Introduction Into Politics*, would contain two areas of focus: “*First*, a critical reexamination of the chief traditional concepts and conceptual frameworks of political thinking—such as means and ends, authority, government, power, law, war, etc.” Second, Arendt would provide a systematic account that was not so much concerned with politics per se, as with the fundamental categories of human activities from which anything political must start:

Here I shall be chiefly concerned with the various modi of human plurality and the institutions which correspond to them. In other words, I shall undertake a reexamination of the old question of forms of government, their principles and their modes of being together: to be together with other men and with one’s equals, from which springs action, and to be together with one’s self, to which the activity of thinking corresponds. Hence, the book should end with a discussion of the relationship between acting and thinking, or between politics and philosophy.<sup>6</sup>

Much of the material Arendt completed for *Introduction Into Politics* had to do with the first area of focus outlined in her grant proposal; those writings became part of *Between Past and Future: Six Exercises in Political Thought*, which was published in 1961. Arendt did not, however, meaningfully reengage with many of the issues she intended to address in the second part of *Introduction Into Politics* for more than a decade after she wrote to the Rockefeller Foundation. At that point, it seemed as though Arendt intended to bring many key concepts full-circle through *The Life of the Mind*, a trilogy dedicated to explicating the faculties of thinking, willing and judging. These mental activities—considered in antiquity and the Middle Ages to be the purview of the solitary man living a life of contemplation, a *vita contemplativa*—were to stand in contrast to the pluralistic and worldly life of the *vita activa* that Arendt described in *The Human Condition*, a life focused on another triad: labor, work and action.<sup>7</sup>

In preparation for drafting the first volume of *The Life of the Mind*, Arendt presented material addressing the faculty of thinking at the University of Aberdeen's Gifford Lectures in 1973. Material which was to provide the framework for the volume on willing was ready for a subsequent set of Gifford Lectures in May 1974. Arendt, however, suffered a near-fatal heart attack at the start of the second series of talks and the remainder of her presentations were rescheduled for 1976.<sup>8</sup> Arendt would not, however, live long enough to return to Aberdeen. As a result of her untimely death in the winter of 1975, Mary McCarthy—an esteemed author and close friend, whom Arendt had appointed as her literary executor—took on the task of readying Arendt's final works for publication.<sup>9</sup>

The manuscript for *Thinking* had been written and preliminarily revised prior to Arendt's passing; it was published in November and December of 1977 as a three-part series in the *New Yorker* magazine. Just days before she died, Arendt completed an initial draft of *Willing* and, in 1978, it was issued together with *Thinking* in a handsome boxed set.<sup>10</sup> As for the final volume of *The Life of the Mind*, Arendt had been working on material related to the faculty of judgment since the early 1950s.<sup>11</sup> Between 1964 and 1970, Arendt lectured on the topic at the New School for Social Research and at the University of Chicago, and intended to do so again in the spring of 1976. It may have been her ongoing consideration of the topic which led Arendt to tell friends that she expected the final volume of the trilogy to be the easiest of the three to produce.<sup>12</sup> We will, however, never know if Arendt was correct in her assessment, because she died with the first page of *Judging* in her typewriter.

According to Elizabeth Young-Bruehl, the fact that *Judging* was never completed means that *The Life of the Mind* fails to "make the task of comprehending Hannah Arendt's oeuvre easier."<sup>13</sup> Young-Bruehl explains:

Like Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time*, a book which can be seen in retrospect to mark the end of an epoch in European philosophy, Arendt's one work of "proper philosophy" (as she jokingly referred to it) is missing its final,

third part. But Heidegger lived for nearly fifty years after his work appeared and he wrote many more works exploring the pathways he had laid down in his magnum opus. Arendt's work must remain rough-hewn, without benefit even of the changes she might have made in the first volumes had her impatience not gotten the best of her.<sup>14</sup>

In other words, because of Arendt's untimely death, we are left with a very unusual circumstance: a prolegomena that was to be brought to fulfillment in a work which was never completed. While it is true that *Thinking* and *Willing* may be unable to provide all the necessary materials to forge Arendt's canon into a seamless whole, I hope to demonstrate in the course of this project—including in the sections addressing deficiencies in the way Arendt represents embodiment in *The Human Condition*—that *The Life of the Mind* goes far in providing meaningful insight into how Arendt's ideas matured and developed in the course of her career.

### **Contributions to Knowledge**

The fact that *The Life of the Mind* and, therefore, aspects of *The Human Condition*, never found a final form leaves me with equal parts curiosity, sadness and gratitude. I am curious as to how that work would have looked if Arendt had lived long enough to finish it; I am sad we will never know, and I am grateful for the pure intellectual joy that has come from years spent trying to ferret out various nuances of meaning from writings which are rich, referential and fully resistant to singular interpretation. This project represents the culmination of my efforts thus far to better understand what Arendt left behind in the form of *The Human Condition* and will yield at least three important contributions to knowledge.

First, I will offer a critical analysis of Arendtian action rooted in the conceptual structure of natality, normativity and narrative. I will begin my study by arguing that Arendt's theory of action is grounded in the concept of natality, and that her construction of that concept is inherently dual. Specifically, we are each delivered

into a worldly environment through our primary, biological birth. As soon as we are born, we begin to be conditioned to the accepted normative standards of our community. Arendt, however, indicates that a gap necessarily exists between the person we are socio-culturally conditioned to be and who we are explicitly and uniquely. While most people will seek to subjugate any difference between who they are expected to be and who they are as authentic individuals, a few people will choose to explicate that gap through action. Action is comprised of two parts: action and speech, which are alternatively referred to as deeds and words.<sup>15</sup> When deeds and words are employed in service of revealing someone's individual identity or essence, they produce stories. These "enacted stories," as Arendt calls them, are not performative recountings of events that have already occurred. Instead, they reveal the unique identity of the actor.<sup>16</sup> Enacting our story where it can be seen and heard by others and, in the process, showing ourselves to be more than simply mirrors of our culture conditioning, is "*like a second birth*," one which is existential instead of biological.<sup>17</sup>

Scholars have largely failed to recognize the duality inherent to Arendt's concept of natality. Those who do recognize the concept as encompassing more than a singular event still miss the mark, either through overextension or, in the case of Seyla Benhabib, by taking an extra-textual approach.<sup>18</sup> Specifically, Benhabib claims that the mastering of our community's natural language simultaneously socializes us to its accepted normative standards.<sup>19</sup> Arendt makes no such claims; however, her assertion that we are conditioned solely by the man-made objects we encounter in the world is decidedly too limited and, therefore, is engaged and expanded in the course of this project.

It will also be my contention that Arendt delineates two different types of narratives within the text of *The Human Condition*. The first is the enacted story that I just described. What agents disclose through the enacting of their stories will be, however, only ephemeral and fleeting unless they are witnessed by a spectator who

is moved to memorialize them in some enduring form: a monument, a work of art or, most important to this study, “sayings of poetry, the written page or the printed book.” Thus, the second type of narrative delineated by Arendt is a retrospective account that serves to document the context, structure and meaning of those revelatory words and deeds, as well as any state of affairs that arises as a result.

My second contribution to knowledge will entail expanding Arendt’s theory of action by offering a more cogent account of embodiment than the one she provides. I will begin by examining what Arendt terms “reification,” which is the process through which the words and deeds of existential agents are transformed into artifactual objects by the spectators. While Karl Marx argued that reification was a form of alienation between the worker and the products of his labor endemic to modern, capitalist societies, Arendt reconceived it as being a deeply intersubjective process involving “remembrance.” Remembrance occurs when the spectators see, hear and commit to memory what they witnessed and then are moved to memorialize those words and deeds in the enduring form of a reified object. However, this construction reveals itself to be deeply problematic when, upon close examination of *The Human Condition*, it becomes evident that Arendt’s agents are presented as being all but completely disembodied, thus leading us to question how their story can be *enacted* in such a manner as to evoke the kind of response from a spectator that Arendt describes. I will, therefore, offer a new account and a revised interpretation of Arendtian embodiment that will remain grounded in the text of *The Human Condition*, while being informed by other works from her canon, as well as scholarship from the field of social cognition.

Finally, I will offer something that Arendt never dares to: a concrete, historical example that both closely matches, and meaningfully expands, on her theories of action, remembrance and reification in *The Human Condition*. Specifically, I will focus on the story of Ruby Bridges, an African-American first-grader who was the sole black student enrolled at the William Frantz Elementary School in New Orleans,

Louisiana in the fall of 1960. Because Ruby had been court ordered to attend William Frantz with the intention of integrating it, her presence was not welcome. As such, her day began and ended with navigating the crowd that gathered to taunt her with racial slurs and threats. Her reaction to these events demonstrates how closely she matches Arendt's description of an existential agent who reveals herself in ways which are new, unique, authentic and in contradiction to many of the normatively accepted socio-cultural standard of her community. I will also examine the media through which Ruby's actions were memorialized, including the book *Travels with Charley: In Search of America*, written by John Steinbeck; the painting "The Problem We All Live With," by Norman Rockwell; and two books about Ruby by Pulitzer Prize winner and psychologist, Robert Coles.

### **Structure of the Project**

I will begin my study by arguing in chapter 2 that Arendt roots her theory of action in the concept of natality, and that her construction of that concept is inherently dual, containing a primary, biological birth and a second, existential rebirth. Furthermore, I will oppose the widely accepted notion that the way in which Arendt constructs her concept of natality is tantamount to a rejection of the work of St. Augustine, on whom Arendt wrote her dissertation. Instead, I maintain that Arendt was positioning herself in opposition to Martin Heidegger's interpretations of human beings as *Sein-zum-Tode*, beings who are existentially oriented towards death. Additionally, since Arendt formulates concepts in ways which tend to conflate their historical, institutional and phenomenological dimensions, I will undertake an exegesis of *The Human Condition*, elaborating key terms within the text including "labor," "work," "action," "private realm" and "public realm."

In chapter 3, I will outline John McDowell, Seyla Benhabib and Patricia Bowen-Moore's interpretations of the dual natality. I will then offer my own analysis of the process through which one actualizes the potential inherent in her primary,

biological birth and, in doing so, undertakes a second, existential natality by revealing herself to others as a unique individual by initiating something new and unpredicted in the world. Utilizing exegesis's offered by Jürgen Habermas and Seyla Benhabib, my focus will then shift away from the subjective experience of the existential agent, herself, and towards a more thorough examination of the words and deeds which comprise Arendtian action, as well as the intersubjective relationships between existential agents.

In order to elucidate Arendt's concept of remembrance and reification, chapter 4 will center on the interactions that occur between the existential agents and the spectators who witness the stories they enact. Remembrance is the seeing, hearing and recollecting of the existential agents' second natality by the spectators. It is, however, more than the basic, cognitive processing of sensory input. Instead, it requires the engagement of a special kind of thinking which, while certainly imaginative, remains critical, reflective and fact-based. The enduring and artifactual product of this kind of thought are works of reification, objects which are transcendent of any use value and created by a special class of workers: artist, poets, historiographers and monument-builders.<sup>20</sup> I compare Arendt's concept of reification with that of Karl Marx, Georg Lukács and Axel Honneth, and then identify problems that arise vis-à-vis the embodiment of existential agents, as well as Arendt's construction of the mechanism through which the spectators make judgments about the events they witness.

In chapter 5, I will introduce research from the field of social cognition and, specifically, the three developmental components that comprise Interaction Theory: primary intersubjectivity, secondary intersubjectivity and narrative competency. I will utilize scholarship on primary intersubjectivity, as well as work from within Arendt's canon, to construct a new understanding of embodied action as effectively and affectively expressive to an observer. I will then build on that discussion by rehearsing some of the key finding advanced in research on secondary

intersubjectivity concerning the inherent synergy between self, others and the things of the world, before relating these findings to the theory of spectator judgment found within the text of *The Human Condition*.

In chapter 6, I will turn to the third developmental component of Interaction Theory, narrative competency, in order to support my assertion that the dynamic between the agent and the spectator is a special kind of interaction which mimics the basic form of a conversation, is temporally extended and situated within a broader socio-cultural framework. I will then posit that *The Human Condition* contains both an explicitly stated theory concerning the way in which we are conditioned to the accepted social customs, habits of discourse and patterns of behavior of our inherited tradition, as well as implicit theory concerning the means by which those normative standards are changed.

Chapter 7 will center on Ruby Bridges's integration of the William Frantz Elementary School, and reifications of that event by John Steinbeck, Norman Rockwell and Robert Coles as illustrative of the theoretical work presented in the preceding chapters. I will then offer a summary of the work I've presented, as well as highlighting my contributions to knowledge. I will conclude by indicating future areas of research. After all, as Arendt rightly notes, any ending—be it of a given historical period, an accepted cultural tradition, a whole civilization or, in this case, a dissertation—is the genesis of new beginnings through which the human mind may again engage “in nothing less than an interminable dialogue between itself and the essence of everything that is.”<sup>21</sup>

## CHAPTER 2

### OUR BIO-ONTOLOGICAL NATALITY

#### **The Birth of Natality**

In a special 1977 issue of the journal *Social Research* dedicated to the work of Hannah Arendt, Hans Jonas, Arendt's longtime friend and fellow philosopher, stated that "[w]ith 'natality', Arendt not only coined a new word but introduced a new category into the philosophical doctrine of man."<sup>1</sup> In order to fully appreciate Jonas' assessment three things must be understood about Arendtian natality. First, Arendt did not come to the concept *ex nihilo*. Instead, like much else in her canon, Arendt's understanding of natality finds its origin in the work of St. Augustine. Second, the Arendtian concept of natality is constructed in such a manner as to make it inherently dual. There is a primary, biological birth and a second, existential rebirth. Third, it is within this dual natality that a cogent account of Arendtian action must be rooted. I will now address each of these points in turn, beginning with the relationship between Arendt's theory of natality and the work of St. Augustine.

Arendt began studying Augustine's work at the University of Berlin after being expelled from secondary school at age fifteen for leading a student boycott. At the university, Arendt took classes in Greek, Latin and Christian theology.<sup>2</sup> The last of these subjects was taught by Romano Guardini, a Catholic priest, author and academic who was seeking to develop a comprehensive, Catholic worldview grounded in the "distinctly Christian" aspects of the literary, philosophical and biographical writings of Dostoevsky, Rilke and Dante, as well as Pascal, Kierkegaard and St. Augustine.<sup>3</sup> Arendt's exposure to these authors, as well as to Guardini's process of inquiry, influenced her greatly and she chose to major in theology.<sup>4</sup> The next year, when Arendt began attending Marburg University, she switched her course of study from theology to philosophy. She did not, however, stray too far from her original discipline, choosing the work of Augustine as her dissertation topic.<sup>5</sup>

Although her focus was on Augustine's concept of love, Arendt's dissertation research is where she began to understand and develop natality as not just a biological, but also a philosophical, category.

In her biography, *Hannah Arendt: For the Love of the World*, Elisabeth Young-Bruehl twice addresses the topic of Arendt's dissertation and, both times, she comments on this development. It is important to note that within each of Young-Bruehl brief discussions on the matter, the concept of natality is linked to Arendt's early study of Augustine, but quickly reframed as having lasting meaning only because of her experience in Nazi Germany. In the first reference, which is found within the main body of the biography, but is comparatively brief, Young-Bruehl asserts that Arendt was concerned with

what she would later call "natality." She had the beginnings of an awareness that we are shaped fundamentally by the conditions of our births, by our Neighborhood, by the group we are a part of by virtue of birth. What Arendt learned while she wrote her dissertation—learned from living, not from reading—was that, by birth, she was a Jew.<sup>6</sup>

In Young-Bruehl's second reference to Arendt's dissertation—which is longer, but is relegated to the book's last appendix where it follows illustrations of Arendt's family tree and texts of her poems in German—Young-Bruehl states: "Hannah Arendt's concern for natality...emerged in her study of Saint Augustine but it was later brought urgently to the center of her thought by her political experiences."<sup>7</sup>

Since Young-Bruehl's attempt to minimize the relationship between the Bishop of Hippo and the development of Arendt's philosophical doctrine of natality is not an uncommon one among scholars, it is, therefore, reasonable to ask why this separation is sought.<sup>8</sup> In their interpretive essay on Arendt's dissertation, Joanna Vecchiarelli Scott and Judith Chelius Stark point towards the answer. They state:

Taking Augustine as seriously as Arendt did has not before now been an acceptable approach among mainstream Arendt scholars. Most demarcate

an “early” Arendt, who was influenced by Augustine only through the medium of her mentors’ German phenomenology, from a “mature” Arendt, who set aside the idylls of her youth for a public philosophy of word and deed influenced more by Aristotle, Kant, and Tocqueville than by Christian *Existenz*.<sup>9</sup>

In other words, scholars have characterized concepts that appear both in the dissertation and in Arendt’s “mature” works as having been completely reformulated in the ensuing years in order to free them from a looming specter. This haunting presence is not, as one would reasonably suspect, the spirit of St. Augustine. Instead, it is the shadow cast by the work of Martin Heidegger.

Arendt was deeply involved with Heidegger during her university years, attending many lectures in which he worked out the concepts explicated (in notoriously painful detail) within his magnum opus, *Being and Time*.<sup>10</sup> Although she ultimately wrote her dissertation under the direction of Karl Jaspers, it is reflective, both in subject and style, of material Heidegger produced during the same period. Since Arendt scholars possess an almost universal fear of her work being subsumed by Heidegger’s legacy, they maintain an uncomfortable relationship with Arendt’s material from this early period, including the dissertation.<sup>11</sup> The odd result is that Augustine’s influence is continually negated in service of separating Arendt from Heidegger.

Of course, this begs the question of both Augustine and Heidegger’s true relationship to Arendt’s formulation of natality as a philosophical category, a question that necessitates turning to the dissertation itself. It should be noted, however, that studying Arendt’s dissertation is an exceptionally arduous task. In fact, in 1962, Arendt signed a contract with Crowell-Collier to publish a revised version. However, by the time the firestorm over her coverage of the trial of Adolph Eichmann for *The New Yorker* erupted in 1963, she had all but abandoned her attempts to shape the paper into a publishable manuscript. As a result, the version of the dissertation I used

was not published until 1996. It contains Copy A—which is the 1960s translation from German into English by E. B. Ashton, plus Arendt’s initial revisions—intermingled with Copy B, which is comprised of further amendments by Arendt to Copy A, some of which she typed and some of which she overwrote by hand. Besides the large amount of forensic work done by the editors in order to piece together the two texts, both Copy A and Copy B underwent further revision prior to publication in 1996 in order to enhance the grammatical and syntactical clarity, address issues with translation and correct errors in the footnotes.<sup>12</sup>

In the sections from Copy A of Arendt’s dissertation on Augustine, it is clear that she had been studying closely with Heidegger as he worked out his formulation of *Dasein*. In the German vernacular, *Dasein* is most often used to mean “existence.” However, its literal translation, “being-there,” offers a better sense of Heidegger’s use of the word to indicate a human being who encounters and interprets Being (*Sein*) from his distinct, temporal position. One of the ways in which this encounter takes place is through *Dasein*’s experience as *Sein-zum-Tode*, a Being-towards-death: “Death is a way to be, which *Dasein* [the individual] takes over as soon as it is.” Heidegger then adds this quote that, strangely enough, is from a book on the German education system: “As soon as man comes to life, he is at once old enough to die.”<sup>13</sup>

In Copy A of her dissertation, Arendt juxtaposes the notion of the Creator against his “creature,” the human being. The Creator is pure Being: immutable, eternal, unalterable; conversely, the creature is defined in large part by the fact of being temporally located. Additionally, when Arendt makes implicit reference to the theme of natality in Copy A—“Whatever the creature is it had first to become.”—it is with the caveat that humans orient themselves away from that beginning and towards their deaths.<sup>14</sup> While Arendt’s formulation of the concept of Being found in Copy A is decidedly more Augustinian than Heideggerian—since she equates Being

with a particular entity: God—her conception of the human being is strikingly similar to Heidegger's *Dasein*.

By the time Arendt wrote "What is *Existenz* Philosophy?" her first essay in English, published in 1946, she was becoming critical of Heidegger's formulation of humans as beings oriented towards their deaths.

To the question of the meaning of Being he [Heidegger] has provided the provisional and inherently unintelligible answer that temporality is the meaning of Being. This implies—and his analysis of *Dasein* (i.e., the being of man) as conditioned by death spells out—that the meaning of Being is nothingness."<sup>15</sup>

In an extended note at the end of the text, Arendt even goes so far as to question the relationship between Heidegger's philosophy and his political alignment with the Nazi party.<sup>16</sup> What she had not yet begun to do in earnest, however, was formulate an alternative to *Sein-zum-Tode*. Evidence of such activity would not be found in Arendt's canon until the publication of her first book-length work five years after "What is *Existenz* Philosophy?"

Published in 1951, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* is Arendt's analysis of Nazism and Stalinism. It was written in the midst of what Arendt identified as "the calm that settles when all hopes have died," and when "all efforts to escape from the grimness of the present into a nostalgia for a still intact past, or into the anticipated oblivion of a better future, are vain."<sup>17</sup> As such, the book maintains an understandably dark tone throughout, including when Arendt engages the issue of natality. Specifically, Arendt posits birth as having importance because it delivers us into a preexisting context—ethnically, culturally, socially, etc.—with which we are inextricably identified thereafter. Despite arguing that these predetermined affiliations often do not work in our favor, Arendt demonstrates that she is starting to consider an entirely different interpretation of natality. In the very last paragraph of the book, she returns to the work of St. Augustine and, in doing so, foreshadows the more

optimistic direction her writing will soon take—birth as the ontological root for other kinds of new beginnings:

But there remains also the truth that every end in history necessarily contains a new beginning; this beginning is the promise, the only “message” that the end can ever produce. Beginning, before it becomes a historical event, is the supreme capacity of man; politically, it is identical with man’s freedom. *In initium ut esset homo creatus est*—“that a beginning be made man was created” said Augustine. This beginning is guaranteed by each new birth; it is indeed every man.<sup>18</sup>

Planning a trip to Germany four years after the publication of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* to see Karl Jaspers, the man who once served as her dissertation advisor, Arendt’s optimism continued to grow. In anticipation of her visit, Jaspers wrote Arendt a letter expressing his excitement in discussing matters of philosophy and politics. He said, “You bring with you shared memories of a lost past. You bring the wide world as it is today.”<sup>19</sup> Arendt replied, “Yes, I would like to bring the wide world to you this time. I’ve begun so late, really only in recent years, to truly love the world that I shall be able to do that now. Out of gratitude, I want to call my next book on political theories ‘Amor Mundi.’”<sup>20</sup> When Arendt’s next book was published in 1958, the title was no longer *Amor Mundi*, for love of the world, but *The Human Condition*.

*The Human Condition* bore no dedication, but in 1960 Arendt sent a German translation to Heidegger with a note reading:

Dear Martin,

I have instructed the publisher to send you a book of mine. I would like to say a word about it.

You will see that the book does not contain a dedication. If things had ever worked out properly between us—and I mean *between*, that is, neither you nor me—I would have asked you if I might dedicate it to you; it came directly

out of the first Freiberg days and hence owes practically everything to you in every respect. As things are, I did not think it was possible, but I wanted to mention the bare facts to you in one way or another.

All the best!<sup>21</sup>

Despite Arendt and Heidegger being back on speaking terms by the time she sent the book and note, there was no response from Heidegger for five years. Arendt interpreted the silence as him giving her a “rap on the nose” for no longer maintaining her role as his eternally admiring student before abruptly putting an end to the charade.<sup>22</sup>

Although undoubtedly heartfelt, I believe Arendt’s explanation of Heidegger’s icy reception of the book is incomplete. After all, the work that “came directly out of the first Freiberg days and hence owes practically everything to you in every respect,” is no homage. Instead, it is within *The Human Condition* that Arendt picks up where *The Origins of Totalitarianism* concluded, even employing the same quote by Augustine as she offers her most complete account of natality as a philosophical doctrine. Unlike in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, however, Arendt makes it very clear that she is now working fully in opposition to Heidegger’s interpretation of human beings as *Sein-zum-Tode*.

The life span of man running toward death would inevitably carry everything human to ruin and destruction if it were not for the faculty of interrupting it and beginning something new, a faculty which is inherent in action like an ever-present reminder that men, though they must die, are not born in order to die but in order to begin.<sup>23</sup>

When she returned to work on Copy B of her dissertation a couple of years after *The Human Condition* was published, Arendt went one step further, doing the one thing that she had avoided doing in that text—she addressed her former teacher by name. In Copy B of the dissertation, Arendt states: “it is memory [of having come into

existence] and not expectation (for instance, the expectation of death as in Heidegger's approach) that gives unity and wholeness to human existence."<sup>24</sup>

Arendt's direct attacks on the role human mortality plays in Heidegger's philosophy brings us back to the question of why scholars have insisted that Arendt's "mature" works are tantamount to a rejection of *Augustine* when, in actuality, she continually employs and expands on his work in order to posit birth, and not death, as the ultimate existential possibility. I believe the answer is strikingly simple. As discussed earlier in this chapter, what scholars such as Young-Bruehl seem to fear the most is having Arendt's intellectual legacy become little more than a footnote to the philosophy of Martin Heidegger. Needless to say, this fear may be well founded if one were to consider only Arendt's earliest works, which do bear notable similarities in subject and style to material Heidegger produced during the same period. While some of Arendt's later writing—such as *The Human Condition* and Copy B of her dissertation—do retain links to her previous works and, therefore, remain referential to Heidegger's philosophy, by that point in her career, Arendt was largely a critic instead of apologetic.

This perspectival shift does not, however, seem to lessen the need felt by many scholars to separate Arendt's intellectual legacy from Heidegger's. To that end, some have taken a direct, if not hyperbolic, approach. For instance, in the tribute piece published in *Social Research* immediately after Arendt's death, Hans Morgenthau stated: "From what philosophic and political point of view did Hannah Arendt approach the disparate topics of her investigations? While she was trained by Heidegger and Jaspers and maintained close personal relations with them, one would have to search very carefully for direct influences traceable to these two giants of modern philosophy."<sup>25</sup> Other commentators, however, have simply turned Heidegger into he-who-shall-not-be-named, choosing instead to attack him through an unlikely surrogate: the Bishop of Hippo.

Of course, as I have sought to demonstrate, the problem with conflating the influence of Augustine and Heidegger is two-fold. First, there is nothing in Arendt's canon that supports any kind of anti-Augustine claim and, second, acting as though there is, robs us of the fullest possible understanding of Arendtian natality by rending it from the context in which it was conceived. Instead, I believe we would be better served by acknowledging fully the influence of both Augustine and Heidegger, and then turning our attention to that which allowed Hans Jonas to declare Arendt's concept of natality to be a new category in the philosophical doctrine of man: namely, that Arendtian natality is constructed in such a manner as to make it inherently dual, encompassing both a primary, biological birth and a second, existential rebirth.<sup>26</sup>

In order to better understand Arendt's dual natality, it is necessary to recognize that she delineates three types of human activity—labor, work and action—and two spaces in which those activities occur: the private realm and the public realm. Since Arendt circumscribes concepts in ways that tend to conflate their historical, institutional and phenomenological dimensions, it is now my intention to map the philosophical topography of the text in such a way as to clarify, as much as is possible, the boundaries of these key conceptual territories.

### **The Private Realm, Labor and Our Bio-Ontological Natality**

In *The Human Condition*, Arendt posits a primary, biological birth and a second, existential rebirth. Our primary, biological birth brings us into Arendt's "private realm," a space rooted in a concrete, historical reference point: the ancient Greek *oikía* or home and, slightly broader, the boundaries separating one household from the other.<sup>27</sup> The *oikía* was ruled by the *paterfamilias*, the head of the family who, through violence or the threat of violence, assured that the biological processes necessary for meeting his basic needs, as well as those of his family, were fulfilled before heading out into the public realm of the *polis* to be among his equals, the other familial patriarchs. Arendt builds on this specific understanding of the private realm,

expanding it to become a trans-historic, conceptual space that contains and constrains activities related to what she terms “labor.” Tasks related to Arendtian labor largely correlate either to our primary natality or to the monotonous effort that comes thereafter from the fulfillment of life-sustaining, biological necessity. I will now address each of these types of labor in turn.

It is via the literal laboring of our mothers through which we are all born into the private realm. Despite this fact, Arendt invests little space within the text of *The Human Condition* discussing the physical realities of our arrival. In an extended footnote, she comments that in Latin, Greek, English, French and German, the word “labor” signifies the pain and effort of bodily exertion, as well as the actual pangs of childbirth. She also makes etymological connections between various translations of the word “labor” and the terms “poverty,” “neglect” and “abandonment.”<sup>28</sup> Later in the text, Arendt says that it is women “who with their bodies guarantee the physical survival of the species.” In the ancient world, this meant that “Women and slaves belonged to the same category and were hidden away not only because they were somebody else’s property but because their life was ‘laborious,’ devoted to bodily functions.”<sup>29</sup>

Given that Arendt’s representation of the acts of laboring and birthing are both limited in scope and negative in tone, it is not surprising that she was, and remains, a lightning rod for feminist theorists. According to Mary G. Dietz’s excellent analysis in *Turning Operations: Feminism, Arendt, and Politics*, thinkers including Adrienne Rich, Hanna Fenichel Pitkin and Mary O’Brien have argued that *The Human Condition* exposes Arendt as part of the lineage of thinkers who, in “failing to analyze the significance of reproductive consciousness,” continue to justify the subordination of women to men and the idealizing of that which is identified with maleness.<sup>30</sup> The problem with these readings is, most minimally, that Arendt was not a feminist. She did, in fact, express concern about any movement that focused on issues endemic to a single group, be they women or, to offer another example which

I will discuss in the final chapter of this paper, African-Americans during the civil rights era.<sup>31</sup>

Of course, I do not wish to imply that it is necessary to ascribe to any given ideology for it to be used to critique one's work, nor does it mean that those who are doing so are completely off-base.<sup>32</sup> However, in this case, I believe that many of these feminist thinkers are choosing to ignore the fact that, like much else in *The Human Condition*, biological birth is a starting point that becomes relevant as a philosophical category through Arendt's conceptual broadening. As such, while Arendt must still acknowledge that only a woman can gestate and deliver a child, she devotes the most minimal attention to the grunt and groan aspects of our arrival. Her real interest, after all, lies in casting our biological birth as the ontological grounding from which springs both the possibility of living a fully human life and, as she emphasizes in works published after *The Human Condition*, guarantees the continuance of a shared, common world.

For Arendt, living a fully human life—a *bios*, as opposed to *zoë*, an undifferentiated place within the animal species *homo sapiens*—means distinguishing one's self as a unique individual by “beginning something new on our own initiative,” and doing so within a web of intersubjective relations and interactions.<sup>33</sup> According to Arendt, this new beginning “is *like a second birth*,” a natality that is not biological but existential.<sup>34</sup> The ability to begin something new, however, remains inexorably linked to our biological birth.

Because they are initium, newcomers and beginners by virtue of birth, men take initiative, are prompted into action. [*Initium*] *ergo ut esset, creatus est homo, ante quem nullus fuit* (“that there be a beginning, man was created before whom there was nobody”), said Augustine in his political philosophy. This beginning is not the same as the beginning of the world; it is not the beginning of something but of somebody, who is a beginner himself. With the creation of man, the principle of beginning came into the world itself, which, of

course, is only another way of saying that the principle of freedom was created when man was created but not before.<sup>35</sup>

It should be noted that this passage—as well as the one found at the end of *Origins of Totalitarianism* and writings appearing within a few years after publication of *The Human Condition*—relies solely on Augustine's theology and fails to offer any meaningful phenomenological or existential justification as to *why* our biological natality holds the power to ontologically root other kinds of new beginnings.<sup>36</sup> In the absence of such an explanation by Arendt, I propose that our birth is bio-ontological in this way because it is our original experience of differentiation.

In short, it is my assertion that we do not choose to be conceived. Once we are, our prenatal experience is constrained by our mother. Not only are we completely dependent upon her for our continued development from fetus to neonate (abortion, after all, is at her discretion), what we taste, hear, see—as well as our exposure to more insidious elements such as environmental toxins or biochemicals triggered by her reactions to factors such as stress—happen in the womb without any element of control on our part. With birth, comes the original occurrence of differentiation. Of course, a neonate is very much still dependent on the caregiver, but this is not the same as being *part of* the caregiver. Instead, a baby is born ready and able to interact with others as others: discerning human faces from other non-human objects in the environment, mimicking gestures and expressions on those faces, and responding to vocalizations.<sup>37</sup> A neonate also responds to the worldly environment that she is now experiencing directly and not, literally, through her mother: when startled by a sound or sudden movement, a baby will throw her arms and legs outward, and her head back. Discomfort caused by temperature, unmet nutritional needs or fatigue will lead a baby to cry. A gentle stroke of the cheek causes a baby to respond by moving her head in ever-tightening arcs until she locates the object-of-touch with her mouth.

Although innate or reflexive, all of the actions I just described indicate a responsive being who is engaging actively and directly with others and with the world. With few exceptions, this responsiveness began with her biological birth, which, while not the beginning of her life, is “the fundamental leap of coming into the world in a new mode of existence, through which the already living organism gets a new being constitution.”<sup>38</sup> This transition is our first experience of differentiation, our first experience of ourselves as distinct from other agents and objects, and grounds the possibility for other alterations of our being-constitution that will differentiate us even further. No degree of differentiation will, however, free us from fetters of biological necessity.

### **Labor and the Fulfillment of Biological Necessity**

Although an individual moves from birth to death linearly, the biological processes necessary for maintaining that life are cyclical. For example, just because you ate lunch yesterday does not mean you can forgo eating lunch today; the activity must be continually repeated in order for your body to thrive. As such, “the laboring activity itself must follow the cycle of life, the circular movement of our bodily functions, which means that the laboring activity never comes to an end as long as life lasts; it is endlessly repetitive.”<sup>39</sup> The second aspect of Arendtian labor has to do with these repetitive tasks and, specifically, the three distinct approaches Arendt delineates for how those tasks may be executed.

First, the tasks of labor may be performed as an indicator of self-sufficiency. For illustrative purposes, Arendt uses the text of the *Odyssey*, citing the example of a king’s daughter, Nausicaä, who does the family laundry, a physically demanding and menial job that would not have normally been performed by a princess. Arendt clarifies that “No work is sordid if it means greater independence; the selfsame activity might well be a sign of slavishness if not personal independence but sheer survival is at stake.”<sup>40</sup> Conversely, the second way in which laborious work may be

executed is by people who do not willingly choose to perform such tasks, but are instead forced to undertake them through some combination of socio-historical circumstances. Arendt refers to this group via a term co-opted from Karl Marx: *animal laborans*. Marx used the term in opposition to *animal rationale* because, in his estimation, it was labor and not reason that distinguished humans from other animals. However, Arendt uses it pejoratively—those doing the work of necessity are not fully human. In fact, she states quite bluntly that the “*animal laborans* is indeed only one, at best the highest, of the animal species which populate the earth.”<sup>41</sup>

It is indeed possible to be critical of Arendt for the ways in which she represents the *animal laborans* and the tasks with which they are identified. However, before judging Arendt too harshly, several things must be considered. First, *The Human Condition* is a trans-historic study of key concepts; however, that study does depart from literal reference points that, as a rule, Arendt addresses as they are given historically. As such, labor—as an Arendtian category—uses ancient Greek slave-labor as its starting point, and draws heavily on Aristotle’s argument that slavery was a natural state for some people who, like beasts of burden, have powerful bodies but an inability to control their own instincts. Second, Arendt acknowledges that the *animal laborans* possess positive qualities that are theirs alone. Among these are fecundity, closeness to nature and the ability to experience true happiness, which she believes cannot be attained any other way except through the expending of bodily effort and then the immediacy of gratification that comes from production and consumption being so closely bound.<sup>42</sup> Third, there is no reason to believe—as will be made clear in the course of this project—that Arendt assumed it to be impossible for an *animal laboran* to distinguish himself as a unique individual by initiating something completely new and unpredicted in the world; in other words, to live a fully human life.

Should it still seem at this point that Arendt was classist, consider that the third way in which Arendt describes the performance of the activities of labor has to

do with jobholders and businessmen who, despite holding positions that often are regarded with great esteem within society, undertake their work with a laborious attitude. In other words, they toil to “make a living,” a phrase that underscores the relationship between wage-earning and survival. Additionally, for the jobholders and businessmen, the positive attributes of vitality, abundance and gratification, which come from a life of bodily effort, are lost.<sup>43</sup> Instead, Arendt describes a dazed and de-individualized form of acquiescence that evokes the dumbed-down passivity of barnyard animals trying to avoid being culled from the herd.<sup>44</sup> It is not a pretty picture, but it is certainly one that discourages any reading of Arendt as someone who thinks that the white-collar elites in corner offices automatically hold a place of prestige over the farmer or factory worker.

Finally, it is reasonable to assume that whatever is produced through labor is immediately consumed either through absorption or, if that does not take place quickly enough, decay. This is correct in the sense that labor produces no thing that is durable; however, what Karl Marx discovered and articulated, is that the productivity of labor does not lie in the consumptive items themselves, “but in the human ‘power,’ whose strength is not exhausted when it has produced the means of its own subsistence and survival but is capable of producing a ‘surplus,’ that is, more than is necessary for its own ‘reproduction.’”<sup>45</sup> In other words, those who labor are able to create more of the goods of necessity than they, themselves, need. This is true whether it is one woman giving birth to five children—which is more than enough progeny to replace her and her mate when they die; Nausicaä, doing laundry for her entire family; a farmer growing food to feed himself and his relatives, and still sending goods to market; or even a single businessman handling the financial transactions of multiple clients. The excess in production means that other people can use the products of labor, but are free from producing those items for themselves. In this way, the consumers may be liberated from the labor-activities necessary for the maintenance of their individual lives.

What no one is ever completely free from, however, is the space where the activities of labor occur: the private realm, itself. Besides the processes necessary for the perpetuation and maintenance of human existence—some of which simply cannot be outsourced through the labor-power of another—the private realm also serves as a sheltering space, protecting the more fragile and ephemeral of human experiences. Included among these experiences is both birth and death. Although much is known about the science of these organic processes—especially in this era of ever-advancing reproductive technologies—they still contain an aspect of pure mystery. After all, as Arendt rightly notes “man does not know where he comes from when he is born and where he goes when he dies.”<sup>46</sup> Thus, birth and death are housed in the private realm because it is the space that “harbors the things hidden from human eyes and impenetrable to human knowledge.”<sup>47</sup> In addition to birth and death, Arendt also houses love in the private realm, because it is “killed, or rather extinguished, the moment it is displayed in public.”<sup>48</sup> Additionally, good works must remain hidden; if they appear—and, in this instance, that even means making themselves known to the mind of the doer—they become acts of charity or solidarity, and forfeit their essential character.<sup>49</sup> Finally, the private realm protects against shallowness of character, which is the outcome of a life lived entirely in the presence of others, where there is no escape from being seen and heard.<sup>50</sup>

Because we are all born and die, are subject to biological necessity, experience friendship, pain and love, every one of us inhabits the private realm. Likewise, we all dwell within Arendt’s “public realm.” Much as the private realm is an often conflated mix of historical, institutional and phenomenological dimensions—the ancient Greek *oikía*, the space of labor, a needed refuge from the unrelenting glare of public display—the boundaries of Arendt’s public realm are also difficult to circumscribe. Seyla Benhabib, in her book *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*, describes the public realm as having “two phenomenological dimensions.”

These are “(a) its quality as a *space of appearance* and (b) its quality of being a *common world*.”<sup>51</sup>

I will now address each of these phenomenological dimensions in turn, and will begin my exegesis by employing the work of analytic philosopher John McDowell. While McDowell and Arendt sit on seemingly opposite sides of the philosophical fence, their areas of inquiry overlap in interesting ways: three major themes identified in McDowell’s work—“(i) perceptual experience, (ii) normativity or rationality, and (iii) nature”—are also central to Arendt’s writings.<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, they share an interest in a philosophical project which McDowell describes as such: “to stand on the shoulders of the giant, Kant, and see our way to the supersession of traditional philosophy that he almost managed, though not quite.”<sup>53</sup> While Arendt’s work on Kant centers around his theory of judgment, McDowell seeks to conceptualize Kant’s notion of spontaneity, which McDowell argues can take a satisfactory form only in the context of what he terms a “second nature.” McDowell’s theory of the second nature shares, as will be illustrated in this chapter, affinity with Arendt’s construction of our existential natality.<sup>54</sup> These commonalities make it useful to place McDowell’s work in conversation with Arendt’s in order to help clarify several key concepts found in *The Human Condition*, including Arendt’s construction of the common world.

### **The Work of Our Hands: Building a Common World**

In his book *Mind and World*, John McDowell argues that “mere animals,” by which he means other-than-human animals, live in an environment. Taking his definition from Hans-Georg Gadamer, an environment is nothing more than a series of problems and opportunities that present themselves as the animal attempts to fulfill its biological imperatives. Of course, the animal does not recognize the environment as such, because it does not possess the conceptual capacity to reflect on its situation. This formulation of the environment-dweller extends beyond other-than-human

animals to both neonates and to human beings who exist within what McDowell terms “a merely animal mode of life.”<sup>55</sup> His description of this mode of life is similar to Arendt’s description of the *animal laborans*.

Also in accord with Arendt, McDowell goes on to explicate a kind of dual natality, although he never employs such language. His formulation begins with a biological birth that is ontologically imbued with the possibility of future self-determination; specifically, he states that babies are born into an environment because “Human infants are mere animals, distinctive only in their potential.”<sup>56</sup> In his schema, “normal human maturation includes the acquisition of a second nature, which involves responsiveness to meaning.”<sup>57</sup> The acquisition of this second nature transforms at least some of us into what McDowell terms “thinkers and intentional agents.” He warns that this process is not a mysterious one, but instead is the normal outcome of *Bildung*.<sup>58</sup>

In his essay “*Bildung* and Second Nature,” Rüdiger Bubner seeks to contextualize the concept of *Bildung*.

Indeed the concept of *Bildung* played a decisive role in classical German philosophy from Herder to Wilhelm von Humbolt. The original meaning of the word *Bildung* was something like “formed according to an inner picture (exemplar or original model).” From then on the concept signified a program of cultural formation and development.... *Bildung* takes place in the upbringing and civilizing of the subject, who must emerge from a state of being driven by instinct with intelligible and recognizable forms of social behavior. In relation to the subject, *Bildung* means the discovery of possibilities and capacities whereby character is shaped, not only in the direction of a socially fixed and pre-given idea of virtue, but in the acquisition of a personality.<sup>59</sup>

In his response to Bubner, McDowell sets his interpretation against the Aristotelian model, which informed the construction of the concept of *Bildung* in classical German

philosophy, and which idealized human beings who were “unreflectively excellent occupants of fixed social roles.”<sup>60</sup> He takes this step in order to emphasize further the importance his interpretation places on “the acquisition of an individual personality,” which “coheres with valuing a critical individuality.”<sup>61</sup>

McDowell’s second natality or, to use his terminology, acquisition of a second nature through *Bildung*, brings us into the “world.” According to McDowell, occupying a world means that we no longer experience our surroundings solely in terms of problems or opportunities for fulfilling biological needs but, instead, develop a contemplative attitude marked by intellectual freedom and distance.<sup>62</sup> In this way, the difference between McDowell’s environment and world seems, at least at first brush, like nothing more than the difference between a non-conceptual, animal mode of perception, and a conceptual mode of human perception. However, McDowell goes on to explain that simply possessing the theoretical capacity necessary to understand our locale in a different way is not enough to actually build a world out of an environment. Instead, the transition “into the ‘free, distanced orientation’ brings intentional bodily action on to the scene no less than theoretical activity.”<sup>63</sup> In other words, when McDowell’s agent acquires his second nature, it is not only a process involving the mind, but also the body.

McDowell elucidates the importance of intentional bodily action by turning to Marx’s writings on alienated labor and the concomitant reduction of human freedom. For Marx, this loss of freedom is found in the forfeiting of control over ones’ productive activities; in this way, the laborer is no longer intentionally directing his or her bodily action, but simply following the mandate of another. Thus, the “part of human life that should be most expressive of humanity, namely, productive activity, is reduced to the condition of merely animal life, the meeting of merely biological needs.”<sup>64</sup> When we are living, according to Marx, a life free of alienation, and thus are fully human, our productive activities are self-directed; the result is that we will make-over what is naturally given into use objects, as well as create objects of art

that, McDowell notes, are free from the constraints of usefulness.<sup>65</sup> Through this brief argument, McDowell is acknowledging that it is necessary, but not sufficient, to think differently about our surroundings. We must also translate our ability to theorize into objective reality, simultaneously conceptualizing and fabricating our environment into a world.

In Arendt's writings, the building of a world is done through the activity of "work" and is the responsibility of *homo faber*, the craftspeople and artisans.<sup>66</sup> She states:

The work of our hands, as distinguished from the labor of our bodies, fabricates the sheer unending variety of things whose sum total constitutes the human artifice, the world we live in. They are not consumer goods but use-objects, and their proper use does not cause them to disappear. They give the world the stability and solidity without which it could not be relied upon to house the unstable and mortal creature that is man.<sup>67</sup>

Thus, through his efforts, *homo faber* creates artifacts that endure past the act of their creation, thus expanding human effort beyond merely the navigation of opportunities and obstacles present within the environment—which Arendt calls "the earth"—and into an act of world-making. Arendt's understanding of the "world," however, is different than McDowell's. For him, it is where we find ourselves as a result of acquiring our second nature, when *Bildung*, and especially the process of language acquisition, allows us to develop an orientation of freedom and distance that are the hallmarks of a contemplative attitude and a fully human life. While his world does have a thing-character, it is a secondary outcome of becoming a minded agent.<sup>68</sup> Arendt's formulation of the concept of "world" lacks a builder who has undergone an existential revelation or has acquired a second nature. Instead, it is purely a human artifact, wrought from the earth's endless repetition of growth and decay.

Not being the by-products of an existential revelation does not mean, however, that the human-made world lacks importance for Arendt. Just as the laborer generates more goods than he, himself, needs—meaning others can use those consumables without having exerted themselves—*homo faber* also exerts his efforts on behalf of the many in order to build a shared, objective context that stabilizes the otherwise subjective nature of existence. Thus, the world is what we have in common. It is the part of Arendt’s public realm that we all occupy. Arendt explains this phenomenon as follows:

[T]he term “public” signifies the world itself, in so far as it is common to all of us and distinguished from our privately owned place in it. This world, however, is not identical with the earth or with nature. . . . It is related, rather, to the human artifact, the fabrication of human hands, as well as to affairs which go on among those who inhabit the man-made world together. To live together in the world means essentially that a world of things is between those who have it in common, as a table is located between those who sit around it; the world, like every in-between, relates and separates men at the same time. The public realm, as the common world, gathers us together and yet prevents our falling over each other, so to speak.<sup>69</sup>

It is important to note, but easy to overlook, that besides being a shared, objective context the common world is also related to the “affairs which go on among those who inhabit the man-made world together.”<sup>70</sup> Arendt expands on this idea by adding that we inhabit “an environment of things that are not consumed but used, and to which, as we use them, we become used and accustomed. As such, they give rise to the familiarity of the world, its customs and habits of intercourse between men and things as well as between men and men.”<sup>71</sup> Arendt is indicating that, although the things of the world “owe their existence exclusively to men [, they] nevertheless condition their human makers;” at least part of that conditioning includes the normatively accepted social customs, habits of discourse and patterns of behavior

that govern the occurrences of speech and action through which the plural aspect of the common world is realized.<sup>72</sup>

### **The Space of Appearance, Action and Our Existential Natality**

Besides having the quality of being a common world, the second phenomenological dimension of the public realm is its quality of being a space of appearance. The space of appearance accommodates what Arendt terms “action.” Action is the third basic condition of human life; the other two, which I have previously discussed, are labor and work. Action is comprised of two parts: action and speech, which are alternatively referred to as deeds and words. Within Arendt’s system, action and speech are virtually inseparable.

Action and speech are so closely related because the primordial and specifically human act must always also answer the question asked of every newcomer: “Who are you?” The disclosure of “who somebody is” is implicit in the fact that speechless action somehow does not exist, or if it exists [it] is irrelevant; without speech, action loses the actor, and the doer of deeds is possible only to the extent that there is at the same time the speaker of words, who identifies himself as the actor and announces what he is doing, what he has done, or what he intends to do.<sup>73</sup>

Arendt takes her distinction between “who” and “what” from the work of St. Augustine. She explains in a footnote in *The Human Condition* that, according to the Bishop of Hippo, the question “Who am I?” is directed internally at one’s self. She summarizes Augustine’s answer as “You are a man—whatever that may be.” The question of “What am I?” is directed towards God and is a theological inquiry about both the nature of man and of the deity. As such, it can be answered only by a divine revelation.<sup>74</sup> Arendt revises Augustine’s definition, so that “what” I am includes personal qualities, talents or shortcomings of character, which I have the ability to display or hide at will. For instance, I know that I have a predilection to interrupt

others when they are talking. Since it is impolite to do so, I attempt to hide this shortcoming by tempering my tendency to interject. In this way, I am able to alter “what” I am. Conversely, “who” someone is—their unique, personal, completely individual identity or essence—appears clearly to others but is usually hidden from the person, herself. Arendt compares “who” we are to the Greek *daimōn*, the ancient spirit who, by always looking over our shoulder from behind, is outside our field of vision, but clearly visible to others.<sup>75</sup> We cannot willingly choose to expose or conceal “who” we are; instead “who” we are is revealed through instances of action.<sup>76</sup>

Action, understood as the words and deeds that disclose “who” someone is, “‘produces’ stories with or without intention as naturally as fabrication produces tangible things.”<sup>77</sup> Arendt, however, is clear that these stories—“the enacted stories,” as she terms them—are a “living reality” and, therefore, are of an altogether different nature than fabricated objects.<sup>78</sup> These stories are not performative recountings of events that have already occurred. Instead, they reveal the unique identity of the actor. Additionally, the words and deeds which produce these stories are not possible for an actor who is isolated. Instead, we reveal “who” we are to others, just as our *daimōn* makes itself visible to those we encounter, but not directly to us. In this way, one’s unique identity is disclosed within a plurality or what Arendt alternately terms the “web of relationships.” When the words and deeds through which we enact our story come into being within the web of relationships, a new phenomenological space comes into being in order to accommodate the event. This is the space of appearance, “where I appear to others as others appear to me, when men exist not merely like other living or inanimate things but make their appearance explicitly.”<sup>79</sup> In this way, the space of appearance is similar to what architect and theorist Bernard Tschumi describes as “simultaneously being space and event” or, more rightly, a space that “only exists by *grace of the happening of events*.”<sup>80</sup> The event is the intersection of two Arendtian categories: the enacted stories and the web of relationships.<sup>81</sup>

According to Arendt, when “who” someone is comes into presence within the space of appearance, it is “*like a second birth* in which we confirm and take upon ourselves the naked fact of our original physical appearance.” Arendt goes on to add that

This insertion is not forced upon us by necessity, like labor, and it is not prompted by utility, like work. It may be stimulated by the presence of others whose company we may wish to join, but it is never conditioned by them; its impulse springs from the beginning which came into the world when we were born and to which we respond by beginning something new on our own initiative.<sup>82</sup>

Arendt tells us that, although all people are capable of the words and deeds necessary to be reborn into the space of appearance, most will not.<sup>83</sup> After all, as Rüdiger Bubner notes, while everyone possesses the means necessary to realize their second nature, “it takes a lot of effort to bring it into concrete existence.”<sup>84</sup> Of course, this begs inquiry into who will and will not experience a second natality and for what reasons. In the next chapter I will explore the answers posed to those questions by three theorists, again beginning with John McDowell.

## CHAPTER 3

### POTENTIALITY TO ACTUALITY: OUR EXISTENTIAL NATALITY

Since Arendt circumscribes concepts in ways that tend to conflate their historical, institutional and phenomenological dimensions, my intention in chapter 2 was to map the philosophical topography of two key, conceptual territories found in *The Human Condition*—the private realm and the public realm—and three types of human activity: labor, work and action. According to Arendt, each of us enters the private realm through biological birth and the laboring of our mothers. Besides delivering us into a physical existence, our biological birth also contains the ontological grounding from which springs both the possibility of living a fully human life and, as Arendt explicates more fully in works written after *The Human Condition*, guarantees the continuance of a shared, common world.

As noted by Seyla Benhabib, the Arendtian public realm has two manifestations. The first is the common world and the second is the space of appearance. The common world is created through the work of *homo faber* and is comprised of artifacts that endure beyond the act of their creation, as well as the occurrences of speech and action through which the plural aspect of the common world is realized. The space of appearance is constituted by the meeting of two Arendtian categories: the enacted story and the web of relationships.<sup>1</sup> For Arendt, we distinguish ourselves as a unique individual by initiating something new and unpredicted in the world; this is done through the words and deeds which are the enactments of stories.<sup>2</sup> We cannot, however, enact our story in solitude; doing so requires a plurality, a web of relationships. When the action and speech of an enacted story occurs within the web of relationships, the space of appearance opens to accommodate the event. Entering this space is “like a second birth,” one that is existential instead of biological.<sup>3</sup>

In this chapter, I will be outlining theses posited by John McDowell, Seyla Benhabib and Patricia Bowen-Moore, all of whom offer similar interpretations of the dual natality. I will then offer objections to their formulations before explicating my argument for the way in which one actualizes the potential inherent in his or her primary, bio-ontological birth and, in doing so, undertakes a second, existential natality. My focus will then shift away from the subjective experience of the existential actor, herself, and towards a more thorough examination of the nature of the words and deeds that are central to undertaking an existential rebirth, as well as the interactions occurring between those agents who are enacting their stories.

### **Labor Pains: Three Formulations of the Second Birth**

As discussed in the previous chapter, in his book *Mind and World*, John McDowell explicates a kind of dual natality. He begins with the premise that “mere animals” live in an environment, by which he means that they experience their surroundings exclusively in terms of problems or opportunities for fulfilling biological needs. McDowell states that babies also are born into an environment because “Human infants are mere animals, distinctive only in their potential.”<sup>4</sup> This leads to an obvious question: potential for doing or becoming *what*? According to McDowell, it is the potential for a second natality or, as he terms it, the “acquisition of a second nature.” This transformation is posited as a normal part of maturation. It occurs through *Bildung*, education and other forms of cultural conditioning, and its outcome is four-fold. First, it results in mastery of our community’s natural language.<sup>5</sup> Second, it involves “acquiring a mind” in order to become “thinkers and intentional agents.” Third, we no longer experience our surroundings only in terms of problems or opportunities for fulfilling biological needs. Instead, our conceptual agility, contemplative attitude and “responsiveness to meaning,” allows us to move from living in a non-conceptual environment to dwelling in a “world,” which we may act upon to fulfill our needs and desires.<sup>6</sup> Fourth, the acquisition of a second nature

comes concomitantly with the responsibility for changing—at least on the generational level, if not on the level of the individual—the very culture whose conditioning has allowed us to leave the environment inhabited by mere animals and enter the world.

The feature of language which really matters is this: that a natural language, the sort of language into which human beings are first initiated, serves as a repository of tradition, a store of historically accumulated wisdom. . . . The tradition is subject to reflective modification by each generation which inherits it. Indeed, a standing obligation to engage in critical reflection is part of the inheritance.<sup>7</sup>

Similar to what McDowell posits, Seyla Benhabib states in her book, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*, that Arendt's concept of "action" corresponds to the human condition of natality. Benhabib likens Arendtian natality to Heidegger's notion of being "thrown" into an already existing context, where our arrival is both biological and "psychic-social." In order to successfully navigate the preexisting space in which he finds himself, the child must master the language of the community. According to Benhabib, once a child has command of the language, he has a concomitant grasp of cultural norms. Furthermore, she argues that we may define our sense of self by identifying the gap between those socio-cultural expectations, and who we are uniquely and distinctly. Unlike McDowell, however, Benhabib is not explicit about our obligation to intentionally alter the expectations of the community, although she does posit the introduction of novel speech and action as part of the process of developing a self-identity.

The crucial point here is that in learning speech and action, every human child also becomes the initiator of new deeds and new words. To learn a language is to master the capacity for formulating an infinite number of well-formed sentences in that language; to know how to act as a Hopi Indian, as an Ancient Greek as a modern American is also to know—more or less—how

to initiate both what is expected of one by the community and what is new, distinctive to the individual.<sup>8</sup>

In her book, *Hannah Arendt's Philosophy of Natality*, Patricia Bowen-Moore argues for the existence of a primary natality, a political natality and a tertiary natality. Since she ascribes Arendt's formulation of the tertiary natality primarily to works written after *The Human Condition*, my focus will remain on the other two. According to Bowen-Moore, the primary natality is comprised of the "factual birth and the concomitant capacity to make beginnings."<sup>9</sup> Since the child is born into the world as a stranger, he must become familiar with the norms of the community of which he is now a part. In Bowen-Moore's assessment, this happens through the process of formal education, which is imbued with "delight" as it fulfills the mandate to "cherish and protect the child's capacity for beginning and renewal."<sup>10</sup> Yet, no matter how nurturing, the child must eventually leave the learning environment and all the other protected spaces of youth. In a chapter titled "From the Chambers of the Nursery to the Stage of the World," Bowen-Moore describes this transition thusly:

At the moment when the child leaves these protective chambers, . . . he enters the stage of the public world where his words and deeds will be heard and seen and judged by others. It is precisely at this moment that primary natality assumes the character of the political. It is, as it were, man's "second birth."<sup>11</sup>

This second birth, the political natality, is where the potential for beginning and renewal inherent in the primary natality are actualized through action and the exercise of political freedom.<sup>12</sup> The outcome of this actualization varies, but it has historically included the American and French Revolutions. According to Bowen-Moore, both revolutions are examples of "new stories and new beginnings," because they "reveal something about freedom's appearance and something about the beginners themselves and the faculty for novelty which is their ineluctable privilege for initiating newness."<sup>13</sup>

Although often tangled thematically,<sup>14</sup> Bowen-Moore's text—which, it is worth noting, is the only book-length work devoted to the study of natality in Arendt's writings—shares insights with Benhabib and McDowell's decidedly more refined analyses:

- Birth is both an actual, biological event and one which is imbued with the potential for the child to undertake further acts of differentiation.
- The child is born into a preexistent community with its own socio-cultural standards. Through whatever means it is achieved, gaining command of the inherited tradition is part and parcel of the normal maturation process.
- Mastery of the normative standards of the community causes an existential awakening: a second birth or the acquisition of a second nature.
- The existential rebirth actualizes the potential inherent in the first, biological birth.
- The result of an individual's existential natality will be a change in the standards of the community which pre-existed her arrival and into which she was enculturated.

Just as there are striking similarities between all three of these analyses, there are also some common problems. In the work of Bowen-Moore and Benhabib, these issues are complicated at several critical junctures by the way in which they interpret Arendt's text. In order to clarify my objections, and offer some of my own analyses, I am going to engage the points posited above one by one.

*Birth is both an actual, biological event and one which is imbued with the potential for the child to undertake further acts of differentiation.*

In *The Human Condition*, Arendt posits two natalities, the first of which is biological. Besides being our original emergence into the world through the laboring of our

mothers, our biological birth is also a philosophical egression; Arendt casts our biological birth as the ontological grounding from which springs the possibility of living a fully human life, as well as the event which guarantees the continuance of a shared, common world. For Arendt, living a fully human life means exercising the ability to distinguish ourselves as a unique individual by initiating something new and unpredicted in the world through the words and deeds of the stories we enact.<sup>15</sup> These stories are enacted within a web of intersubjective relations and interactions. Up to this point, McDowell's, Benhabib's and Bowen-Moore's formulations are similar to Arendt's and, therefore, all four also share a common problem: not one of them offers any explanation or phenomenological justification as to *why* our biological natality holds the power to ontologically root other kinds of new beginnings. In response to this deficit, in chapter 2 I contend that our primary birth is bio-ontological because it is the first alteration of our basic, constitutive status; in this case, the change is from one who is towards being-there, but isn't yet, to one who is autonomously present in the world, even if that autonomy is minimal. This transition is our first experience of differentiation, our first experience of ourselves as distinct from other agents and objects—the most notable being our mother and the environment of her womb—and grounds the possibility for other alterations of our being-constitution. When we do differentiate ourselves further by initiating something new and unpredicted in the world, it is “*like a second birth* in which we confirm and take upon ourselves the naked fact of our original physical appearance” and are reborn into the Arendtian space of appearance.<sup>16</sup>

*The child is born into a preexistent community with its own socio-cultural standards. Through whatever means it is achieved, gaining command of the inherited tradition is part and parcel of the normal maturation process.*

For McDowell and Benhabib, enculturation happens as a result of acquiring the community's natural language. For Bowen-Moore, it occurs through the process of formal education, which, it can reasonably be assumed, also includes a linguistic component. Conversely, within the text of *The Human Condition*, Arendt's discussion of cultural conditioning does not specifically engage language mastery or education.<sup>17</sup> Instead, she focuses on the artifacts of work as the source of our enculturation. These objects possess an inherent durability and stability which transcends the endlessly repetitive processes of all things natural. These processes include the cycles of death and birth—the death of existent community members, as well as “the constant influx of newcomers who are born into the world as strangers.”<sup>18</sup> These same objects insure that those newcomers are conditioned in such a way so as not to remain strangers indefinitely: “The world . . . consists of things produced by human activities; but the things that owe their existence exclusively to men nevertheless constantly condition their human makers. . . . This is why men, no matter what they do, are always conditioned beings.”<sup>19</sup>

This conditioning takes place on two levels. First, mundane use objects shape our understanding of regular, day-to-day interactions including, Arendt tells us, customs and discursive habits.<sup>20</sup> Second, beyond use items, there is a whole other category of artifactual objects crafted by the world's workers. These are the outputs of “*homo faber* in his highest capacity,” and consist of art, poetry, histories and monuments—objects that both Arendt and McDowell agree do not necessarily have use value but that, arguably, have an even more profound influence on our conditioning than mere use items; they are media especially well-suited for preserving and transmitting the information that knits together a community's phenomenological horizon, information about things like family structure, religious beliefs and traditions, gender roles, and other social and cultural conventions and expectations.<sup>21</sup>

*Mastery of the normative standards of the community causes an existential awakening: a second birth or the acquisition of a second nature.*

McDowell, Bowen-Moore and Benhabib all assert that shared expectations, meanings, values and beliefs are the preexisting, implicit and transparent context that both supports and constrains the activities of our daily existence. Through normal maturation, we become reflectively and critically conscious of this context. This awareness causes some sort of existential awakening. In McDowell formulation, the existential awakening is the “acquiring of a mind.” On the whole, minded agents are vested with the obligation to change the very socio-cultural tradition of which they are a part, although it does not seem as though this expectation rest equally on every individual: “The tradition is subject to reflective modification by each *generation* [as opposed to each individual,] which inherits it.”<sup>22</sup> For Benhabib, this awakening entails recognizing that which is distinctive to us as an individual, because “Socialization and individuation are two sides of the same coin.”<sup>23</sup> In Bowen-Moore’s interpretation, the second birth occurs at the point of making oneself publically present in such a way that our actions can be seen, heard and judged; additionally, we will prompted to respond to the scrutinizing eye of the other by undertaking novel activities.

The problem with all three of these interpretations is this: there is nothing within our usual life experiences—nor, for that matter, within the text of *The Human Condition*—which would encourage us to believe that mastery of the socio-cultural standards of the community into which we are born necessarily leads to the kind of critical reflection necessary to illuminate any gaps between the inherited tradition and a self that is unique and distinctive. Empirically, I am not implying that such a thing never occurs, but simply stating that the frequency is far less than McDowell, Benhabib and Bowen-Moore would purport. In accord with Arendt, I maintain that most people are conditioned to the standards of their community and will unquestioningly accept those normative expectations as they are given.

*The existential rebirth actualizes the potential inherent in the first, biological birth.*

Thus far, my objection to McDowell, Benhabib and Bowen-Moore's work has focused on their shared claim that an existential awakening, marked by both a critical awareness of socio-cultural traditions and—at least according to Bowen-Moore—a willingness to intentionally challenge those same standards, is the default product of the normal socialization and maturation process. Although I do not find sufficient justification in any of their writings for positing this outcome as all but axiomatic, I do believe that a small number of people will certainly follow the basic model they outline. As such, my second objection has to do with the minority of people who do undergo an existential natality or acquire a second nature.

Specifically, I assert that the development of a critical awareness of an inherited, socio-cultural tradition, and a willingness to act in such a manner as to challenge those same standards, are actually two distinct activities; the former takes place within the mind of the agent, and the latter takes place in the world where our words and deeds both coincide and conflict with the actions of others. Arendt notes this distinction etymologically.

In order to illustrate what is at stake here we may remember that Greek and Latin, unlike the modern languages, contain two altogether different and yet interrelated words with which to designate the verb "to act." To the two Greek verbs *archein* ("to begin," "to lead," finally "to rule") and *prattein* ("to pass through," "to achieve," "to finish") correspond the two Latin verbs *agere* ("to set into motion," "to lead") and *gerere* (whose original meaning is "to bear"). Here it seems as though each action were divided into two parts, the beginning made by a single person and the achievement in which many join by "bearing" and "finishing" the enterprise, by seeing it through.<sup>24</sup>

Given this reality, a person who becomes, to borrow McDowell's term, a minded agent, may, upon reflection, choose to do what's necessary to subjugate any differences between who he is as a unique individual and the accepted standards of his community in order to avoid navigating the intersubjective aspect of the process. An example of just such an individual is easily identified in Arendt's description of the jobholder and businessman who—despite holding positions that often are regarded with great esteem—undertake their work with a laborious attitude. In other words, they toil in order to “make a living,” a phrase that underscores the relationship between wage-earning and survival. In order to continue to be able to make a living, Arendt tells us that the jobholder or businessman must make “the only active decision still required of the individual.” In this case, it is the decision “to let go, so to speak, to abandon his individuality, the still individually sensed pain and trouble of living, and acquiesce in a dazed, ‘tranquilized,’ functional type of behavior.”<sup>25</sup>

Although Arendt's portrayal of the jobholder or businessman is indeed harsh, she is pointing to a basic truth about human nature that is all too easily overlooked. Namely, that although they posit the undertaking of a second, existential natality as an all but automatic result of the maturation process, many people will develop a critical awareness of their inherited socio-cultural tradition, and still *actively decide* to retreat into the well-worn and familiar in order to fulfill the expectations of the community as they are given. Those who make such a decision are refusing to undertake the obligation to change the socio-cultural tradition of which they are a part and, in doing so, forgoes the opportunity to actualize fully the potential inherent in their bio-ontological birth.

For the few people who do develop a critical awareness of their socio-cultural traditions *and* who also possess a willingness to challenge those same standards by illuminating the space between what is personally real and what is expected by the community, it is my judgment that there is still no guarantee of the potential inherent in their bio-ontological birth being actualized through an existential rebirth. After all,

as Arendt rightly expresses, there are obstacles with which we must contend when we act; these factors do not exclude the possibility of a second, existential natality, but they do tell us more about the forces that thwart “the greatest achievements of which human beings are capable,” those that are “conceptualized in Aristotle’s notion of *energeia* (‘actuality’).”<sup>26</sup> Arendt clarifies some of these obstacles in her discussion of the foreigner and slave in antiquity, and the laborer in the modern age.<sup>27</sup>

Specifically, foreigners living in ancient Greece would not have been allowed to own property, which was a prerequisite for participation in the public and political space of the *polis*.<sup>28</sup> Arendt uses this historical reference to represent those people who face structural or socio-cultural biases that make it exceedingly difficult to enact their stories; a more contemporary example would be African-American’s during the heyday of segregation and the Jim Crow laws. Additionally, Arendt states that in order to be existentially reborn, we must not be devoting a majority of our time to labor, i.e.—securing basic, life-sustaining necessities. This freedom from necessity may be achieved in multiple ways, including usurp the excess labor-power of others. Accordingly, Arendt explains that we may utilize the labor power of others by obtaining it through some sort of exchange market: I go to the grocery store and purchase vegetables produced through the laboring of the farmer. It is also possible to co-opt that excess labor power by enslaving, or otherwise forcibly coercing, those people whom Arendt calls *animal laborans* to execute such tasks on my behalf.

I am in complete agreement with Arendt that a person’s biological natality contains only the *possibility* or *potential* for a second natality, which may not ever be actualized either because one chooses not to act or because one encounters insurmountable obstacles that inhibit one from doing so. However, I do not always agree with the examples she offers in illustration of this point. For instance, while I understand Arendt’s insistence on freedom as a precursory condition for undertaking of a second, existential natality, I am willing to assert that—except, possibly, when one possesses a slavish adherence to the norms of the community—those who

experience sustained socio-structural restriction of motility or activity, or deprivation of their basic physical needs, may experience a greater-than-average gap between what is personally real and what is expected of them and, therefore, offered to them, by their community. Concomitantly, they have a lesser number of compelling reasons not to explicate the space between the two, as the risk of challenging those biases by asserting “who” they are may cease to seem so great. As a result, restriction of one’s freedom through chronic deprivation, enslavement, entrenched structural bias or the like may ultimately bring with it a level of sovereignty comparable to when our basic needs are met and we have the necessary measure of personal autonomy. It is, therefore, with no sense of frivolity that I quote lyrics made famous by Janis Joplin: “Freedom’s just another word for nothing left to lose.”<sup>29</sup>

*The result of an individual’s existential natality will be a change to the existent standards of the community.*

Arendt makes the bold assertion that, in the final account, there is only one thing that separates those who actualize the potential inherent in their bio-ontological birth from those who do not. It is not freedom from labor, nor social or political standing. Furthermore, it is not conceptual agility, language acquisition or formal education. It is courage.<sup>30</sup> Courage is necessary for at least two reasons. First, it is not possible to possess prior knowledge of “who” we will turn out to be: “one discloses one’s self without ever either knowing himself or being able to calculate beforehand whom he reveals.”<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, once that revelation has occurred, the exact nature of our unique, personal, and completely individual identity or essence will be displayed fully to others while remaining outside of either our view or our control. For this reason, Arendt compares “who” we are to the Greek *daimōn*, the ancient spirit who, by always looking over our shoulder from behind, is outside our field of vision, but clearly visible to others.<sup>32</sup> Needless to say, it takes great courage to allow ourselves

to be laid bare to gaze of another in this way, especially when we will never be able to see ourselves with the same clarity. Thus, Arendt states:

The connotation of courage, which we now feel to be an indispensable quality of the hero, is in fact already present in a willingness to act and speak at all, to insert one's self into the world and begin a story of one's own. And this courage is not necessarily or even primarily related to a willingness to suffer the consequences; courage and even boldness are already present in leaving one's private hiding place and showing who one is, in disclosing and exposing one's self. The extent of this original courage, without which action and speech and therefore, according to the Greeks, freedom, would not be possible at all, is not less great and may even be greater if the "hero" happens to be a coward.<sup>33</sup>

Second, since "who" we are, the authentic, individuated self, sits in contradistinction to what is expected of us as a community member—psychologically, theologically, sexually, legally, aesthetically, economically or so on—eschewing some aspect of those standards is choosing to make oneself, at least to some degree, an outsider. We cannot anticipate what response that status may provoke from others, what action or chain of reactions it may cause to commence. It is certainly possible that there will be no perceivable response or even some level of immediate support; conversely, it is not difficult to imagine such instances prompting a malevolent reaction. Since we are not able to anticipate the response our actions will provoke towards us as individuals, it follows logically that we cannot have precursory knowledge of whether our words and deeds will provoke a change in the existent standards of the community, let alone what kind of change.

### **The Enacted Story and the Web of Relationships**

Having rehearsed McDowell's argument concerning the development of a second nature through *Bildung*, as well as Benhabib and Bowen-Moore's interpretations of

the dual natality in *The Human Condition*, I am now going to posit my own version of the process through which an existential awakening occurs. My theory is grounded in analysis of *The Human Condition* and continues to draw upon the conceptual trinity of natality, normativity and narrative.

As has been discussed, we are born into what Arendt terms the “private realm” through the laboring of our mothers. Upon our arrival, we immediately start to be conditioned to the accepted social customs, habits of discourse and patterns of behavior of our inherited tradition by the things of the common world. These objects are the artifacts of work—the crib in which we are laid, the snuggly, stuffed bunny we are given for comfort, and so on. We are also exposed to stories, art, monuments and other kinds of artifactual objects that are especially well-suited for preserving and transmitting the normative conventions of our inherited tradition.<sup>34</sup>

Although we are conditioned beings, Arendt is still very clear when she says that “each man is unique, so that with each birth something uniquely new comes into the world.”<sup>35</sup> In other words, Arendt is indicating that a gap necessarily exists between the world we are born into, and the person that world conditions us to be, and who we are explicitly, uniquely, newly, authentically. It is my contention that most people will never become cognizant of this gap. Of those who do recognize it, some will do whatever is required to subjugate any differences between the who they are as unique individuals and the expectations of the community as they are given. Others may desire to challenge the dominant norms, but encounter insurmountable obstacles that prohibit them from doing so. In all of these circumstances, they will be limited to lives of labor and work. A few people, however, will find the courage necessary to reveal “who” they are.

Just as biological necessities are met through the tasks of labor, and world-building occurs through the activities of work, action discloses “who” someone is and “‘produces’ stories with or without intention as naturally as fabrication produces tangible things.”<sup>36</sup> This disclosure is not, however, possible for an actor who is

isolated: we reveal “who” we are to others within the “web of relationships.” When the words and deeds through which we enact our story come into being within the web of relationships, a new phenomenological space concomitantly comes into being in order to accommodate the event. Our appearance in this space constitutes our second natality, and actualizes the potential inherent in our first, biological birth. Just like as our primary natality marks an important instance of differentiation—in that case, it is when we first experience the worldly environment directly and not, literally, through our mother—our existential rebirth heralds the arrival of an individuated self who will live a distinctly human life, a *bios*, as opposed to *zoë*, an undifferentiated place within the species *Homo sapiens*.

Although our second natality may seem like the end of the story, the completion of the narrative, like all births, it is really just the beginning. In order to understand what comes next, it is necessary to examine more closely the nature of both Arendtian action and the interactions between existential agents within the web of relationships. I will begin this examination by turning to Jürgen Habermas’ essay “Hannah Arendt’s Communications Concept of Power,” in which he states that the deeds and words Arendt describes in *The Human Condition* are a form of communicative action. By this, Habermas means that they are used by the existential agents “‘illocutionarily,’ that is, for the noncoercive establishment of intersubjective relations,” as opposed to ‘perlocutionarily,’ meaning “merely to instigate other subjects to a desired behavior.”<sup>37</sup> The result is that Arendt’s agents enjoy what Habermas terms “unconstrained communication,” which allows them to reveal themselves as unique individuals while simultaneously recognizing others as constitutionally equal and able to participate reciprocally. According to Habermas, besides yielding “unimpaired intersubjectivity,” Arendt also posits communicative action as the basis for the consensus building that undergirds political power.<sup>38</sup> Political power, tautologically, then manifests itself in loci of reciprocal speech: “(a) in orders that protect liberty, (b) in resistance against forces that threaten political

liberty, and (c) in those revolutionary actions that found new institutions of liberty.”<sup>39</sup> Habermas goes on to identify those points which he considers to be weaknesses in Arendt’s theory, not the least of which is her failure to consider the need for other types of action and, specifically, strategic action. This type of action is decidedly perlocutionarily, as is made evident when Habermas states bluntly: “War is the classic example of strategic action.”<sup>40</sup> However, it is this kind of action that, according to Habermas, actually does the heavy lifting in regards to maintaining and employing the political power that only communicative action is capable of generating. As such, he suggests the need to “place strategic action alongside communicative action, as another form of social interaction (which is, to be sure, not oriented to reaching agreement but to success).”<sup>41</sup>

While I agree with much of what Habermas advances, there are some basic problems with his exegesis, beginning with the fact that communication between existential agents is not unconstrained. Instead, Arendt tells us, they extend to each other mutual consideration as they enact their stories. These considerations include the making of promises and the offering of forgiveness. Such considerations are necessary because of the boundlessness, unpredictability and irreversibility of words and deeds enacted within an intersubjective plurality: “Since we always act into a web of relationships,” Arendt explains, “the consequences of each deed are boundless, every action touches off not only a reaction but a chain reaction, every process is the cause of unpredictable new processes.”<sup>42</sup> Arendt goes on to add that it does not matter if our actions are great in magnitude or achingly simple: “The smallest act in the most limited of circumstances bears the seed of the same boundlessness and unpredictability; one deed, one gesture, one word may suffice to change every constellation.”<sup>43</sup> Thus, the entelechy of action is not the same as creating the artifacts of work. With action, there is no tangible product; instead, there is a new state of affairs, which is not subject to the categories of means and ends.

Besides being boundless and unpredictable, once an action-process has begun, it is also irreversible. If a table turns out to be wobbly or unattractive, a craftsman may dismantle his work and try again. But, in the circumstances Arendt describes, we are not building a table. We are acting into a web of intersubjective relationships and, as a result, it is impossible to stop, undo or annul what has begun, even if the results are disastrous.<sup>44</sup> For these reasons, Patchen Markell asserts that “it might be better to speak of action as something that is, at various times and places, coming into being or passing away, as the intensity of responsiveness in a space of potential circulation waxes and wanes, but which never simply or definitely *is*.”<sup>45</sup>

Illocutionary acts like promising and forgiving serve as the only available “control mechanisms built into the very faculty to start new and unending processes.”<sup>46</sup> Making promises binds existential agents to certain courses of actions; in other words, “promising looks forward as it seeks to establish islands of security in an otherwise uncertain and unpredictable future.”<sup>47</sup> Forgiveness is backwards-looking, and offers release from the unforeseeable and unintended outcomes of action.<sup>48</sup> Without it, Arendt tells us, it would be possible to remain victims of action’s consequences forever, “not unlike the sorcerer’s apprentice who lacked the magic formula to break the spell.”<sup>49</sup> As such, while promising and forgiving are necessary, they are, nonetheless, constraints on the communication between existential agents.

Building off of Habermas’ work—although not yet explicitly referencing any connection to Arendt’s writings—Seyla Benhabib, in her 1986 text *Critique, Norm, and Utopia*, discusses four modes of action: communicative, expressive, instrumental and strategic action. Benhabib’s understanding of communicative action is similar to Habermas’ in that its’ goal is mutual understanding. It is symmetrical and reciprocal. Communicative action yields collective, supportive and accommodational models of interaction between existential agents. Expressive action lends itself to self-realization and self-actualization. It involves manifesting and confirming our unique attributes.<sup>50</sup> Expressive action causes existential agents to strive competitively in

their interactions for recognition and affirmation. Instrumental action is object-oriented and refers to making or doing; an example of instrumental action would be building a birdhouse. Strategic action is subject-oriented and aimed at getting others to fulfill designated ends; an example of strategic action would be the discourse of advertising or political propaganda.<sup>51</sup>

In 1996, ten years after the publication of *Critique, Norm, and Utopia*, Seyla Benhabib applied the communicative and expressive modes of action directly to the text of *The Human Condition*. She renamed them the “narrative model of action” and the “agonal model of action,” respectively. These models retained all of the original characteristics of communicative and expressive action, but now reflected the specifics of the enacted story. Narrative/communicative action was described as contextual, embedded, expressive of an emergent self, inventive and constructive. Agonal/expressive action was defined as being revelatory, contrastive, discoverative and essentialist.<sup>52</sup> Benhabib’s decision to apply her study of action-types to *The Human Condition* came in response to Maurizio Passerin D’Entrèves’s 1994 work, *The Political Philosophy of Hannah Arendt*, in which he stated that Arendt’s theory of action rested on an unstable combination of the communicative and expressive modes Benhabib had originally outlined in *Critique, Norm, and Utopia*. According to D’Entrèves, this instability causes a variance in Arendt’s account of politics based on which category of action she seems to be emphasizing at any given point within the text.

When the emphasis falls on the expressive model of action, politics is viewed as the performance of noble deeds by outstanding individuals; conversely, when her stress is on the communicative model of action, politics is seen as the collective process of deliberation and decision making that rests of equality and solidarity.<sup>53</sup>

Just as D’Entrèves described contradictory accounts of political activity based on whether the communicative or expressive mode of action is fore-fronted, other

commentators described the existential agents themselves in opposing terms for the very same reasons. Hanna Fenichel Pitkin portrays Arendt's actors as resembling "posturing little boys clamoring for attention ('Look at me! I'm the greatest!' 'No, look at *me!*') and wanting to be reassured that they are brave, valuable, even real."<sup>54</sup>

Pitkin even goes so far as to gender-identify her analysis; not only do the agents resemble "posturing little *boys*," she adds: "Though Arendt was female, there is a lot of *machismo* in her vision."<sup>55</sup> Pitkin, who reads Arendt's existential agents as narcissistic attention-seekers, clearly emphasizes expressive action, which, for her, is a masculine method of communication. Conversely, Leslie Paul Thiele says that the existential agents lack "self definition, autonomy, and mastery," and that their agency "is not seated in a pre-existing, unified, deliberate, self-knowing subject."<sup>56</sup> Thiele, who reads those same agents as selves in need of social construction, in need of a community who will help assemble their fragmented bits of being, emphasizes the communicative model of action.

Just as in the case of Habermas, there are problems with the analyses of Arendtian action put forth by Pitkin, Thiele and D'Entrèves. In the case of Pitkin and Thiele, they confuse the possibility of identifying various types of action with character traits possessed by the existential agents who are enacting those words and deeds. In fact, Arendt tells us very little about the nature of these people, asserting only that there is one trait that ultimately separates those who actualize the potential inherent in their bio-ontological birth by undertaking a second, existential natality from those who do not: courage. After the point at which they are reborn, we are essentially told nothing else about the character of the existential agents, nor does Arendt ever offer a concrete, historical example of someone who has actualized her potential in this way. I believe the exclusion has something to do with the fact that Arendt shifts her attention from the individual, existential agent to the plurality, the web of relationships.

According to Arendt, this plurality—not the individual, existential agent—has two defining features that cannot be considered separately: distinction and equality. Concerning distinction, Arendt states: “If men were not distinct, each human being distinguished from any other who is, was, or will ever be, they would need neither speech nor action to make themselves understood. Signs and sounds to communicate immediate, identical needs and wants would be enough.”<sup>57</sup> The need for speech and action, the call to show “who” we are, in all of our uniqueness, by initiating that which is new and unprecedented, is demonstrative of the revelatory, contrastive, discoverative and essentialist character of expressive action. Conversely, communicative action is exemplified in equality, which Arendt defines as the second characteristic of plurality. Arendt states, “If men were not equal, they could neither understand each other and those who came before them nor plan for the future and foresee the needs of those who will come after them.”<sup>58</sup> As previously explained, communicative action facilitates collaboration and consensus building by being contextual, embedded, expressive of an emergent self, inventive and constructive.

The problem with D’Entrèves’s analysis is that he is not actually discussing that which can rightly be defined as Arendtian action—when the potential inherent in our bio-ontological birth is actualized through words and deeds that reveal “who” someone is within a web of relationships. As such, while political activities certainly may contain instances of Arendtian action, as soon as that action is translated into a more resolute and fixed form—or, I would contend, becomes part of a process that seeks a predetermined end—it is transfigured into something else entirely: a reification.

## CHAPTER 4

### REIFICATION, RECOGNITION AND REMEMBRANCE

In chapter 3, I outlined John McDowell's formulation of the process through which humans acquire a second nature, as well as Seyla Benhabib and Patricia Bowen-Moore's interpretations of the second natality in *The Human Condition*. I then offered objections to their formulations before explicating my argument for the way in which one actualizes the potential inherent in his or her primary, bio-ontological birth and, in doing so, undertakes a second, existential natality. My focus then shifted away from the subjective experience of the existential actor, herself, and towards a more thorough examination of the words and deeds that comprise Arendtian action, as well as the interactions between existential agents within the web of relationships.

In this chapter, I am going to focus on another set of intersubjective relationships: those that occur between existential agents and the spectators. Spectators serve as witnesses to the events through which agents reveal "who" they are. Out of those interactions, arises occurrences of what Arendt terms "remembrance" and "reification." I will explicate Arendt's construction of those concepts before contrasting them against the work of Axel Honneth, who links reification with a theory of recognition. I will then detail two major problems with Arendt's formulation, one involving the mind and the other involving the body. This discussion will lead into the next chapter, where I will demonstrate how work from the field of social cognition can enrich and inform the deficits inherent in Arendt's account.

#### **Reification and Recognition**

Etymologically, the word "reification" is a neologism that first came into use in the 1860s, and is derived from the combination of the Latin word *res*, meaning "thing," and *facere*, meaning "to build or make."<sup>1</sup> It is a concept closely associated with Karl

Marx, even though the term reification (*Verdinglichung*) appears in Marx's work only twice, and both times in the third book of *Capital*; it is not, as is commonly supposed, found in the chapter on commodity fetishism in the first book. Instead, in that often-referenced section, there may be found only "basic elements for a theory of reification . . . given in a number of pregnant statements."<sup>2</sup>

In the three-part treatise "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat," from his 1923 book *History and Class Consciousness (Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein)*, Georg Lukács expanded on Marx's work. Lukács was a leader within the early twentieth-century Hungarian Communist movement, as well as a philosopher and literary critic loosely associated with the humanistic neo-Marxists of the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt. He argued, in contrast to Marx, that reification was not solely a form of alienation between the worker and the products of his labor endemic to modern, capitalist societies.<sup>3</sup> Instead, he asserted that reification extended beyond the economic sphere and into every aspect of life within capitalist societies; his analysis focused on three manifestations of reification, the first being closest to the original Marxist concept, while the others introduced subjective and intersubjective elements. According to Lukács, reification is made manifest in instances when

1. objects are regarded merely as things on which one may make a profit. In this way, they are totally divorced from the person responsible for their fabrication.
2. "fragmentation of the object of production necessarily entails the fragmentation of its subject."<sup>4</sup> In these cases, the subject begins to regard his or her own feelings, desires, intentions, abilities and talents as mechanisms for creating profit.
3. a commodity exchange requires another with whom we transact. During these transactions, other people become objects, mere instruments of deal-making, with no intrinsic value.<sup>5</sup>

According to Axel Honneth, who studied under Jürgen Habermas and is the current Director of the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt, this broadening of the concept of reification beyond the purely economic and into the realms of the subjective and intersubjective, resonated in socio-political climate of early twentieth century Germany.<sup>6</sup> As a result, first-generation members of the Institute for Social Research continued to develop theories related to reification. After World War II and the atrocities of the Holocaust, however, the concept of reification was ostensibly laid to rest as “social theorists and philosophers were instead content to analyze deficits of democracy and justice, without making use of concepts referring to social pathologies such as reification or commercialization.”<sup>7</sup>

In a series of lectures and the book that followed, *Reification: A New Look at an Old Idea*, Honneth sought to revive a Lukácsian-inspired interpretation of the concept of reification by linking it with a theory of recognition. Honneth’s theory of recognition is founded on the primacy of intersubjective interactions wherein one is recognized—in the sense of being granted positive status—by another, who he or she recognizes in return.<sup>8</sup> When this foundational moment of recognition is somehow forgotten, or when recognition is withheld by one party

We develop a tendency to perceive other persons as mere insensate objects. By speaking here of mere objects or “things,” I mean that in this kind of amnesia, we lose the ability to understand immediately the behavioral expressions of other persons as making claims on us—as demanding that we react in an appropriate way. We may indeed be capable in a cognitive sense of perceiving the full spectrum of human expressions, but we lack, so to speak, the feeling of connection that would be necessary for us to be affected by the expressions we perceive.<sup>9</sup>

The consequences of forgetting or withholding intersubjective recognition may be made manifest in acts of *Mißachtung*, “disrespect.” Honneth outlines three types of disrespect, thus giving the term broader meaning than we would usually

assign. The first kind of disrespect relates to the deprivation of bodily autonomy, as in instances of physical abuse, torture or rape. The physical pain of these acts is combined with the mental anguish of being at the mercy of another. The result is a loss of trust both in the reliability of the social world, as well as a collapse of confidence in one's self. The second type of disrespect is related to being structurally excluded from possessing a valid rights-claim, either socially or legally. This inequality—both under the law and as a reciprocating moral agent—brings with it a concomitant loss of self-respect.<sup>10</sup> The final form of disrespect has to do with the creation of a value-hierarchy, which Honneth explains as follows:

If this hierarchy of values is so constituted as to downgrade individual forms of life and manner of belief as inferior or deficient, then it robs the subjects in question of every opportunity to attribute social value to their own abilities.... For individuals, therefore, the experience of the social devaluation typically brings with it a loss of personal self-esteem, of the opportunity to regard themselves as beings whose traits and abilities are esteemed. Thus, the kind of recognition that this type of disrespect deprives a person of is the social approval of a form of self-realization that he or she has to discover, despite all hindrances, with the encouragement of group solidarity.<sup>11</sup>

In other words, this last form of disrespect inhibits one from realizing his potential, because of the internalization of the myriad of direct and indirect messages concerning his inherent inferiority.

The loss of the antecedent moment of recognition, no matter how it occurs, and the emotional and behavior consequences that follow, are what Honneth understands as reification. The only way to avoid reification is to find a means through which to recover the lost or forgotten moment of foundational recognition. This solution has proved problematic for Honneth since, according to Alexander Garcia Düttman, "Honneth rigs the outcome of the struggle for recognition in advance by positing an ideologically idealized norm of anticipated and desirable

reconciliation.”<sup>12</sup> Kelly Oliver has expanded on Düttman’s critique, as well as similar ones offered by other scholars.<sup>13</sup> Oliver argues that while Honneth’s theory of recognition entails the intersubjective construction of identity, the people participating in the interaction possess seemingly unequal levels of authority. This allows one participant to exercise a disproportionate level of influence over the identity formation of the other.<sup>14</sup> Given this imbalance of authority, Honneth’s theory of recognition unwittingly continues to legitimize much of what Karen J. Warren terms the “logic of domination, i.e., a structure of argumentation that leads to a justification of subordination.”<sup>15</sup> Typically, this structure is marked by value dualisms, “disjunctive pairs in which the disjuncts are seen as oppositional (rather than complementary), and exclusive (rather than inclusive), and which place higher value (status, privilege) on one disjunct rather than the other.”<sup>16</sup> These dualisms have traditionally included white/colored, man/woman, wealthy/poor, educated/unschooled and heterosexual/homosexual. Within this dynamic, marginalized people—those who hold the secondary position within each disjunctive pair—seek validation from those in the dominant position. According to Oliver, this creates a “pathology of oppression”: the oppressed seeks recognition from the oppressor, who is least likely to recognize those being oppressed; after all, what reason would the master have for extending recognition to his slave? Thus, even if reconciliation is ideologically idealized, anticipated and desired, it is improbable. Furthermore, according to Oliver, the receipt of a null or negative response may cause those who are in the inferior position to internalize the rightness of their deflated status and/or leave them with “the sense that they are lacking something that only their superior dominators have or can give them.”<sup>17</sup>

### **Reification and Remembrance: Honneth Meets Hannah**

Fifty years before Honneth argued that the time had come for the concept of reification to be resurrected, Hannah Arendt had done just that within the pages of

*The Human Condition*, all while avoiding many of the pitfalls Honneth encounters. Much of her success is due the fact that Arendt's interpretation of reification stands in direct contradiction to Honneth's in at least three noteworthy ways. First, for Honneth, reification occurs when the antecedent moment of intersubjective recognition is lost or forgotten. In those instances, we "lose the ability to understand immediately the behavioral expressions of other persons as making claims on us—as demanding that we react in an appropriate way." This is not a cognitive deficiency, as we still perceive the full spectrum of their expression. What we lack is "the feeling of connection that would be necessary for us to be affected by the expressions we perceive."<sup>18</sup> Conversely, instead of arguing that reification results from a damaged experience of recognition, Arendt suggests a positive relationship between reification and intersubjectivity via what she terms "remembrance." Remembrance occurs when the speech and action of existential agents is seen, heard and recollected. It is, however, more than the basic, cognitive processing of sensory input; instead, it is a call to be fully present in witnessing the stories that others enact in order to translate them into worldly objects: works of reification.<sup>19</sup>

Second, in *The Human Condition*, reifications produced in the fulfillment of remembrance are the products of *homo faber*, who crafts the enduring artifacts that offer human existence a shared, stable, objective context. As discussed, these artifactual objects usually serve as buffers against the endless cyclicity of nature. They forge a common world out of the organic environment as it is given, a world largely comprised of mundane use-objects: tables, tennis shoes and teddy bears. However, in instances where reifications are created in fulfillment of remembrance, Arendt seeks the fabrication of something special, something beautiful.<sup>20</sup> These special objects require Arendt to delineate a new class of workers whose craftsmanship transcends the basic use-objects that *homo faber* would typically create; she states: "acting and speaking men need the help of *homo faber* in his highest capacity, that is, the help of the artist, of poets and historiographers, of

monument-builders or writers, because without them the only product of their activity, the story they enact and tell, would not survive at all.”<sup>21</sup> Being part of this select group of workers comes, however, at a price. In order to serve as spectators charged with remembrance and reification, these artisans may not be existential actors, themselves.<sup>22</sup> Throughout course of her canon, the Arendt offers various reasons for this, including that a level of personal disinterest is required in order to be able to assess the meaning of an event, and that the process of crafting the reified objects is a solitary one requiring a retreat from the public realm and into the private realm.<sup>23</sup>

Finally, since remembrance and reification remain intertwined, there can simply be no “loss” of the antecedent experience of recognition that could lead, as Honneth posits, to disregard for bodily integrity, legal inequality or devaluation of certain ways of life. Furthermore, without an imbalance of relational authority, in which one party—in this case, either the existential agent or *homo faber*—may exercise a disproportionate level of influence over the identity formation of the other, there is a limited possibility of inadvertently advancing a pathology of oppression.

Since Arendt’s work, like Honneth’s, links reification with intersubjectivity, and managed to do so fifty years earlier and without the problems inherent to his theory, it is worth asking why he sought neither to co-opt nor to rebut her ideas in his quest to resurrect reification from what he asserts was its place in the dustbin of history. The answer may be rooted, surprisingly enough, in Honneth’s bias concerning Arendt’s construction of the concept of work. Specifically, *The Human Condition* was one of three books that Hannah Arendt published between 1958 and 1962, all of which were unintended by-products of a project originally conceived to fill in what Arendt described as the “most serious gap” in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*.<sup>24</sup> Published in 1951, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* contained Arendt’s analysis of Nazism and Stalinism. According to Arendt, what the volume lacked was an “adequate historical and conceptual analysis of the ideological background of Bolshevism.” Arendt asserted the omission was one she made deliberately.

The shocking originality of totalitarianism, the fact that its ideologies and methods of government were entirely unprecedented and that its causes defied proper explanation in the usual historical terms, is easily overlooked if one lays too much stress on the only element which has behind it a respectable tradition and whose critical discussion requires a criticism of some of the chief tenants of Western political philosophy—Marxism.<sup>25</sup>

With *The Origins of Totalitarianism* in print, Arendt planned to write a companion piece tentatively titled *Totalitarian Elements in Marxism*. Much of the material intended for eventual inclusion in that text was delivered in a series of lectures, and the manuscript pages bespeak their beginning: “they are disordered, cut up and pasted together for the various lectures, and for that reason also at times repetitive.”<sup>26</sup> Arendt, herself, was having little success making order out of the chaos she had created and in 1954 she expressed her frustration with the project in a letter to her former teacher, Martin Heidegger: “I cannot make it concrete without it becoming endless. I got into these matters, in a way, when I had time to pursue issues that were already bothering me throughout the writing of the book on totalitarianism—and now I cannot quite escape them anymore.”<sup>27</sup>

Although Arendt would eventually abandon *Totalitarian Elements in Marxism*, she was correct about the inescapability of the issues raised in the course of her research and writing. For example, in the spring of 1956, Arendt delivered the Walgreen Foundation lectures at the University of Chicago; there, “she presented the reflections on labor, work, and action that represented the first draft of *The Human Condition*.”<sup>28</sup> As she explained in a letter to Henry Allen Moe at the Guggenheim Foundation, the material for the lectures had grown out of her conceptual analysis of Marxism: “I concentrated on the theory of labor, philosophically considered, as distinguished from work. By this I mean the distinction between man as *homo faber* and man as *animal laborans*; between man as a craftsman and artist (in the Greek

sense) and man as submitted to the curse of earning his daily bread by the sweat of his brow.”<sup>29</sup> In Arendt’s opinion, Marx conflated the two, so that

he actually understood history in terms of processes of production and consumption much closer to animal life—labor, in fact. His vision of human history as a predictable process is a story not of unique, mortal individuals but of the collective life-process of a species. While he was in Arendt’s view quite wrong to suppose that this process could lead through revolution to “the realm of freedom,” she was struck by his picture of individuality submerged in the collective life of a human species, devoted to production and consumption and moving inexorably on its way. She found this a revealing representation of modern society, in which economic concerns have come to dominate both politics and human self-consciousness.<sup>30</sup>

Despite Arendt clearly being concerned about the rise of a society dedicated to *labor*, with its sacrifice of the unique identity of the individual to the needs of the collective, Honneth insists that Arendt was attempting to do nothing less than to “dispute and dismantle by various means the special, emancipatory status of the 19th-century concept of *work*.”<sup>31</sup> In his essay “Work and Instrumental Action,” in which he offers his most extensive treatment of Arendt’s writing, Honneth attempts to support this assertion by stating that, according to Arendt, the activities of work are the means through which the necessities of biological life are secured, while labor “creates from the materials of the natural world an enduring but nonetheless artificial environment.”<sup>32</sup> He goes on to charge that Arendt “waters down the category of work to the merely mechanical expenditure of reproducible labor power.”<sup>33</sup> The problem with Honneth’s analysis is that he transposes the meaning of Arendtian labor and Arendtian work—it is, of course, *labor* that Arendt links to the fulfillment of necessity and *work* that Arendt posits as the activity that fabricates an artificial/artifactual world. As a result, everything that Honneth claims to be part of Arendt’s definition of work is actually found in her definition of labor, and vice versa.

Given the challenging nature of Arendt's writing, it is difficult, but not impossible, to believe that even a scholar of Honneth's standing could be confused by the delineation she draws between the concept of work and concept of labor. However, a point comes at which one wonders if there might not be a level of convenience in conflating the two concepts in order to support the axiomatic assertion that Arendt was seeking to dismantle the special, emancipatory status of work. That point comes when Honneth asserts that, for Arendt, "the possibility of truly experiencing oneself" comes about "through direct contact with the results of one's own labor."<sup>34</sup> He substantiates this position by quoting a passage from *The Human Condition* which states that only labor "can provide self-assurance and satisfaction, and can even become a source of self-confidence throughout life." He offers this quote with the intention of juxtaposing Arendt's supposedly anti-work position against that of Karl Marx, who included self-discovery through fabrication "in the meaning-realm of his concept of work."<sup>35</sup> It is at this point that it becomes difficult to accept a mere terminological mix-up. After all, if Honneth had included just a little bit more of the quote from *The Human Condition*, then his readers would have been able to see that Arendt names *work*, and not labor, as

the most elemental experience of human strength and, therefore, the very opposite of the painful, exhausting effort experienced in sheer labor. *It [work] can provide self-assurance and satisfaction, and can even become a source of self-confidence throughout life, all of which are quite different from the bliss which can attend a life spent in labor and toil or from the fleeting, though intense pleasure of laboring itself which comes about if the effort is coordinated and rhythmically ordered, and which essentially is the same as the pleasure felt in other rhythmic body movements.*<sup>36</sup>

Given the entirety of the quote for context, it becomes clear that Arendt is not devaluing, but elevating, the concept of work. The importance Arendt assigned to

work is crystallized further when it is placed in the context of action, remembrance and reification.

In "Work and Instrumental Action," Honneth rightly notes that the words and deeds of the stories enacted by existential agents are inherently meaningful.<sup>37</sup> After all, they are the means through which existential agents reveal themselves as unique individuals by initiating something completely new, unprecedented, improbable and unpredicted in the world. Honneth is also correct in his assertion that action produces no product.<sup>38</sup> Instead, since words and deeds are enacted within an intersubjective plurality, "every action touches off not only a reaction but a chain reaction, every process is the cause of unpredictable new processes."<sup>39</sup> If, therefore, the actions of existential agents are to attain a level of permanence and public visibility that is enduring, those actions must be transformed into a tangible, objective form. These objects express the significance of an action to those removed from its point of origination, either by space and/or time and are produced by spectators. These spectators are engaged by what they witness, but not directly involved in the intersubjective dynamic between actors. Within the text of *The Human Condition*, it is *homo faber* who serves in the role of the witnessing spectator and, through remembrance and reification, produce something tangible out of the fleeting ephemera of action. Of course, to acknowledge that a reified work, born out of the experience of remembrance, plays such a crucial role in Arendt's theory would have undermined Honneth's argument concerning the instrumentality of Arendtian action, as well as his assertion that she degrades the concept of work. Furthermore, it would have also challenged his whole construction of reification as something that comes about as the result of a damaged experience of recognition.

### **Spectator Judgment**

Although I question the validity of the critique Honneth offers concerning Arendt's concept of work, as well as his concomitant decision not to engage her theory of

reification and remembrance, it does not mean that I find her construction to be flawless. In fact, there are two major problems that need to be addressed. The first concerns *homo faber's* capacity for making judgments, while the second issue involves the embodiment of existential agents. I will address these issues in turn, beginning with Arendt's theory of judgment.

Arendt derives her theory of judgment from a creative appropriation of key concepts found within Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, and especially his writings on aesthetic judgment. One concept Arendt appropriates is that of the *sensus communis*, the public or common sense. In Kant's formulation, "enlarged thought" or "broadened mind" is employed in order to transcend merely subjective, personal opinion by "weighing the judgment, not so much with actual, as rather with the merely possible, judgments of others and putting ourselves in the position of everyone else."<sup>40</sup> Kant's assumption is that this reflective act will bring us in line with "common sense," which aligns a given particular with an *a priori* universal. This experience of aesthetic judgment is nicely summarized in a passage from Eleanor Catton's novel *The Rehearsal*, wherein the young protagonist attends a jazz performance and reflects on the experience of forming a *sensus communis* about the music:

Isolde thinks how strange it is, that every person in the auditorium is locked in their own private experience of the music, alone with their thoughts, alone in their enjoyment or distaste, and shivering at the vast feeling of intimacy that this solitude affords, already impatient for the interval when they can compare their experience with their neighbor's and discover with relief that they are the same.<sup>41</sup>

In a nod to Kant, Arendt proposes her own version of "common sense," which she names as "the sixth and the highest sense."<sup>42</sup> In her version, common sense is when "things can be seen by many in a variety of aspects without changing their identity, so that those who are gathered around them know they see sameness in

utter diversity.”<sup>43</sup> It is in these instances that “worldly reality truly and reliably appear.”<sup>44</sup> Also in accord with Kant’s writings on aesthetic judgment, Arendt advocates making judgments through the engagement of what she terms an “enlarged mentality.” However, in opposition to Kant, enlarging one’s mentality is not about weighing personal experience against the actual and/or possible judgments of others, as if every one of those against whom I make my comparison shares in a unity, a golden mean, of aesthetic taste. Instead, it is about training one’s imagination to “go visiting.”<sup>45</sup>

Visiting entails “constructing stories of an event from each of the plurality of perspectives that might have an interest in telling it and imagining how I would respond as a character in a story very different than my own.”<sup>46</sup> In this way, a visitor seeks to inhabit unfamiliar perspectives, without standing apart from, nor attempting to make familiar, these new positions. Instead, to paraphrase Arendt, the visitor attempts to be and to think from where she is not in order to seek that which is specific to discreet standpoints. Thus, the goal of visiting is not to align with an *a priori* universal; instead, when Arendt advocates for the engagement of an enlarged mentality, it is in service of seeking multiperspectivalism. A variety of perspectives are necessary because the “more people’s standpoints I have present in my mind... and the better I can imagine how I would feel and think in their place, the stronger will be my capacity for representative thinking and the more valid my final conclusions, my opinion.”<sup>47</sup> Arendt’s use of the word “opinion” is important because she is ultimately interested in arriving at a judgment that yields just that, a valid opinion, not a universal truth. Additionally, this opinion does not concern aesthetics—although the creation of something beautiful is central to her theory—but, instead, meaning.

In order to understand the way in which Arendt delineates truth and opinion, as well as the role the latter plays in the meaning-making process, we must first consider her assertion that “[a]ll truths . . . are opposed to opinion in their *mode of asserting validity*.”<sup>48</sup> Truth possesses an objective facticity. However, where the

nature of physical reality is ascertained through an intersubjective process—in the form of Arendt’s a sixth, or common, sense—neither the subjective nor the intersubjective plays any role in verifying what is true. That’s because truth is outside agreement or dispute, opposition or consent; its veracity is not influenced by the number of people who assent to it. For example, it is the truth that Hannah Arendt was born on 14 October 1906. This statement remains true even if a million people sign a petition to the contrary. While truth is viewed by Arendt as being absolute and irrefutable, it is not inherently meaningful. Instead, truth gains significance and meaning when it is within an interpretive context, when it goes through the visiting process necessary for it to become opinion. With that said, however, Arendt is still very specific when she asserts that opinion, and the truth that sparked it, need to not part company: “Facts inform opinions, and opinions, inspired by different interests and passions, can differ widely and still be legitimate as long as they respect factual truth.”<sup>49</sup>

The legitimacy, the validity, of my opinion is dependent upon my ability to “visit” a multitude of viewpoints, even if doing so is a process that occurs entirely within my own mind. Arendt states that “even if I shun all company or am completely isolated while forming an opinion, I am not simply together only with myself in the solitude of philosophical thought. I remain in this world of universal interdependence.”<sup>50</sup> This is a unique kind of participatory sense-making, where the physical presence of others is not a necessity, but the ability to form judgments through the engagement of an enlarged mentality—to inhabit unfamiliar perspectives without standing apart from, nor attempting to make familiar, the new position—is a requirement.

Within the text of *The Human Condition*, it is *homo faber* who serves in the role of the spectator.<sup>51</sup> The spectator is engaged by the enacted stories of the existential agents, but not directly involved in the intersubjective dynamic occurring between those agents. Yet, through remembrance and reification, the spectator is

expected to craft enduring objects that make present the significance of those words and deeds to people removed from their point of origination, either by space and/or time. In order to meet this task, excellent judgment, the ability to enlarge one's mentality, surely would be necessary. The problem with Arendt's construction of this process is that *homo faber* seems to lack the abilities necessary to do what is asked of him, since he is portrayed throughout the text of *The Human Condition* in a dull and unflattering light. She lists the following as the defining attitude of *homo faber*:

instrumentalization of the world, his confidence in tools and in the productivity of the maker of artificial objects; his trust in the all-comprehensive range of the means-end category, his conviction that every issue can be solved and every human motivation reduced to the principle of utility;.... his equation of intelligence with ingenuity, that is, his contempt for all thought which cannot be considered to be "the first step . . . for the fabrication of artificial objects, particularly of tools to make tools, and to vary their fabrication indefinitely"; finally, his matter-of-course identification of fabrication with action.<sup>52</sup>

The result is that "*Homo faber*, in so far as he is nothing but a fabricator and thinks in no terms but those of means and ends which arise directly out of his work activity, is just as incapable of understanding meaning as the *animal laborans* is incapable of understanding instrumentality."<sup>53</sup> Although Arendt elevates a certain subset of *homo faber* to a more esteemed position—the artists, poets, historiographers and monument-builders—this same basic set of characteristics apply, thus making it hard to imagine they would be at all skilled at "going visiting." This forces one to wonder where these workers, who value the principle of utility above all else, would derive the sensitivity of judgment necessary to practice remembrance, and then reify what they witness into objects of beauty that express the meaning and significance of the fleeting words and deeds they witness.

Nowhere in the text of *The Human Condition* does Arendt offer any insight into the process of judgment-formation as related to *homo faber*. The omission is at

least partially due to the fact that the book is limited to discussions of labor, work and action—those tasks that are expressly bodily in nature, even though the construction of the body will end up being quite problematic in and of itself. As discussed in chapter 1, mental activity was to be addressed in a subsequent, three-volume work collectively titled *The Life of the Mind*. Arendt completed the first two volumes—those addressing “thinking” and “willing”—but died with the first page of the text on judgment in her typewriter.<sup>54</sup> While this penultimate text is missing, there are discussions on the issue of judgment spread throughout a multitude of Arendt’s other writings, including *Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951); “Understanding and Politics” published in *Partisan Review* (1953); “The Crisis in Culture” and “Truth and Politics” in *Between Past and Future* (1961); lectures given at the New School on Immanuel Kant’s theory of judgment (1970, but published posthumously in 1982 in the volume *Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy*); “Thinking and Moral Consideration: A Lecture” (1971; reprinted in 1984); and, of course, *Thinking and Willing*.

When examined chronologically, these writings reveal is an interesting shift in her consideration of the topic. Specifically, when Arendt addresses the topic in her earlier works, then judgment is a faculty inherent to agents who make decisions based on actualizing their personal *telos*. In her later works, judgment becomes the purview of the spectators who are witnessing the actions of the existential agents.<sup>55</sup> Even though *The Human Condition* belongs to the earlier part of Arendt’s canon, it is already possible to see the beginnings of this shift in the locus of judgment. However, what is not yet obvious is how this change will affect the way Arendt conceives of *homo faber*’s basic nature.

As Arendt’s work progresses, *homo faber* becomes increasingly driven by mental activity and divorced from his more utilitarian, and bodily, form as the maker of artifactual objects whose durability and stability transcends the endlessly repetitive processes of all things natural. Instead, *homo faber* in his role as the spectator, becomes focused on preserving the meaning of the enacted stories he witnesses.

This shift in the nature of *homo faber* will necessitate a concomitant change in the existential agent, as he must now conduct himself “in accordance with what the spectator expects of him... [since] the final verdict of success or failure is in their [the spectators’] hands.”<sup>56</sup> In this way, as Arendt’s canon progresses, both the importance of revealing “who” one is, and the subsequent recording of those words and deeds “are mutually entailed by Arendt’s concept of action;” this mutual entailment “should not obscure the fact, however, that the prime object of concern has shifted from the self-revelatory to the world-sustaining pole of action.”<sup>57</sup> While it may seem on the surface as though this shift brings her closer to a notion of reification as commodification, it must be remembered that Arendt’s construction still avoids any of the negative personal or interpersonal consequences found in Lukács’s or Honneth’s work.

### **From Heroes to No-Bodies**

By appealing to the full canon of Arendt’s work, it is possible to see how she attempts to address the problem of spectator judgment found in *The Human Condition*. There remains, however, a second issue related to how Arendt constructs the relationship between existential agents and witnessing spectators which must still be addressed: embodiment. In order to frame this issue, allow me to begin with an article from *The International Journal of Press/Politics* that caught the attention of the American media. It concerned the television show *The Colbert Report*, which satirizes the punditry of some heavily-editorialized programs shown on major news stations. The article summarized the results of a study that demonstrated that the political ideology of a viewer influenced how he or she processed the content of the comedy show. Those who identified themselves as being politically liberal, tended to report that the show’s host, Stephen Colbert, was expressing a completely satirical viewpoint, slyly poking fun at those on the political right. Conversely, conservatives believed that Colbert disliked liberalism and actually ascribed to the traditionalist values he

espoused on-air. The difference in interpretation, according to the researchers, was due to each group engaging in biased processing. Biased processing “concerns itself with a type of precognitive, unintentional information processing that occurs as a means of creating self-enhancing benefits. Thus, . . . individuals actually see and hear different information depending on whether that information will help or hinder their personal goals.”<sup>58</sup> Evidence of biased processing often is identified easily in peoples’ reactions to material with a political slant, especially if that material contains ambiguous content.

I offer this study as an introduction to the Arendtian body as presented within *The Human Condition*, because the text does contain a preponderance of material with political content and is, additionally, ambiguous in the presentations of many concepts. As such, it lends itself to biased processing, a fact that becomes obvious when the object in question is the human body; interpretations offered by various scholars on the topic become so variant, that it begins to seem as if they have each read completely different texts. For instance, Hanna Fenichel Pitkin asserts that human bodies are only found in Arendt’s private realm. The fact that there are no bodies within the public realm is part of the reason Pitkin believes the existential agents come to resemble “posturing little boys,” needing to be reassured that they are brave, valuable and even real; they suffer from a deep insecurity partially rooted in the fact that they have no corpus.<sup>59</sup> Conversely, Linda Zerilli, in her piece “The Arendtian Body,” states that Arendt refuses “to embrace an abstract, transcendental subject who is nobody and who has no body.”<sup>60</sup> According to her interpretation, there are indeed bodies in the public realm, even ones that serve as a source of pleasure; it is just that Arendtian agents, in their role as existential actors, are prohibited from speaking about their embodiment.<sup>61</sup> In this way, Zerilli asserts the existence of a dichotomy between the mute body and the speaking subject. Julia Kristeva, on whose work Zerilli draws heavily, excludes the body from the public realm, casting it exclusively as an object of labor, and incapable of any form of sensation or

perception. When Kristeva revises this position, it is to declare that the Arendtian body is capable of experiencing sensation, but only those that are painful. She goes on to state that Arendt severely limited the role of the body in order to avoid engaging with psychology or psychoanalysis, which Arendt supposedly fears.<sup>62</sup> Kristeva's position, however, is not as negative as the one presented by Thomas F. Tierney. Tierney claims that, on a personal level, Arendt viewed the human body with contempt and disgust, and that her philosophy of natality—the possibility of transcending base, biological concerns in order to engage in higher-order inquiries and activities—demonstrated her hope for humanity to free itself from the shackle of embodiment.<sup>63</sup>

It is to this discordant chorus that I add my own interpretive voice, and begin by echoing an insight from Linda Zerilli. She notes that the difficulty in being a woman attempting to talk about the body lies in how difficult it is to not immediately *become* the issue or, as Zerilli phrases it, “to make oneself a spectacle; . . . to lose one's symbolic placement by walking through the wrong restroom door.”<sup>64</sup> In other words, to be a female theorizing about embodiment makes it seem as though whatever one writes is really about one's self and that the disclosure may carry with it a level of embarrassment concerning the exposure.

Whether Arendt, penning her philosophy more than 50 years ago, would have agreed with Zerilli's assessment is unclear. However, this does not diminish Arendt's acute awareness of her sex. In a letter to Gershom Scholem concerning her analysis of the Eichmann trial, Arendt asserts “a basic gratitude for everything that is as it is; for what has been *given* and was not, could not be, *made*; for things that are *physei* and not *nomō*.”<sup>65</sup> She is speaking of the fact of her Jewishness, but illustrates the point not by indicating something cultural or religious, but instead equating it with another “given,” her feminine body: “The truth is that I have never pretended to be anything else or to be in any way other than I am, I have never even felt tempted in

that direction. It would have been like saying that I was a man and not a woman—that is to say, kind of insane.”<sup>66</sup>

This was not the first time Arendt had drawn a parallel between her experience of being a Jew and being a woman. Prior to the Eichmann trial, Arendt had been the first woman invited by Princeton University to give a series of lectures as part of the prestigious Christian Gauss Seminars in Criticism. Several years later, she returned to Princeton as the first woman to hold the rank of full professor. In both instances, Arendt expressed concern about being cast as the “exception woman,” a phrase meant to evoke “exception Jews,” German Jews who, due to wealth, education or the like, were granted unusual levels of social or political access. Arendt was uneasy about people who had willingly accepted such standing, and wished to avoid being similarly distinguished.<sup>67</sup> As such, she even went so far as to threaten to refuse the appointment at Princeton after a 145-word announcement in the *New York Times* twice mentioned that she was the “only woman” to hold such an appointment at the university.<sup>68</sup>

Even though Arendt saw similarities between being Jewish and being a woman, the way she approached these issues in her work is quite different; throughout her canon, the former is addressed head-on, while the latter is addressed more circumspectly. For instance, she begins *The Human Condition* by stating that she is not going to discuss thinking, which she names as “the highest and perhaps the purest activity of which men are capable.”<sup>69</sup> Instead, she says, she will limit the discussion to labor, work and action, all of which she asserts are activities of the body, as opposed to the mind.<sup>70</sup> Arendt situates these three activities in such a manner that some take place within the private realm, while others occur within the public realm. As has been discussed, we enter each of these realms through birth. Our arrival into the private realm is via our biological birth. Given that it is women who gestate and deliver children, it would seem as though Arendt would have been forced to address the issue of embodiment and, specifically, female embodiment.

However, she side-steps this issue by devoting little space to the physical reality of childbearing, and instead addresses our biological birth as a referential starting point that becomes relevant as a philosophical category only because it is our first experience of differentiation—the initial experience of ourselves as distinct from other agents and objects in the worldly environment. This experience serves as the ontological grounding for other alterations of our being-constitution that will differentiate us even further. In this way, our primary natality finds import not in the fact of being biological but, instead, bio-ontological. This shift removes the possibility of considering it as determinant influenced at least by sex, if not also by gender.<sup>71</sup>

When we undertake a second, existential natality, it is through *enacting* our story, being *seen* and *heard* by others, all of which point towards that which is decidedly corporeal. Yet, it is at this point in the text that the already sexless human body all but completely disappears, since Arendt constructs this rebirth in such a way that revealment of who we are as a unique individual seems at odds with our very physicality in at least four different ways. First, as has just been discussed, our biological natality—our physical arrival into the world through the literal laboring of our mother—is only important to Arendt insofar as it contains within it the potential for our subsequent rebirth. Second, Arendt expands the definition of labor beyond the actual pangs of childbirth in order to include any form of monotonous efforts that comes from the fulfillment of biological necessity. Within Arendt's system, that which is laborious must be overcome in order to live a distinctly human life. This means securing one's basic, bodily needs, often through usurping—forcibly or through a commercial market—the excess labor-power of others. Third, in *The Human Condition*, and in a chapter titled “The Social Question” from *On Revolution*, Arendt constructs the body not just as something whose animal-level needs must be met as a precursor to the revealment of “who” one is uniquely and distinctly, she also formulates it as threat to the very existence of the public realm. Specifically, when the concerns of the body are introduced into the public realm, the result is that a hybrid

space is created to accommodate the intrusion. Arendt terms this space “the social realm” and warns that it may usurp both the public and the private realms due to the laboring body’s fecundity being unfettered by the balance inherent in the greater cycles of the natural world. If unfettered, an “unnatural growth, so to speak, of the natural” is unleashed, against which the private and the public realms will be incapable of defending themselves.<sup>72</sup>

Arendt’s concerns about the social realm—rampant fertility destroying our home lives and overpowering the halls of government— may, at first blush, seem absurd. However, that is only until we consider that she is essentially warning of the consequences of once-private matters, including bodily issues, becoming collective concerns. Once these topics are introduced into the public realm, it begins to function as an enormous, collective household. The result is that all members of the community become one extended “family.” Like a family in Arendt’s private realm, the *paterfamilias* dictate even the most intimate aspects of life. If household members fail to respond with behavioral conformity, they face repercussions that are often disproportionate to the offense. For an example of this dynamic, one may look to Uganda, where the “Anti Homosexuality Bill” of 2009 sought

to establish a comprehensive consolidated legislation to protect the traditional family by prohibiting (i) any form of sexual relations between persons of the same sex; and (ii) the promotion or recognition of such sexual relations in public institutions and other places through or with the support of any Government entity in Uganda or any non governmental organization inside or outside the country.

Not only does this Bill, in and of itself, create a social realm by destroying the line between the concerns of the public realm and the private realm, it goes so far as to criminalize any attempts to reestablish that demarcation. Furthermore, for those who violate these prohibitions, the penalties range from seven years in prison to execution.<sup>73</sup>

Fourth and finally, besides constructing the body as an impediment to living a fully human life and as threat to the very existence of the public realm, Arendt also tells us that nothing is less common and communicable, or publically visible and audible, than that which is perceived by the body.<sup>74</sup> Although she most clearly explicates this issue as related to pain, pleasurable sensations are also included. This leads me to wonder: if subjective sensory perceptions, as well as internal, physical states, can neither be expressed nor perceived, how is the agreement needed for common sense ever attained? Additionally, given these limitations, how can existential agents ever *enact* their stories in such a way that the content possesses sufficient affective resonance to cause the spectators to see, hear, remember and reify the meaning? Nowhere within the text of *The Human Condition* does Arendt find ways to address these issues. As such, it becomes necessary once again to supplement that text with other material from her canon, as well as to inform her work from the outside; in this case, with research from the field of social cognition.

## CHAPTER 5

### SOCIAL COGNITION AND *THE HUMAN CONDITION*

In chapter 4, I focused on the interactions that occur between the existential agents and the witnessing spectators in order to elucidate Arendt's concepts of remembrance and reification. Remembrance is the seeing, hearing and recollecting of the existential agents' enacted stories by the spectators. The spectators then seek to express what they witnessed through works of reification, which often take the form of a narrative. In *The Life of the Mind*, Arendt summarizes this process; "To state this in conceptual language: The meaning of what actually happens and appears while it is happening is revealed when it has disappeared; remembrance, by which you make present to your mind what actually is absent and past, reveals the meaning in the form of a story."<sup>1</sup> Arendt's construction of the concepts of remembrance and reification stands in contradiction to the work of Axel Honneth, who links reification with a theory of recognition. For Honneth, recognition is founded on the primacy of intersubjective interactions, wherein one party is recognized by another, who he or she recognizes in return.<sup>2</sup> When this foundational moment of recognition is somehow lost or forgotten, the negative emotional and behavior consequences that follow are what Honneth understands as reification. Honneth's theory of recognition and reification have been criticized for encouraging that which has been termed "a pathology of oppression," which arises in instances when an oppressed person seeks recognition from his oppressor; a null or negative response may cause the one who is in the inferior position to internalize his deflated status as valid justification for continued subordination.

Although Arendt's work linked reification with an antecedent experience of intersubjectivity, and did so fifty years earlier than Honneth and without many of the problems inherent to his theory, he still chose neither to co-opt nor to rebut her writings on the subject. I maintained that the reason has to do with his assertion that

Arendt dismantles the special, emancipatory status of work.<sup>3</sup> Since reification is a kind of Arendtian work, he could not meaningfully address her theory of reification without admitting that she does not denigrate the concept of work in the manner he asserts. Honneth's oversight does not, however, mean that Arendt's theory of reification, if addressed critically, is flawless in its construction. In fact, there are two major problems that needed to be addressed. The first problem concerned the spectator's capacity for making judgments, while the second concerned the way in which Arendt portrays the issue of embodiment. Appeal to works written after *The Human Condition* did serve to demonstrate her address of the issue of spectator judgment via key changes in the nature of both the existential agent and the spectator. Problems with how she represents the human body, however, must be reconciled both by addressing work from within her canon, as well as from external sources. My aim in this chapter is, therefore, to offer a more cogent account of embodiment than the one offered by Arendt in *The Human Condition* by introducing insights from *The Life of the Mind*, as well as scholarship from the field of social cognition. I will then expand the discussion of spectator judgment based on this new account.

### **Social Cognition**

In *The Human Condition*, Arendt states that the "science of economics, which substitutes patterns of behavior only in this rather limited field of human activity, was finally followed by the all-comprehensive pretension of the social sciences which, as 'behavioral sciences,' aim to reduce man as a whole, in all his activities, to the level of a conditioned and behaving animal." In such an environment, she laments, "it is a hopeless enterprise to search for meaning in politics or significance in history when everything that is not everyday behavior or automatic trends has been ruled out as immaterial."<sup>4</sup> Whether Arendt was aware of it or not, at the time she was writing those very words, behaviorism's dominance was beginning to wane. Thanks to what is now

referred to as the “cognitive revolution” of the 1950s, the burgeoning fields of neuroscience, linguistics, artificial intelligence and computer science began to influence the study of psychology, causing it to move away from strict behaviorism and towards an approach that sought to inquire about mental processes that could not be defined solely through examination of outwardly visible behavior.<sup>5</sup> This paradigmatic shift gave rise not only to the field of cognitive psychology, but also cognitive economics, cognitive anthropology, cognitive archaeology, cognitive sociology and, of course, a cognitive approach in the philosophy of mind.

As part of their nomenclature, many of these disciplines employ the term “social cognition,” and do so with no constancy of meaning between them.<sup>6</sup> Within philosophy of mind, social cognition aims to address that which has been termed “the problem of other minds.” Most philosophers recognize two aspects of this problem, which Shaun Gallagher explains as follows: “There are at least two questions involved in this problem: How do we recognize others as conscious or minded agents/persons, and how do we understand their specific behaviors, actions, intentions, and mental states?”<sup>7</sup> Simulation Theory (ST) and the improbably named Theory Theory (TT) have long been the standard philosophical approaches for recognizing minded agents and then interpreting their actions. Although both TT and ST have been variously explicated, and have evolved over time to account for findings such as mirror neurons, they still can be broadly described.<sup>8</sup>

TT maintains that we apply intuitive, commonsense psychological theory (or “folk psychology”) in order to “mindread” or “mentalize;” that is, to infer mental states and process and then attribute them to others.<sup>9</sup> In ST mentalizing consists in modeling the other as self, without appealing to knowledge of external theories. In this process, I imagine myself in the situation of the other person. I resonate to that context, creating in my own mind the beliefs and desires, strategies and outcomes that would arise for me. Then I attribute the patterns identified through my simulation

to the person who is actually inhabiting the situation, as if she and I are same-minded.<sup>10</sup>

Although TT and ST are radically different in their approach, and each has attracted its own supporters and critics, Gallagher has identified three axiomatic suppositions shared by both:

1. The problem of social cognition is due to the lack of access that we have to the other person's mental states. Since we cannot directly perceive the other's thoughts, feelings, or intentions, we need some extra-perceptual cognitive process (mindreading or mentalizing) that will allow us to infer or simulate what they are.
2. Our normal everyday stance towards the other person is a third-person observational stance. Based on what we observe we use mindreading to *explain* or *predict* their behaviors.
3. These mentalizing processes constitute our primary and pervasive way of understanding others.<sup>11</sup>

Gallagher challenges these suppositions and proposes an alternative theory that he calls Interaction Theory (IT).

IT is part of what has been termed the 4E (embodied, embodied, extended or enacted) or DEEDS (distributed, embodied, embodied, dynamical or situated) approach to social cognition. Although there are significant differences within the body of research grouped under the 4E / DEEDS umbrella, they remain unified by the fact that they all view "intelligent human behavior as engaged, socially and materially embodied activity, arising within the specific concrete details of particular (natural) settings, rather than as an abstract, detached, general purpose process of logical or formal ratiocination."<sup>12</sup> With IT, this core principle is made evident in the propositions that Gallagher has formulated in response to the three axioms shared by TT and ST in their address of the problem of other minds:

1. Other minds are not hidden away and inaccessible. The other person's intentions, emotions, and dispositions are expressed in their embodied behavior. In most cases of everyday interaction no inference or projection to mental states beyond those expressions and behaviors is necessary.
2. Our normal everyday stance toward the other person is not third-person, detached observation; it is second-person interaction. We are not primarily spectators or observers of other people's actions; for the most part we are interacting with them in some communicative action, on some project, in some pre-defined relation; or we are treating them as potential interactors.
3. Our primary and pervasive way of understanding others does not involve mentalizing or mindreading; in fact, these are rare and specialized abilities that we develop only on the basis of a more embodied engagement with others.<sup>13</sup>

Gallagher goes on to assert that—as opposed to engaging psychological theories in order “mindread” or “mentalize,” or running simulation routines—there are three developmental components that build upon each other to become our ordinary means of social cognition. These are primary intersubjectivity, secondary intersubjectivity and narrative competency. The resources utilized in this account, in conjunction with insights from Arendt's text *The Life of the Mind*, will allow us to construct a more cogent account of embodiment than the one offered in *The Human Condition*. Building on this new account, I will then expand on my analysis of spectator judgment.

### **Primary Intersubjectivity**

In the previous chapter, I began to outline the ways in which the human body is presented within the text of *The Human Condition*. The first presentation is via the category of labor. Labor is defined by an intersecting duality of meaning; it is both the

contractions of childbirth, as well as the monotonous bodily effort required for the fulfillment of biological necessity. Second, Arendt offers a dichotomized view of the body in relationship to the undertaking of a second natality. On one hand, she posits any form of laborious activity as being an obstacle that must be overcome in order to live a fully human life. On the other hand, an agent must *enact* a story, which is *seen* and *heard* by others—all of which points to the centrality of bodily expression. Finally, fearing that once-private matters will become collective concerns, Arendt presents the body as a threat to the very existence of the space of appearance, warning that its presence will force the creation of what she variously terms the “social realm,” “society” and “mass culture.” Within this realm, absolute behavioral conformity is expected; such conformity would necessarily be at odds with the novelty of an existential agent’s words and deeds: “society expects from each of its members a certain kind of behavior, imposing innumerable and various rules, all of which tend to ‘normalize’ its members, to make them behave, to exclude spontaneous action or outstanding achievement.”<sup>14</sup> To these complicated and problematic constructions of the human body, Arendt adds two more. The first has to do with the relationship between the body and the objects that comprise the common world. The second occurs when Arendt goes on to elucidate how that world, and the people who populate it, become lost to us when we are in pain. I am going to address each of these two additional constructions in turn, and outline my objections to Arendt’s position.

The common world is created through the work of *homo faber* and is comprised of artifacts that endure beyond the act of their creation. Besides offering a shared, objective context that transcends the endlessly repetitive processes of nature, the common world also serves to condition us to the accepted social customs, habits of discourse and patterns of behavior that govern ordinary occurrences and interactions and, through which, the plural aspect of the common world is realized.<sup>15</sup> In addition to these functions, Arendt indicates that the objects that comprise the

common world are also largely responsible for prompting awareness of where our bodies are located spatially. For example, I am not proprioceptively conscious of the placement of my arm until I am engaged in a worldly activity: I become attentive to the position of my arm and of my hand as I reach out to grasp my coffee cup. While this seems like a fairly straight-forward proposition—bodily awareness is facilitated by my interaction with the things of the world—there are, in fact, multiple problems with Arendt’s construction. The first problem has to do with the facticity of the cup, which cannot be reliably ascertained solely through my individual, sensory data. Instead, I must depend also on “common sense.” As discussed in the previous chapter, Arendt explicates common sense as being the sixth and highest sense. It occurs at the point when the things of the world are presented “to a multitude of spectators.”<sup>16</sup> She continues by stating that, “Only where things can be seen by many in a variety of aspects without changing their identity, so that those who are gathered around them know they see sameness in utter diversity, can worldly reality truly and reliably appear.”<sup>17</sup>

This refusal to rely on individual sense data is compounded further by the way in which Arendt describes sensations experienced by the body as a result of being stimulated by some worldly object. In short, these sensations purportedly tell us nothing about the object that is the source of the original stimuli: “The pain caused by a sword or the tickling caused by a feather indeed tells me nothing whatsoever of the quality or even the worldly existence of a sword or a feather.”<sup>18</sup> Following this line of reasoning, if my cup happens to be hot enough to burn my hand, I will have learned nothing about its qualities as an object nor will I have verified its existence. Instead, what I am perceiving is merely, to paraphrase Arendt, an irritation of my nerves or a resistance sensation of my body. In her formulation, this irritation or sensation has no necessary connection to a worldly object, be it a sword, feather or coffee cup.<sup>19</sup>

Even in its more extreme manifestations—say, for instance, a person who has been badly burned in a house fire—the pain still fails to offer information about the worldly environment. Instead, what the burn victim now endures is such an intense, intra-corporeal experience that it causes a disturbance, a discontinuity, as the pain forces his consciousness back upon itself in such a way that it is completely imprisoned by those physical sensations. According to Arendt, when a person is in this state, whatever worldly environment he occupies—be it a hospital room, a rehabilitation center or the home of a friend—falls away, unable to meaningfully engage his awareness at all; he is unable to concentrate on anything except trying to remain alive. This focus on sustaining biological life occurs in instances for as long as a person remains in intense pain, even if he is no longer in immediate peril; for example, a patient who is well into the process of healing from burns sustained in a house fire would still be unable to wrest his attention from his wounds in order to reengage consistently with the world.<sup>20</sup>

Furthermore, by focusing attention exclusively on that which is occurring within the body, pain also causes a loss of intersubjectivity. According to Arendt, this loss occurs concomitantly with the state of worldlessness just described; specifically, because we have been conditioned to the normative standards of behavior associated with the everyday, worldly environments we inhabit, we use those contexts to help us make sense of what transpires between ourselves and other people.<sup>21</sup> When those contexts lose their salience, we simultaneously lose much of what makes social interaction coherent and comprehensible.<sup>22</sup> However, even if a person was able to disengage his attention from his wounds and reclaim his focus on whatever worldly environment he occupies, intersubjective communication related to the individual's personal suffering could still not be regained; this is due to Arendt's assertion that nothing is less common and communicable, or publically visible and audible, than that which is experienced as sensations within the body.<sup>23</sup> She states: "the most intense feeling we know of, intense to the point of blotting out all other

experiences, namely, the experience of great bodily pain, is at the same time the most private and least communicable of all."<sup>24</sup> In other words, even if I was in the presence of other people, and able to turn my attention towards them and our shared, pragmatic context, I would still be unable to communicate with them about the suffering I was enduring.

At this point, it is worth asking if Arendt's construction of worldly embodiment within the text of *The Human Condition* is correct. To that end, let me begin by stating that I agree with Arendt's insight that, under normal circumstances, my interactions with the things of the world often prompts awareness of the position of my body; reaching for my coffee cup is one of the ways in which I become consciously aware of the placement of my arm and hand. Furthermore, I respect Arendt's attempt to avoid representing the human experience as one in which each individuals' subjective, sensory perceptions dictate the nature of reality. As such, her notion of "common sense" is inviting. At the same time, this insight is stretched almost to the point of absurdity. While it is true that my coffee cup would reveal itself to my consciousness differently in various pragmatic or social contexts, this still does not change the fact that I have never needed a quorum in order to be certain that there is a coffee cup sitting on my desk. At the very least, the cup exists, and continues to do so even if I am the only spectator available to perceive it. Similarly, I have never drunk from my cup, burned my tongue and then found myself utter confounded. After all, the pain caused by a scalding latte has always been sufficient to tell me everything I needed to know about the quality of that liquid, including the fact that, yes, it too does indeed exist.

In terms of the loss of the world that occurs when we are in pain, scientific experimentation has shown that great bodily pain disengages us in just the way Arendt describes. Researchers have even argued that chronic pain should be redefined as chronic interruption.<sup>25</sup> Additionally, if we assume that when Arendt asserts the privacy of pain, she is attempting to indicate its deeply subjective nature,

then she is again in accord with those who study the phenomenon with the utmost rigor. The International Association for the Study of Pain (IASP), for example, states unequivocally that, “Pain is always subjective.”<sup>26</sup> Although Arendt’s formulation in *The Human Condition* is correct on these counts, she is simply wrong when it comes to her assertion that the interruptive and subjective nature of pain means that it beggars communicability. Without a doubt, pain is difficult to describe. The degree of difficulty inherent in translating the experience into words is made evident by the IASP, which elucidates the experience via a twenty-word definition—“An unpleasant sensory and emotional experience associated with actual or potential tissue damage, or described in terms of such damage.”—which is immediately followed with a 249-word explanatory note.<sup>27</sup> However, these linguistic challenges do very little to lessen the communicative possibilities inherent in painful experiences, especially when we take into consideration the indispensable role played by nonlinguistic communicators.

One of the most well-studied of these nonlinguistic communicators is facial expression. Using the Facial Action Coding System (FACS) developed by Paul Ekman and Wallace V. Friesen in 1978, a prototypical combination of facial actions have been identified that seem to be specific to pain. These are: brow lowering, cheek raising, eye closing and lid tightening, nose wrinkling and upper lip raising. This “pain face” is consistent regardless of stimuli, age or cognitive ability, which lends credence to the possibility that it is innate behavior.<sup>28</sup> Since the pain face is recognizable to an observer even in circumstances when the sufferer attempts to suppress his or her reflexive response, it is not surprising that facial expression of pain are highly salient, with observers consistently reporting that they trust these nonverbal expressions more than anything that can be described in the process of self-reporting.<sup>29</sup> Additionally, there is strong evidence that not just pain, but also happiness, sadness, fear and disgust—and, possibly, excitement, awe and embarrassment—have distinct facial expressions that also are characterized by their “rapid preawareness onset, brief duration, involuntariness, and automatic appraisal

by observers.”<sup>30</sup> In other words, pain *is* communicable, as is a whole range of sensory-emotional experiences that are expressed through the face in a remarkably consistent manner. Furthermore, we attune to these facial expressions in ways that are immediate, innate and enactive. As a result, when Arendt extends her argument concerning the incommunicability of physical sensations from those that are painful to those that are pleasurable—and, eventually, to *all* bodily experiences—she is clearly no less in error, since an observer would attune to those expressions as readily as to expressions of pain.<sup>31</sup>

In order to begin correcting deficits in Arendt’s approach to embodiment in *The Human Condition*, it is helpful to turn to her writings on the subject in the first volume of *The Life of the Mind*, and most especially the chapter titled “Body and soul; soul and mind.” There, Arendt draws on the texts *Signs* and *The Visible and the Invisible* by Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Merleau-Ponty, who would influence later phenomenologists and philosophers of mind, interested Arendt because she believed him to be “the only philosopher who not only tried to give an account of the organic structure of human existence but also tried in all earnest to embark upon a ‘philosophy of the flesh.’”<sup>32</sup> Despite these accolades, Arendt took issue with the way in which Merleau-Ponty described the connection between the mind, the soul and the body and, therefore, sought to posit an alternative theory about the relationship.

In Arendt’s construction, “feelings, passions, and emotions” are the purview of the soul. She goes on to state that every emotion occurs simultaneously with a somatic experience: “my heart aches when I am grieved, gets warm with sympathy, opens itself up in rare moments when love and joy overwhelms me, and similar physical sensations take possession of me with anger, wrath, envy and other affects.”<sup>33</sup> These occurrences may be transmitted “by glance, gesture, [or] inarticulate sound.”<sup>34</sup> Such glances, gestures and sounds are, however, “no more *meant* to be shown in their unadulterated state than the inner organs by which we live.”<sup>35</sup> Of course, this begs the question of what kind of emotional expressions are *meant* to be

shown. In order to provide an answer, it is first necessary to rehearse the basics of Arendt's notion of *Selbstdarstellung*, "the urge to self-display," that she derives from the work of the Swiss zoologist and interdisciplinary theorist, Adólf Portman.<sup>36</sup>

Arendt begins her discussion on self-display by stating: "To be alive means to be possessed by an urge towards self-display which answers the fact of one's own appearingness. Living things *make their appearance* like actors on a stage set for them."<sup>37</sup> This kind of appearance—which Arendt deems as "authentic"—is perceived by fellow actors, as well as spectators, all of whom are endowed with sense organs appropriate to the task of seeing, hearing, seeing, tasting and smelling that which is being displayed.<sup>38</sup> In this way, Arendt indicates that what is meant to appear, to be displayed to others, is given readily to the observer. Conversely, she posits that there are also instances of "inauthentic" appearance, "such as the roots of a plant or the inner organs of an animal, which become visible only through interference with and violation of the 'authentic' appearance."<sup>39</sup>

Although it is easily argued that glances, gestures and sounds are readily given to an observer, Arendt takes the position that the feelings, passions, and emotions which underlie such expressions "can no more become part and parcel of the world of appearances than can our inner organs."<sup>40</sup> In this way, Arendt makes it clear that she considers these occurrences to be a form of inauthentic appearance. In order to authentically appear—to be fit to be seen and heard by others—feelings, passions and emotions must not only be felt in the soul, but processed in the mind through the "intervention of reflection and the transference into speech."<sup>41</sup> At that point, "Every *show* of anger, as distinct from the anger I feel, already contains a reflection on it, and it is this reflection that gives the emotion the highly individualized form which is meaningful to all surface phenomena. To show one's anger is one form of self-presentation: I decide what is fit for appearance."<sup>42</sup> In other words, it is through the mind's process of reflective thought and then articulation in speech that the feelings, passions and emotions of our soul may authentically appear, thereby

displaying something of myself to others who are readily equipped to comprehend my expression, and who may choose to offer their own self-displaying response.

With Arendt's discussion of the mind and soul in *The Life of the Mind*, she does offer some degree of correction to deficits identified in her approach to embodiment in *The Human Condition*. Specifically, she articulates an interesting prefiguring of the IASP's research on the inseparability of sensory experiences from emotional experiences. Additionally, her description of the pre-reflective and pre-articulated ways in which feelings, passions and emotions are transmitted in an immediately recognizable way certainly matches the distinct facial expressions that have been identified as accompanying experiences of pain, happiness, fear, excitement and so on. The fact that Arendt insists, however, that such immediate, innate and enactive responses—which have been shown to have levels of salience for an observer above anything that can be purposefully articulated to them about the same experience—are an inauthentic form of self-display on par with exposed viscera would certainly be at odds with contemporary research on social cognition, and especially embodied approaches like Gallagher's Interaction Theory. As such, I will now turn briefly to resources from that field, beginning with research on primary intersubjectivity, in order to further “flesh out” Arendt's account of embodiment.

Specifically, primary intersubjectivity, a term coined by developmental psychologist Colwyn Trevarthen—<sup>43</sup> entails innate or early-developing perceptual and sensory-motor capabilities that are engaged in the service of direct, and often complex, interaction with others.<sup>44</sup> These capabilities are put to use within the first few minutes after a baby's birth and include the ability to recognize a human face as distinct from other objects in the environment. A neonate then will mimic certain movements and expressions of that face, the most common being tongue protrusion. This imitation, however, appears to be more than an involuntary response to stimuli. Instead, it may serve as a pathway to building social affiliations of exactly the quality endemic to Arendt's web of relationships. This relationship-building component is

evident in the fact that, by six weeks of age, infants will enact of a facial gesture that they had previously mimicked in a bid to elicit a response-in-kind. Such a response will allow them to verify the identity of, and their connection to, the person they are reencountering.<sup>45</sup> Additionally, when interpersonal connection via facial expression is withheld from infants—as in experiments where two and three-month olds are exposed to the still, non-expressive face of the person with whom they likely have the strongest relationship, their mother—they “become negative and show increased protest and wariness.”<sup>46</sup>

Given the importance of this nonverbal, intersubjective communication, which is present virtually from the moment of our biological birth, it really cannot be considered an overstatement when Merleau-Ponty stressed that “I live in the facial expressions of the other, as I feel him living in mine.”<sup>47</sup> As such, research on primary intersubjectivity allows us to correct supplement deficiencies in Arendt’s approach to the human body by demonstrating that, even if we limit ourselves to research on facial recognition, imitation and expression, it is all but impossible to find support for Arendt’s assertion in *The Human Condition* concerning the incommunicability of individual sensory-emotional sensations. When we take into account the fact that primary intersubjectivity is not limited to that which can be conveyed through the face, but also includes vocalizations, posture and physical orientation, gesticulation and more, it becomes difficult to support her argument in *The Life of the Mind* that glances, gestures, and inarticulate sounds are, at best, inauthentic means of self-display that become authentic only once they are transformed by the mind’s process of reflective thought and then articulation in speech. As a result, I propose that Arendt’s construction is best reconsidered in light of the new understanding of embodied action.

In the next section, I am going to build on this proposition by rehearsing some of the key finding advanced in research on secondary intersubjectivity concerning the inherent synergy between self, others and the things of the world. I am then going to

relate these findings to the theory of spectator judgment found within the text of *The Human Condition* that, while not as problematic as Arendt's construction of worldly embodiment, is nonetheless strengthened by being brought into conversation with research on social cognition.

### **Secondary Intersubjectivity**

I am going to begin by looking at the way in which our interactions with others are used to gain necessary familiarity with a variety of pragmatic contexts, a process that commences with the emergence of joint attention when a child is between nine and 14 months of age. In joint attention, "the child alternates between monitoring the gaze of the other and what the other is gazing at, checking to verify that they are continuing to look at the same thing."<sup>48</sup> These sorts of interactions help youngsters learn about the world and the objects that populate it. In order for a child to be able to master the immense amount of practical and socio-cultural knowledge needed in adulthood they must, however, be able to generalize the information they receive during these episodic interactions with others. This generalization occurs in part through what Gergely Csibra and György Gergely term "natural pedagogy."<sup>49</sup> Natural pedagogy recognizes that children learn through all forms of unguided observation. However, when children are engaged overtly and directly—and, preferably, by a communicator with whom the child has a preexisting, benevolent relationship—learning patterns fundamentally change.<sup>50</sup> This manner of engagement, which is also referred to as the "ostensive signal," must be developmentally appropriate and is often a precursor to acts of joint attention; specifically, "infants tend to follow gaze shifts only when these [occurrences] are preceded by an ostensive signal such as eye contact or infant-directed greeting."<sup>51</sup>

Ostensive signaling "does not only make children pay more attention to the demonstration but they also see it as a special opportunity to acquire generalizable knowledge."<sup>52</sup> For example, a study involving nine month olds showed that in

interactions during which no ostensive signals were offered, the infants' attention focused on information that was all but irrelevant for identifying an object when they reencountered it or for generalizing to other, similar referents; such information included the location of a readily movable object. Conversely, when ostensive communication cues were introduced, infants focused on properties of the object that were more relevant to future recognition and could be kind-generalized, such as colors, size or other aspects related to visual appearance.<sup>53</sup> It bears stressing that in these experiments, a child did not once "need to rely on statistical procedures to extract the relevant information to be generalized because this is selectively manifested to her by the communicative demonstration."<sup>54</sup> Instead, such "a 'short-cut' to generic knowledge acquisition relies heavily on the communicative cooperation and epistemic benevolence of the communicative partner."<sup>55</sup>

Other studies have begun to illuminate how secondary intersubjectivity, including the ostensive signaling indicative of natural pedagogy, not only allows children to use instances of shared attention in order to come to a fuller understanding of objects in the world, but also how those object-centered interactions become the means through which young children gain insight into other minds. An experiment conducted with children fourteen months of age showed that when they observe another person's expression of aversion or attraction during an encounter in which ostensive signals were offered, they were more likely to infer that the response concerned some property that was inherent to the object, and not simply the communicator's subjective attitude.<sup>56</sup> When similar experiments were done with eighteen month olds, the children assumed the inherence of the property to the referent, and readily generalized that information to other objects of the same kind. Furthermore, they would predict that people other than the original communicator would share the same reaction of attraction or aversion.<sup>57</sup> If the same information was received during an encounter that lacked ostensive signaling, the children were likely to assume that the reaction of attraction or aversion was a

subjective response offered by the other person and not one that was related to a property inherent to the object. In short, increasing the level of direct communication through ostensive signaling helps children more quickly develop their expectations of what constitutes people's normal, generalizable behavior in relationship to certain objects.

Also around eighteen months of age, toddlers can “read below the surface behavior of the adult and reenact the goals, aims, or intentions of the adult.”<sup>58</sup> This is evident in experiments where toddlers are “able to re-enact to completion the goal-directed behavior that someone else fails to complete. Thus the child, upon seeing an adult who tries to manipulate a toy and appears frustrated about being unable to do so, quite readily picks up the toy and shows the adult how to do so.”<sup>59</sup> As Gallagher and Jacobson suggest, “This is not taking an intentional stance, i.e., treating the other as *if* they had desires or beliefs hidden away in their minds; rather, the intentionality is there to be perceived in the embodied actions of others.”<sup>60</sup> Soon after being able to complete the specific, goal-directed activities of another, there is an expansion of abilities that allows children to imitate the social roles and normative perspective that underlie and predict the intended actions. According to Meltzoff and Moore, this includes a child “[b]ehaving ‘as-if’ they were mommy, acting from a mommy-like perspective, and expressing mommy-like desires and beliefs, even if they are not the child’s own.”<sup>61</sup>

Unlike issues related to worldly embodiment, when we compare research on secondary intersubjectivity to the text of *The Human Condition*, we find basic agreement between that work and Arendt’s most general claims concerning how the objects we encounter shape our understanding of the world:

The world . . . consists of things produced by human activities; but the things that owe their existence exclusively to men nevertheless constantly condition their human makers. . . . This is why men, no matter what they do, are always conditioned beings. . . . The objectivity of the world—its object- or thing-

character—and the human condition supplement each other; because human existence is conditioned existence, it would be impossible without things, and things would be a heap of unrelated articles, a non-world, if they were not the conditioners of human existence.<sup>62</sup>

Arendt, however, diverges from the research on social cognition when she grants objects an almost totemic level of power by seeming to imply that they could do their work of conditioning us to the accepted social customs, habits of discourse and patterns of behavior of our inherited tradition all on their own, without any interaction between the newcomer and established members of the community. In concrete terms, this would be akin to asserting that a toddler learns just as much in an instance where she finds a book of fairytales and looks at the words and pictures, as when a caregiver reads to the child while focusing the child's attention on meaningful events in the story.

Arendt's discussion of "common sense" marks the place in her work where intersubjective interaction finally becomes a necessity. While I have criticized her construction, it is to her credit that some experiments involving joint attention substantiate that our understanding of the nature of worldly reality is shaped by the verification of our sense data by others. It is worth highlighting, however, that as part and parcel of secondary intersubjectivity such verification is an inherent and instantaneously understood aspect of our interactions that may be enhanced by, but does not require, any special forms of communication.

Besides gaining information about the worldly environment, in instances of joint attention I also attain knowledge about my co-communicator: her embodied action within our shared, pragmatic context discloses her intentions, desires and beliefs as a minded agent. Arendt posits a similar kind of revelation.

Action and speech go on between men, as they are directed toward them, and they retain their agent-revealing capacity even if their content is exclusively "objective," concerned with the matters of the world of things in

which men move, which physically lies between them and out of which arise their specific, objective, worldly interests. These interests constitute, in the word's most literal significance, something which *inter-est*, which lies between people and therefore can relate and bind them together. Most action and speech is concerned with this in-between, which varies with each group of people, so that most words and deeds are *about* some worldly objective reality in addition to being a disclosure of the acting and speaking agent.

Within the text of *The Human Condition*, this disclosure of an agent is seen and heard by a special class of *homo faber* who are expected to remember and then reify the fleeting words and deeds they witness. As we saw in the previous chapter, Arendt explicates “visiting” as an integral part of this process. Visiting involves mentally constructing stories about what the spectator has seen and heard from each of the plurality of perspectives that might have an interest in telling it in order to reach the most valid opinion of the event as possible. For Arendt, a valid opinion must respect the facticity of the original event, but ultimately aims at illuminating its meaning or significance through the creation of something beautiful and enduring—a work of art, a poem, an architectural monument.

The ability to “go visiting” would seem to have strong ties to the capacity we develop as part of secondary intersubjectivity to behave “as-if” in instances of pretend play, to inhabit the thoughts and imitate the actions of someone with a different social role and normative perspective than ourselves. Furthermore, Meltzoff and Moore have noted the relationship between being able to inhabit the viewpoint of another and the process of meaning making. In the final paragraph of their paper on imitation practices in early childhood, they state that youngsters “are only partly governed by the stimulus that is present in perception. Infants act to bring their perceptual and representational worlds into register, to ‘give meaning to’ what they perceive. This is one of the chief motivations and psychological functions of the early imitation of people.”<sup>63</sup>

As discussed earlier in this chapter, advocates of Simulation Theory (ST) indicate that the simulation involved in recognizing others as minded agents and then understanding their specific behaviors, actions, intentions and mental states “is based on either the observer's first-person experience (if they describe an explicit or conscious process of simulation) or on what registers in the observer's own motor system, which has been tuned to the kinds of actions with which the observer has familiarity from past experience.”<sup>64</sup> Thus, as Christian Keysers and Valeria Gazzola explain, “In all cases, observing what other people do or feel is transformed into an inner representation of what we would do or feel in a similar, endogenously produced, situation.”<sup>65</sup> As a result, if simulation theorists “recognize that we understand people who may be very different from us, they typically do not mention this issue, and have not explained how it is possible if in fact simulation, as they define it, is the default way that we understand others.”<sup>66</sup>

Conversely, what may seem quite abstract in Arendt's presentation of her theory of “visiting” turns out, in fact, to be a very natural and everyday occurrence: we possess an almost innate ability to assume the perspective of another person in order to make sense of our experiences and encounters with them. Furthermore, what both Arendt and proponents of IT understand—which is seemingly lost on those who advocate for ST—is that as we enact these processes, we seek to inhabit unfamiliar perspectives without either standing apart from, nor attempting to make familiar, these new positions. Instead, to paraphrase Arendt, we attempt to be and to think from where we are not in order to seek that which is specific to a standpoint different than our own. As a result, I do not ordinarily, nor automatically, attribute the patterns identified through my visitation, through my acting “as-if,” to the person who is actually inhabiting the situation as if she and I are same-minded. After all, as the research by Meltzoff and Moore demonstrates, the child is not her mommy any more than the spectator is the existential agent, and both the child and the spectator understand that fact axiomatically.

## **Participatory Sense-Making**

The consideration and creation of meaning through social interaction is the aspect of secondary intersubjectivity referred to as participatory sense-making.<sup>67</sup> According to Hanne De Jaegher and Ezequiel Di Paolo, in order for an interaction to rightly be considered social it must possess two defining characteristics: coordination and autonomy. Coordination means “the non-accidental correlation between the behaviours of two or more systems that are in sustained coupling, or have been coupled in the past, or have been coupled to another, common, system.”<sup>68</sup> While the levels of coordination can run the gambit between absolute and relative, what is important in social interactions is that there is some level of voluntary coordination, and that through that coordination interactors establish a relational domain, a space that is generated by, and then continues to support, what is occurring between participants. The relational domain is marked by its own limited form of autonomy that, with a certain degree of circularity, encourages or curtails the interactional content that continues to create it anew.

Even though certain activities may be promoted or discouraged within the relational domain, the participants must still maintain a level of personal autonomy. De Jaegher and Di Paolo draw on the analogy of two people dancing in order to illustrate this point. They state that, just as in an interaction during which autonomy is maintained, “couple dancing involves moving each other, making each other move, and being moved by each other. This goes for both leader and follower. Following is part of an agreement and does not equate with being shifted into position by the other.” However, if one participant were to give up or lose her autonomy, “the couple dancing would end there, and it would look more like a doll being carried around the dance floor.”<sup>69</sup>

In many ways, what De Jaegher and Di Paolo posit parallels Arendt’s description of the meaning-making which arises in the interactions between

existential agents: that which occurs between those agents must give rise to at least a minimal level of coordination in order for the actions of one to be able to become the genesis of new action-processes for another. Since the outcomes of these various action-processes are boundless, unpredictable and irreversible, a level of coordination also is necessary between actors so that they may extend to each other mutual consideration in the form of illocutionary acts such as promising and forgiving. Additionally, Arendt makes it clear that when agents come together they may limit each other's personal autonomy only in dire circumstances, and then for as brief a time as possible. Arendt formulates this expectation most succinctly in terms of political action: "men in their freedom can interact with one another without compulsion, force, and rule over one another, as equals among equals, commanding and obeying one another only in emergencies—that is, in times of war—but otherwise managing all their affairs by speaking with and persuading one another."<sup>70</sup>

Besides the autonomy of the participants, we must also address the autonomy of the relational domain. In *The Human Condition*, Arendt names this domain the "space of appearance." When the words and deeds through which we enact our story come into being within the web of relationships, a new phenomenological space comes into being in order to accommodate the event. This is the space of appearance, "where I appear to others as others appear to me, when men exist not merely like other living or inanimate things but make their appearance explicitly."<sup>71</sup> In this way, the space of appearance may be described as "simultaneously being space and event" or, more rightly, a space that "only exists by *grace of the happening of events*."<sup>72</sup> In emphasizing the event quality of the space of appearance, on page 199 of *The Human Condition*, Arendt states:

The space of appearance comes into being wherever men are together in the manner of speech and action, and therefore predates and precedes all formal constitution of the public realm and the various forms of government, that is, the various forms in which the public realm can be organized. Its peculiarity is

that, unlike the spaces which are the work of our hands, it does not survive the actuality of the movement which brought it into being, but disappears not only with the dispersal of men—as in the case of great catastrophes when the body politic of a people is destroyed—but with the disappearance or arrest of the activities themselves. Wherever people gather together, it is potentially there, but only potentially, not necessarily and not forever.<sup>73</sup>

For the period during which it is brought into being, the space of appearance shapes the content unfolding within it. The ability to encourage or curtail certain content is founded on the fact that the web of relationships is not only comprised of the various face-to-face interactions occurring among those enacting their stories, it is also, Arendt tells us, the implicit, socio-cultural context that frames that which is unfolding.<sup>74</sup> In other words, expectations of right behavior are part of the very thread of Arendt's web of relationships. These behaviors include those things that Arendt outlines specifically, such as acts of promising and forgiving. It would also include accepted social customs, habits of discourse and patterns of behavior that would govern ordinary interactions. Even though some aspect of those normative patterns are being violated by the existential agent as she acts and speaks in ways that illuminate the space between what is personally real and what is expected by the community, the rest of those expectations would need to remain largely intact for the occurrence to have coherence. After all, to modify a point made by Arendt, if everything to which we have been conditioned were to disappear at once, we would experience only a jumble of unrelated action and objects, a world of nonsense.<sup>75</sup>

Of course, the relationship I have thus far described concerns the parallel between De Jaegher and Di Paolo's construction of participatory sense-making and Arendt's description of the meaningful action-processes which arise through the interactions between existential agents. What must now be considered is that which occurs when, to play off of De Jaegher and Di Paolo's analogy, I am not a direct participant in the couple dance but, instead, I am interestingly engaged in watching

others dance the tango, waltz or foxtrot. In such instances, am I still involved in a kind of social interaction sufficient for the consideration and creation of meaning which is the hallmark of participatory sense-making? Arendt's work on remembrance and reification suggests the possibility that I am.

As discussed in chapter 4, remembrance occurs when the speech and action of existential agents is seen, heard and recollected via a process Arendt terms "remembrance." Remembrance is, however, more than the basic, mental processing of sensory input; instead, there is an expectation that the spectator be fully engaged by the process of witnessing the stories others enact so that he may then translate those words and deeds into worldly objects: works of reification.<sup>76</sup> Reifications produced in the fulfillment of remembrance are more than the usual kinds of mundane use-objects which typically serve as buffers against the endless cyclicity of nature by forging a common world out of the organic environment as it is given. In instances where reifications are created in fulfillment of remembrance, Arendt seeks the fabrication of something special, something beautiful.<sup>77</sup> These special objects require Arendt to delineate a new class of workers whose craftsmanship transcends the basic use-objects that *homo faber* would typically create—a class of artists, poets, historiographers, and the like. Being part of this select group of workers comes, however, at a price: in order to fulfill their duty of remembrance and reification, Arendt's artisans may not be existential actors, themselves. In other words, they look with interest upon that which is occurring within the space of appearance, but they are not direct participants.

Throughout course of her canon, Arendt offers various reasons why the spectator must withdraw from active involvement. In *The Human Condition*, she emphasizes that the execution of the talents necessary for a craftsman to produce an object of reification requires a retreat from the interactions of the public realm and into the solitariness of the private realm.<sup>78</sup> In her essay "The Crisis in Culture," Arendt argues that a level of personal distance and disinterest is required in order to be able

to assess the meaning of a witnessed event.<sup>79</sup> She expands this argument in the chapter titled “Thinking and Doing: The Spectator” in the first volume of *The Life of the Mind*. There, Arendt states that the “nobility” of the spectators

is only that they do not participate in what is going on but look at it as a mere spectacle. From the Greek word for spectators, *theatai*, the later philosophical term “theory” was derived, and the word “theoretical” until a few hundred years ago meant “contemplating,” looking upon something from the outside, from a position implying a view that is hidden from those who take part in the spectacle and actualize it. The inference to be drawn from this early distinction between doing and understanding is obvious: as a spectator you may understand the “truth” of what the spectacle is about; but the price you pay is participating in it.<sup>80</sup>

Even though the spectator is not directly involved in the dynamic occurring between existential agents, it is my contention that what Arendt describes constitutes a special type of intersubjective occurrence. This occurrence arises out of the fact that, when one of those agents finds the courage to expose and disclose herself through the words and deeds of the story she enacts, she shows “who” she is, and thus actualizes the potential that is bio-ontologically rooted within her. As Patchen Markell rightly states, once the move occurs from

possibility to actuality—regardless of how probable or improbable we may have taken it to be while it was still only a possibility—*something* changes in a different register; namely, the register in which happenings are not only caused state of affairs but also meaningful events, features of a world, and, in particular, occasions for response.<sup>81</sup>

In other words, when a second, existential natality occurs for the actor, others within the web of relationships may respond by initiating their own new and unpredictable action-processes. Additionally, an invitation is issued to the spectators who also now have the ability and, in my judgment, the expectation, to offer their own responses to

that which they have witnessed. These responses do not take the form of words and deeds but, instead, are issued via the objects of reification.

The dynamic between the agent and the spectator, therefore, mimics the basic form of a conversation, with a failure on the part of the spectator to formulate an answer to the question posed by the existential agent causing a communicative and interactional breakdown analogous to what would occur if I asked my dinner companion a question and found myself met only by his blank stare. It must be noted, however, that even when the spectator does respond, the agent has no control, no authority, over the reply that is issued. In this way, each party retains his autonomy.

This conversational dynamic suggests that even though what occurs between Arendt's existential agent and witnessing spectator "is not interaction in the embodied immediacy of the encounter, certain kinds of observation—those which result in narrative, monuments, etc. could be part of an interaction over time and in a wider framework."<sup>82</sup> Furthermore, this interaction "can be such that others also join in;" this opens the possibility for further activities of meaning-making in instances where the spectator communicates significance of those words and deeds of the originative event to people removed from their point of origination, either by space and/or time.<sup>83</sup> In order to explicate more about the temporally extended nature of the interaction between the agent and the spectator, the framework that supports it and the ways in which others may participate, I am now going to turn to the third developmental component of Interaction Theory, communicative and narrative competency.

## CHAPTER 6

### NARRATIVE

In the previous chapter, insights from *The Life of the Mind* and research on primary intersubjectivity allowed us to construct a more cogent account of embodiment than the one offered by Arendt in *The Human Condition*, especially as related to individual sensory-emotional perceptions and their concomitant communicability to others. Scholarship on secondary intersubjectivity allowed for an expanded discussion of spectator judgment, including the process of participatory sense-making—the consideration and creation of meaning through our interactions with others. Those who study participatory sense-making have focused on face-to-face, dyadic encounters which parallel Arendt’s description of the action-processes which arise through the interactions between existential agents. I asserted that in the case of Arendt’s existential agent and witnessing spectator, a third-person or observational stance also constituted a sufficient level of interaction for participatory sense-making because it is a special circumstance in which the dynamic between the agent and the spectator mimics the basic form of a conversation. Furthermore, it was my contention that this inherently conversational dynamic is enhanced by being temporally extended, situated within a supporting framework and constructed in such a manner as to invite the participation of others. In this chapter, I am going to employ scholarship related to communicative and narrative competency to support these claims.

#### **Selfhood and the Story: Lived Narratives and Retrospective Recountings**

As the third developmental component of Interaction Theory, communicative and narrative competency arises as we gain command of different types of narratives that allow for a more nuanced, sophisticated and complex understanding of self, others and intersubjective interactions than can be attained solely through the

developmental, biological or embodied aspects of primary and secondary intersubjectivity.<sup>1</sup> Galen Strawson states that, among proponents of this approach,

There is widespread agreement that human beings typically see or live or experience their lives as a narrative or story of some sort, or at least as a collection of stories. I'll call this the *psychological Narrativity thesis*, using the word "Narrative" with a capital letter to denote a specifically psychological property or outlook. The psychological Narrativity thesis is a straightforwardly empirical, descriptive thesis about the way ordinary human beings actually experience their lives. This is how we are, it says, this is our nature. The psychological Narrativity thesis is often coupled with a normative thesis, which I'll call the *ethical Narrativity thesis*. This states that experiencing or conceiving one's life as a narrative is a good thing; a richly Narrative outlook is essential to a well-lived life, to true or full personhood.<sup>2</sup>

Of course, it is with no small sense of irony that I am commencing my discussion by calling on Strawson's work. He is, after all, a predominant figure in the anti-narrative movement and rejects both the psychological and the ethical view, claiming they "hinder human self-understanding, close down important avenues of thought, impoverish our grasp of ethical possibilities, needlessly and wrongly distress those who do not fit their model, and are potentially destructive in psychotherapeutic contexts."<sup>3</sup> As such, it is undoubtedly not meant as a compliment when Strawson names Alasdair MacIntyre as "the founding figure in the modern Narrativity camp."<sup>4</sup>

While I cannot claim to know if MacIntyre's work has, as Strawson suggests, ever predicated a psychological schism, it has sparked much debate concerning the relationship between self and story: is the self constructed through a living narrative, so that the story constitutes the self, and/or is part of what should be understood as selfhood found in the ability to tell one's life story in a narrative form that elucidates the context, structure and logic of our actions? In his iconic text *After Virtue*, MacIntyre answers both of these questions in the affirmative—responses that,

according to Allen Speight, find their “particular impetus” within *The Human Condition*.<sup>5</sup> While I agree that Arendt’s construction of a lived narrative enacted through words and deeds foreshadows MacIntyre’s formulation, Arendt and MacIntyre hold very different views on whether we should also then be able to recount our lives in the form of a retrospective biography. In order to highlight the similarities and the difference in their work, I am going to address issues relevant to the lived narrative and those related to the retrospective biography one at a time.

To begin, it is necessary to recount that within the text of *The Human Condition*, Arendt asserts that we are born into the private realm through the laboring of our mothers. Upon our arrival, we immediately start to be conditioned to the accepted norms of our inherited tradition. Arendt, however, asserts clearly that a gap necessarily exists between the person we are conditioned to be, and “who” we are explicitly, uniquely, newly, authentically. Just as biological necessities are met through the tasks of labor, and world-building occurs through the activities of work, revelation of “who” someone is happens as a result of action.

Action, understood as the words and deeds that disclose “who” someone is, “‘produces’ stories with or without intention as naturally as fabrication produces tangible things.”<sup>6</sup> These “enacted stories,” as Arendt calls them, are not performative recountings of events that have already occurred. Instead, they reveal the unique identity of the actor.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, the words and deeds which produce these stories are not expressible by an actor who is isolated. Instead, we may only reveal “who” we are to others. In this way, one’s unique identity is disclosed within a plurality or what Arendt alternately terms the “web of relationships.”

When the words and deeds through which we enact our story come into being within the web of relationships, a new phenomenological space comes into being in order to accommodate the event. This is the space of appearance, “where I appear to others as others appear to me, when men exist not merely like other living or inanimate things but make their appearance explicitly.”<sup>8</sup> Within the space of

appearance, agents extend to each other mutual consideration, including the making of promises and the offering of forgiveness. These considerations are necessary because of the boundless, unpredictable and irreversible consequences that may follow from the stories we enact.

Enacting our story is unpredictable because the entelechy of action is not the same as creating the artifacts of work; there is no tangible product produced through action, only a process. It is boundless because every action not only touches off a reaction, but a chain of reactions; every action-process may be the genesis of other new and unpredictable processes.<sup>9</sup> Once an action-process has begun, by the very fact that it is boundless and unpredictable, it is also irreversible. Therefore, it is impossible to stop, undo or annul what an existential agent has begun through her words and deeds, even if the results are disastrous.<sup>10</sup> The boundless, unpredictable and irreversible nature of Arendtian action as it unfolds within the intersubjective web of relationships leads her to make the following assertion about the authorship of the stories we enact:

Although everybody started his life by inserting himself into the human world through action and speech, nobody is the author or producer of his own life story. In other words, the stories, the results of action and speech, reveal an agent, but this agent is not an author or producer. Somebody began it and is its subject in the twofold sense of the word, namely, its actor and sufferer, but nobody is its author.<sup>11</sup>

Despite the challenges inherent in enacting stories where they can be seen and heard by others and, in the process, showing ourselves to be more than simply mirrors of our cultural conditioning, one of the reasons Arendt values this process is because it is "*like a second birth*" for the individual who undertakes it, a rebirth which is existential instead of biological.<sup>12</sup>

In his canonical work *After Virtue*, MacIntyre constructs his concept of narrative in such a way that it shares five commonalities with Arendt's: it is enacted,

teleologically oriented, embedded within an inherited socio-historical tradition, influenced by others and has an unpredictable outcome. Specifically, MacIntyre envisions our lives as narratives that we enact through “both conversations in particular then and human actions in general.”<sup>13</sup> These words and deeds are aimed towards a final, teleological end, which MacIntyre terms a personal “narrative quest.” In order to undertake this quest, I must have an adequate sense of the larger socio-cultural and institutional framework into which I am born and in which “the story of my life is always embedded.”<sup>14</sup> I must then recognize the moral limitations of that tradition—“Lack of justice, lack of truthfulness, lack of courage, lack of relevant intellectual practices”—and seek to align with a universal, instead of a locally particular, principle that is assumed to be free of those shortcomings.<sup>15</sup> According to MacIntyre, this process is part and parcel of the “historically extended, socially embodied argument” that serves to further the “not-yet-complete narrative” of the tradition in which I am embedded.<sup>16</sup>

In accord with Stawson’s “ethical Narrativity thesis,” MacIntyre assumes that the outcome of my narrative quest will be that I discover “*the good*” both for myself and for the communities, institutions and traditions that provide the framework from which I derive my identity. However, even MacIntyre is forced to admit that shining a bright and unflattering light on normatively accepted socio-cultural practices—even if they are rooted in ignorance, injustice or the like—will add such a witch’s brew of “harms, dangers, temptations and distractions” to my narrative quest that it changes the authorship of the story I enact.<sup>17</sup> MacIntyre states:

we are never more (and sometimes less) than the co-authors of our own narratives. Only in fantasy do we live what story we please. In life, as both Aristotle and Engels noted, we are always under certain constraints. We enter upon a stage which we did not design and we find ourselves part of an action that was not our making. Each of us being a main character in his own drama

plays subordinate parts in the dramas of others, and each drama constrains the others.<sup>18</sup>

This lack of authoritative control leads MacIntyre to assert that, after being teleological, the “second crucial characteristic of all lived narratives” is unpredictability.<sup>19</sup> The unpredictability of the lived narrative brings us to an often-cited problem with MacIntyre’s work: insistence on narrative unity.

MacIntyre argues that there is a tendency in existentialism and analytic ethical theory towards being episodic and non-contextual. In contradistinction, MacIntyre envisions his “enquiry into the nature of human action and identity” as creating a unity that links “birth to life to death” in exactly the same way any literary narrative ties the “beginning to middle to end.”<sup>20</sup> However, as Paul Ricoeur rightly notes, one thing that differentiates literature from life is that, although a literary narrative may commence at any temporal point in relation to the present moment, the structure of the work dictates where it starts and where it ends; the first sentence is the beginning of the narrative and the last sentence is the conclusion.<sup>21</sup> Conversely, there is nothing in real life that serves as a narrative beginning; memory is lost in the hazes of early childhood; my birth and, with greater reason, the act through which I was conceived belong more to the history of others—in this case, to my parents—than to me. As for my death, it will finally be recounted only in the stories of those who survive me. I am always moving toward my death, and this prevents me from ever grasping it as a narrative end.<sup>22</sup>

Echoing Ricoeur, John Lippitt states that the problem with MacIntyre’s construction lies in the fact that “my death is necessarily not an event in my life, I cannot grasp it as an episode in the story of my life. My death can be experienced only from a perspective outside my life: it can be an event in the lives of the descendants and friends I leave behind.”<sup>23</sup>

Seeming to sense that the very criticism offered by Ricoeur and Lippitt would inevitably arise, MacIntyre offers a secondary construction of narrative beginnings

and endings that is not biological but, instead, conceptual. MacIntyre states: “there are many events which are both endings and beginnings,” and when we take an event to be definitively one or the other, “we bestow a significance upon it which may be debatable.”<sup>24</sup> With the addition of this secondary construction of beginnings and endings, we are left to decide if our death (MacIntyre never addresses directly the question of our birth) constitutes the absolute conclusion of our lived narrative and, thereby, rightly invites the criticisms offered by Ricoeur, Lippitt and others;<sup>25</sup> or, if our death should be treated as an event with indefinite significance, thus making it difficult to justify the importance ascribed to it within the kind of unified life narrative for which MacIntyre advocates.

Arendt avoids the ambiguities found in MacIntyre’s writings on narrative unity by addressing the beginning of our life and the beginning of our enacted story as two distinct, although related, events. As has been discussed, the Arendtian concept of natality is constructed in such a manner as to make it inherently dual. There is a primary, bio-ontological birth and a second, existential rebirth. Arendt offers no indication that she would expect us to remember, let alone narratively recount our physical arrival into the world. Although she never says as much, I believe a reasonable argument can therefore be made that she is in accord with Ricoeur that our conception, gestation, labor and delivery belong first to other people’s histories and, at best, only secondarily to each of us. What is ours alone, however, is the possibility of living a fully human life, the potential for which is ontologically grounded in our first natality. That possibility is actualized when we are existentially reborn into a distinctly human life. Arendt describes that event in narrative terms, naming it as the moment an “individual life, with a recognizable life-story from birth to death, rises out of biological life.”<sup>26</sup> Unlike MacIntyre, Arendt constructs our existential rebirth in such a manner as to make it clear that our biological birth and the commencement of our enacted story occur at different times. Furthermore, everything Arendt tells us

about the process of undertaking a second natality indicates that, if called upon to do so, we should be able to remember and recount the point at which it occurred.

Although Arendt posits a dual natality, death is a singular event that marks the conclusion of any story we may enact through our words and deeds. Additionally, it is the point at which Arendt shifts her focus towards the retrospective narration of our actions and experiences. Arendt asserts unambiguously that it will not be the existential agent who authors that tale: the “chief characteristic of this specifically human life, whose appearance and disappearance constitute worldly events, is that it is itself always full of events which ultimately can be told as a story, *establish a biography*.”<sup>27</sup>

A biographical account of an existential actor’s life is necessary for multiple reasons. First, it allows Arendt to avoid the previously discussed problem of post-mortem narration, the expectation that the existential actor will tell the story of her life from beyond the grave. Second, Arendt expresses concerns about the veracity of an autobiographic narrative offered by the existential actor, herself: “All accounts told by the actors themselves, though they may in rare cases give an entirely trustworthy statement of intentions, aims, and motives, become mere useful source material in the historian’s hands and can never match his story in significance and truthfulness.”<sup>28</sup> Third, Arendt links personal identity directly to a unified narrative; within Arendt’s construction, that unity is only revealed at the point of death.

This unchangeable identity of the person, though disclosing itself intangibly in act and speech, becomes tangible only in the story of the actor’s and speaker’s life; but as such it can be known, that is, grasped as a palpable entity only after it has come to its end. In other words, human essence—not human nature in general (which does not exist) nor the sum total of qualities and shortcomings in the individual, but the essence of who somebody is—can come into being only when life departs, leaving behind nothing but a story.

Finally, Arendt's discussion of the death introduces us to a new aspect of the relationship between the agent and the spectator, one that is more temporally extended than previously described. Up to this point, we have understood the spectator as being present at the point of an actor's existential natality and then, through the process of remembrance and reification, crafting enduring objects that make present the significance of those words and deeds to people removed from their point of origination, either by space and/or time. As a result of this construction, what transpires between the agent and the spectator seems to occur within a brief period of time. In some instances, that may very well be the case. However, unlike the documenting of a single, catalytic event, the crafting of someone's life-story in a form that elucidates the essence of who somebody is, implies a relational dynamic that occurs over an extended time period.

### **Defining Arendtian Narratives**

Whether it is a single, catalytic event or the entire life-story of an existential agent, Arendt indicates the acceptable media in which her words and deeds may be reified; these are the "sayings of poetry, the written page or the printed book, into paintings or sculpture, into all sorts of records, documents, and monuments."<sup>29</sup> At first glance, Arendt's list seems straight-forward and reasonably uncomplicated. However, even if we set aside non-textual media, and focus only on the "sayings of poetry, the written page or the printed book," scholars simply do not agree on exactly what kind of works should be considered. According to George Kateb, acceptable genres would include novels, short stories, plays, biographies, autobiographies and historical accounts.<sup>30</sup> Lisa Disch argues for the inclusion of short stories and novels, as well as the essays Arendt wrote for *The New Yorker* and *Commentary*.<sup>31</sup> Disch disqualifies polemic historical writings, first-person testimonials, arguments or examples.<sup>32</sup> Veronica Vasterling rules out scientific and philosophical texts, while Mel A. Topf argues strongly against consideration of the novel.<sup>33</sup>

In order to evaluate who is correct, we find ourselves engaging a question that is central to the narrative approach: namely, what counts as a narrative? According to Peter Lamarque, the conditions “are indeed minimal.” First, “a story must be told, it is not found.” Additionally, “at least two events must be depicted in a narrative and there must be some more or less loose, albeit non-logical, relation between the events.” Finally, there is “a temporal relation between the events, even if just that of simultaneity.”<sup>34</sup> A less minimal set of conditions is outlined by David Herman.

I define narrative as a mode of representation that is situated in—must be interpreted in light of—a specific discourse context or occasion for telling, and that cues interpreters to draw inferences about a structured time-course of particularized events (in contrast with general patterns or trends). In addition, the events represented are such that they introduce conflict (disruption or disequilibrium) into a storyworld, whether that world is presented as actual or fictional, realistic or fantastic, remembered or dreamed, etc. The representation also conveys what it is like to live through this storyworld-in-flux, highlighting the pressure of events on (in other words, the qualia of) real or imagined consciousnesses undergoing the disruptive experience at issue.<sup>35</sup>

While Arendt is never explicit about the criteria she employs, one may infer from a survey of her writings that an Arendtian narrative should meet three standards. First, it must be fictional. Second, it should demonstrate perspectival plurality and, third, it must invite on-going reinterpretation of meaning. Since these criteria are quite different than ones advanced by scholars such as Lamarque and Herman, it is worth looking at them in a bit more detail.

To begin, Arendt states that the “distinction between a real and a fictional story is precisely that the latter was ‘made up’ and the former not made at all. The real story in which we are engaged as long as we live has no visible or invisible

maker because it is not made.”<sup>36</sup> In other words, “real” stories are constituted by the words and deeds of existential agents as they live and act together, as well as any state of affairs which arises out of those occurrences; they are enacted instead of authored. Conversely, fictional stories are reifications created by *homo faber* in response to the witnessing of those instances of action and speech. As discussed in chapter 4, in order to produce these reified objects, Arendt expects that the spectator will train his imagination to “go visiting,” by which she means that he will attempt to be and to think from where he is not in order to make sense of events which are fleeting, ephemeral and, more often than not, unprecedented.<sup>37</sup> It must be emphasized, however, that within Arendt’s construction, this kind of imaginative thinking is critical, reflective, fact-based and sustaining of the public world. As such, even when the enduring and artifactual product of this kind of thought takes the form of short stories or novels—genres which generally fall under the rubric of “fiction”—there remains an expectation that the author respects the facticity of the original words and deeds he seeks to reify.

Second, due in part to her encounters with totalitarianisms, Arendt feared that whenever there was a diminishment of human plurality in favor of a singularity of perspective, the accepted point of view could easily harden into what she termed “ideological lies” that were expected to be believed as if they were “sacred untouchable truths.”<sup>38</sup> In contradiction to this notion, as Vasterling explains,

Arendt insists that the existence of a shared world is dependent on the possibility of articulating many different views of the same reality. Without a plurality of stories concerning human actions and the consequences thereof, the reality of the web of human affairs will become insubstantial to the point of simply evaporating. The articulation of plural viewpoints is the illumination, from many different perspectives, of the same fragile, ephemeral, and contingent web of human relationships, facts, and events—making it thereby more solid, more objective, more real. Without a plurality of stories about

worldly matters, the world will first lose its character of commonality, then its meaningfulness, and finally, its reality.<sup>39</sup>

While it seems as though Arendt ensured this plurality through her insistence that a spectator engage in the process of imaginative thinking in order to mentally “visit” a variety of perspectives, in her posthumously published lectures on Kant, she went one step further. In those lectures, Arendt explicitly states that the witnessing spectator “exists only in the plural. The spectator is not involved in the act, but he is always involved with fellow spectators.... [T]he faculty they have in common is the faculty of judgment.”<sup>40</sup> Thus, by the end of her career, Arendt’s spectators found themselves enmeshed in a web of relationships with their peers analogous to the one that weaves together the existential agents. As a result, just as every action that an agent commences within that web has the potential to become the genesis of countless other new and unpredictable action-processes, because of the nature of the process of “visiting,” each additional spectator who witnesses an action exponentially increases the points-of-view from which it will be considered.

Third, not only must an Arendtian narrative avoid distilling the “plural meanings of an incident into definitive conclusions,” it should also continue encouraging “contestation and multiple reinterpretation of meaning.”<sup>41</sup> This quality of hermeneutic openness, however, is not simply a matter of style—something more native to the symbolic language of poetry than the concise prose of a historiography. Instead, it is the result of a “transfiguration, a veritable metamorphosis in which it is as though the course of nature which wills that all fire burn to ashes is reverted and even dust can burst into flames.”<sup>42</sup> Arendt goes on to explain that, in the case of an enacted story, the reified objects are the ash and dust—the cold remains of what was once vital and alive. Those words and deeds can, however, be reanimated, just as that which was reduced to ash can revert to its original form.

We mentioned before that this reification and materialization, without which no thought can become a tangible thing, is always paid for, and that the price

is life itself: it is always the “dead letter” in which the “living spirit” must survive, a deadness from which it can be rescued only when the dead letter comes again into contact with a life willing to resurrect it.<sup>43</sup>

With the concept of transfiguration, Arendt indicates the way in which the words and deeds of an existential agent can, at any moment, be reenacted for “a ‘fresh audience’ that will draw its conclusions based on present concerns.”<sup>44</sup> Concerning this reenactment, Arendt reminds us that “even if the spectacle were always the same and therefore tiresome, the audiences would change from generation to generation,” and the new audience would be unlikely to arrive at the same conclusions about the event as those who came before.<sup>45</sup> In other words, each new audience is, in effect, a new set of spectators. In this way, the conversational dynamic begun when an agent first revealed “who” she was through the words and deeds of the story she enacts may remain open in such a way that, at any point after the reification occurs, others may join the interaction and participate in the process of sense-making in order to expand the understanding of the event.

Having explicated the three criteria of an Arendtian narrative, we can now return to the question of which genres could be employed acceptably in the reification of speech and action. First, based on her insistence that the words and deeds of existential agents be documented by the witnessing spectators and not by the agents, themselves, I agree with Kateb that Arendt would consider biographies to be a satisfactory form of narrative reification. However, it is for this same reason that I must disagree with him about the acceptability of autobiographies. While the argument that disqualifies autobiographies would also apply to first-person testimonials, Disch offers an entirely different reason for not including them. She states: “A testimonial is self-expressive: it asserts ‘this is the way I see the world.’ It is fully determined by the experience of the speaker and, as such, can inspire refutation or empathy but not critical engagement as Arendt defines it.”<sup>46</sup> According to Disch, Arendt defines critical engagement as “telling or hearing multiple stories of an event

from the plurality of perspectives that it engages.” This is necessary because “testing one’s perspective against the perspectives of others is to take a stand in full recognition of the complexity and ambiguity of the real situations in which judgments are made.”<sup>47</sup> Thus, for Disch, first-person testimonials fail to meet the second criteria of an Arendtian narrative, perspectival plurality.

Within the text of *The Human Condition*, Arendt calls the novel “the only entirely social art form,” a designation by which she indicates that it is a product of mass culture and encourages behavioral conformity.<sup>48</sup> As such, it seems as though one must agree Topf’s exclusion of the novel as an acceptable means of retrospectively narrating the words and deeds of an existential agent. However, if we look outside *The Human Condition* at the rest of Arendt’s canon, we find that she wrote many literary essays on novels by authors including Kafka, Dostoevsky, Kipling and Melville. Additionally, she employed novels extensively in a unique pedagogical format through which she sought to dissolve theoretical thinking in favor of being “confronted with direct experience.”<sup>49</sup> For example, in her seminar “Political Experience in the Twentieth Century,” which she held at the New School in 1968, Arendt assigned

everything from novels to drama to history, all arranged to explore the experience of an imaginary person, born in 1890, who might have come into public life, into politics, at the beginning of the twentieth century, in the First World War. She was making, as it were, a biography of an imaginary person, although we [her students] always thought that there was a very specific referent in her husband Heinrich Bluecher, who had had political experiences close to the ones she was re-creating in her imagination.<sup>50</sup>

Given her scholarly writings on novels and, more importantly, her use of novels in the creation of a retrospective life-story, I think a valid argument also can be made for the inclusion of such works. Additionally, it suggests the possibility that an existential agent may not have to be an actual person but can, instead, be a literary construct.

The suitability of short stories raise an interesting question, because Arendt does quote two of them in *The Human Condition*—"Converse at Night in Copenhagen" and "The Dreamers," both of which were written by Isak Dinesen.<sup>51</sup> Arendt also quotes Dinesen epigraphically at the start of her chapter on action: "All sorrows can be borne if you put them into a story or tell a story about them."<sup>52</sup> Almost a decade after the publication of *The Human Condition*, Arendt employed the same quote in an essay for *The New Yorker* titled "Truth and Politics," and stated that Dinesen "was one of the great storytellers of our time but also—and she was almost unique in this respect—knew what she was doing."<sup>53</sup> According to Lynn Wilkinson, what Dinesen knew how to do was two-fold. First, Dinesen was able to serve as the exception to the Arendtian rule. She was an existential actor who was able to retrospectively narrate her own life-story; most of us are familiar with the opening line of her autobiography, *Out of Africa*: "I had a farm in Africa, at the foot of the Ngong Hills."<sup>54</sup> Wilkinson posits that

What makes such storytelling possible is an experience of extreme loss, such as the catastrophe of Nazism and exile or Dinesen's loss of her farm and lover in the early 1930s. Such catastrophes, which for both women [Dinesen and Arendt] also entailed a kind of linguistic exile, make it possible to double back and consider the meaning of a life that followed the lines of a master-plot that resembles that of the Judeo-Christian tradition, with expulsion from the garden followed by various attempts at survival and even redemption.<sup>55</sup>

Second, Dinesen's stories "exhibit a lack of closure: they offer an experience which is fragmentary and dissonant, rather than a harmonious resolution at odds with the world of the storyteller and her audience."<sup>56</sup> In other words, her work is inherently open to an on-going reinterpretation of meaning even though it did not go through the process of reification and transfiguration described by Arendt. Thus, despite not meeting Arendt's procedural specifications, Dinesen's work still meets the three criteria of an Arendtian narrative.

Since she discusses the genre in positive terms multiple times within the text of *The Human Condition*, as well as utilizes excerpted dialogue in subsequent works, I do agree with Kateb and Disch that plays are satisfactory forms through which to document the words and deeds of an existential agent.<sup>57</sup> Similarly, Arendt consistently speaks highly of poetry, and especially of the writings of Randall Jarrell, Robert Lowell, Rainer Marie Rilke, Emily Dickinson, W.H. Auden and William Butler Yeats. Julia Kristeva asserts that these poets were not chosen by Arendt because of the “virtuosity of their expression, but rather the wisdom of their blazing stories.” Kristeva goes on to explain that neither the technical agility of some of them “nor the stylistic uniqueness of others is the focus of Arendt’s attention. She is more interested in “narrative themes”: in brief narrative sequences that condense or metaphorically express the eyewitness account of an historical experience.”<sup>58</sup> Conversely, scientific and philosophical works would not be acceptable objects of Arendtian reification because such writings aim at “clearing up the ambiguities, reducing the complexities, and explaining the phenomena by fitting them in a causal and consistent pattern.”<sup>59</sup> According to Vasterling, this is problematic because “[s]cientific and philosophical explanation and knowledge are necessary, in so far as they establish and explain facts, but they are not sufficient to make sense of the facts, which is what a good story does.”<sup>60</sup> Similarly, if historical writing becomes polemic, then it would be disregarded because it “relies on a ‘pre-articulated’ normative framework and functions not to initiate discussion but to settle it.”<sup>61</sup>

In summary, while it is clear that biographies, plays and poems would be satisfactory genres for spectators to employ in reifying the narratives enacted by existential agents, and that autobiographies, first-person testimonials, and works of philosophy and science would be unsatisfactory, some types of literature remain questionable. Specifically, depending on where you look in Arendt’s canon, a case could be made for both including and excluding the novel. Because of Arendt’s great admiration for the author’s talent, short stories written by Isak Dinesen seem as

though they would be acceptable forms of reification; what is undetermined is whether the same can be said for short stories penned by other writers. In *The Life of the Mind* Arendt states that she “did not conceive of the historian as a spectator whose job is to preserve the past and hand it on as a tradition.” As such, works of history judged by Arendt to be polemical would not be allowed; however, if an historian is able to take a more open and reflective stance, then Arendt would accept his work. In the end, if one remains unsure about whether a certain text would find favor, it is probably best to turn to these words from Arendt: “No philosophy, no analysis, no aphorism, be it ever so profound, can compare in intensity and richness of meaning with a properly narrated story.”<sup>62</sup>

### **Reified Work and Conditioning Object: The Two Functions of Arendtian Narratives**

Attempting to ferret out the criteria for an Arendtian narrative, and then using those standards to make decisions about which genres would be permissible for retrospectively narrating the words and deeds of an existential agent, is an important exegetical exercise. Additionally, it aids in illuminating the connection between two concepts central to *The Human Condition*: reification and conditioning. As previously discussed, Arendt argues that we are conditioned beings and that our conditioning begins as soon as we come into contact with the mundane use objects out of which the common world is largely constructed. Besides these objects, there is another category of artifacts crafted by the world’s workers that do not necessarily have use value but, arguably, do have an even more profound influence on our conditioning; they are media especially well-suited for preserving and transmitting the information that knits together a community’s phenomenological horizon, information about things like family structure, religious beliefs and traditions, gender roles, and other socio-cultural conventions and expectations. These items are monuments, artworks and most central to our study, various forms of narratives.<sup>63</sup>

In the previous chapter, I criticized Arendt for implying that such objects condition us to the accepted social customs, habits of discourse and patterns of behavior of our inherited tradition purely through the power of their physical existence; in support of my criticism, I cited research from the field of social cognition that demonstrated the necessity of intersubjective engagement between a child and a caregiver in order for much of that conditioning to occur.<sup>64</sup> In terms of narratives, this means that we must acknowledge that there is a substantial difference in the learning that occurs when a toddler finds a book on the floor and flips through the pages, than when the child is actively supported by her caregiver in an age-appropriate way. “For example, in acts of storytelling, such active support takes the form of children being prompted to answer certain questions and by having their attention directed at particular events.”<sup>65</sup> It is through this active, intersubjective engagement with narratives—and, specifically, with those kinds of stories Daniel D. Hutto terms “folk psychological narratives,” which are “distinguished by being about agents who act for reasons”—that children “learn the *norms* associated with social roles that pervade our everyday environments – shops, restaurants, homes and theatres.”<sup>66</sup> Therefore, not only are narratives themselves the framework for further, ongoing interaction, but also, when properly employed, these stories are “an important source of guidance about the boundaries between what is acceptable and what is not” and, as they are internalized, they “make much unreflective social navigation possible.”<sup>67</sup>

Although Arendt never makes the connection, it is reasonable to assume at least some of the narratives read to children will be works that were produced by *homo faber* in his role as the witnessing spectator. As such, those stories reify the words and deeds of an existential agent who has critically reflected on the prescribed boundaries, and then chosen to act in ways that explicate the gap between what is expected of her as a community member and “who” she is as an authentic, individuated self. As a result, the same folk psychological narratives that may further

entrench culturally confirmed normative standards, may concomitantly serve to document exemplary violations of those social mores. Through this process, certain violations of previously accepted norms become part of the “evaluative framework in the young. They also contribute to the development of a common sense of the obvious, the significant, and the ethical on which that understanding rests.”<sup>68</sup> In other words, what was once a violation of established custom, discourse and behavior now becomes a model for that which is considered right, normal and acceptable. As new norms take hold, events that occurred previously are transfigured, i.e., reevaluated and reinterpreted in light of present circumstances.

In short, Arendt presents narratives, as well as artworks, monuments and the like, in two completely different ways. In one presentation, these artifacts of work condition us to socio-cultural norms of our inherited tradition. In the second presentation, they are the media that document violations of those same normative structures. In Arendt’s construction, these are conceptual tracks that seemingly run parallel to each other without ever meeting. When we do allow them to intersect—by acknowledging that at least some conditioning narratives would have to have been produced as part of the process of remembrance and reification—then we find that *The Human Condition* contains an explicitly stated theory concerning the way in which we are conditioned to the accepted social customs, habits of discourse and patterns of behavior of our inherited tradition. Additionally, there arises an implicit theory concerning the means by which shifts in those same normative standards are facilitated by paintings, sculptures, poems, plays, historiographies, and biographies which communicate the significance of the originative event and the state of affairs which comes about as a result. In order to both illustrate, and expand upon, the theoretical work presented up to this point, I am now going to turn the story of Ruby Bridges and her integration of the William Frantz Elementary School.

## CHAPTER 7

### RUBY

In the previous chapter, I employed scholarship on narrative and communicative competency in order to further delineate and describe two different types of narratives presented within the text of *The Human Condition*. The first was the enacted narrative; the second was the retrospective account that serves to reify those words and deeds. I then advanced my argument concerning which genres would be permissible to use for recounting an enacted narrative. Finally, I made explicit a connection between those retrospective works and the artifactual objects that, according to Arendt, condition us to the accepted social customs, habits of discourse and patterns of behavior of our inherited tradition. In this chapter, I will present a detailed illustration intended to clarify these arguments and theories. I will focus on the historical events surrounding Ruby Bridges' integration of the William Frantz Elementary School in New Orleans, Louisiana and reifications of those events by John Steinbeck, Norman Rockwell and Robert Coles. Before doing so, however, I will situate my study as a counter-example to a similar one offered by Arendt.

#### **Arendt's "Reflections on Little Rock"**

Even when she was working on a book, Arendt tended to compose the text in shorter, essay-like sections.<sup>1</sup> As is evident in *The Human Condition*, these sections were typically related to each other via some sort of conceptual trinity: "work, labor, and action; the private, the social, and the political; judging, thinking, and willing; all variations on the temporal categories of past, present, and future."<sup>2</sup> Arendt could, however, be neglectful of smoothly joining together the component parts in such a way that the exact nature of the relationship between these triadic concepts were made clear in the finished product. This ambiguity would be compounded in subsequent works where Arendt would draw on complex schema she had work out

previously without reiterating key points. “Her impatience,” Young-Bruehl states succinctly, “paved the way for many misunderstandings.”<sup>3</sup>

Young-Bruehl was referring to “The Crisis in Education” and “Reflections on Little Rock,” two essays that were published shortly after *The Human Condition* and that drew heavily on that text. Published in 1961, “The Crisis in Education” contained Arendt’s argument for the importance of allowing the classroom to be a protected space where children may continue to learn the accepted socio-cultural norms of their community. This enculturation ensures both the sustainment of their inherited tradition and the possibility of its continued revitalization when something new and unprecedented is brought into the world through the words and deeds of an existential agent.<sup>4</sup> Arendt summarized this argument in the final paragraph of the text by employing language that seems lifted straight from the pages of *The Human Condition*.

What concerns us all . . . [is] our attitude towards the fact of natality: the fact that we have all come into the world by being born and that this world is constantly renewed through birth. Education is the point at which we decide whether we love the world enough to assume responsibility for it. . . . And education, too, is where we decide whether we love our children enough not to expel them from our world and leave them to their own devices, nor to strike from their hands their chance of undertaking something new, something unforeseen by us, but to prepare them in advance for the task of renewing a common world.<sup>5</sup>

The argument Arendt made in “The Crisis in Education” was an attempt to illuminate the theoretical underpinning of a previously published essay that Arendt had been commissioned to write by *Commentary* magazine after the passage of the 1957 Civil Rights Act, a piece of legislation that guaranteed all Americans the right to vote. However, as Arendt was drafting the essay for *Commentary*, her attention was captured by events in Little Rock, Arkansas. There, Governor Orval Faubus was

taking actions that violated *Brown v. Board of Education*, a ruling handed down in 1954 by the Supreme Court of the United States that affirmed the unconstitutionality of separate public schools for African-American and white students. Governor Faubus had called out his state's National Guard to block nine African-American students from attending Little Rock Central High School. In response, President Dwight D. Eisenhower federalized Faubus's National Guard, as well as sent 1,200 members of the Army's 101st Airborne Division to Arkansas to escort the nine students through the massive mob of enraged, anti-integration protesters.

By the time Arendt completed the commissioned essay, it addressed the 1957 Civil Rights Act only secondarily and focused instead on the weighty responsibility that she perceived as having been placed unfairly on the young people of Little Rock, a responsibility to work out the problems associated with racial prejudice "which adults for generations have confessed themselves unable to solve."<sup>6</sup> In order to emphasize her concerns, Arendt asked rhetorically: "Have we now come to the point where it is the children who are being asked to change or improve the world? And do we intend to have our political battles fought out in the school yards?"<sup>7</sup> The editors at *Commentary* were shocked and angered by the content of the essay, which Arendt titled "Reflections on Little Rock." As a result, it was not published until 1959 when it ran in the aptly titled *Dissent* magazine. Its publication caused Arendt to be sharply criticized for what she had written, including her assertion that "enforced integration is no better than enforced segregation."<sup>8</sup>

While it is difficult at a distance of more than 50 years to find any agreement with the idea that public schools should not be desegregated, I can respect Arendt's commitment to the principle that children, and the institutions responsible for educating them, should not be instrumentalized for political ends.<sup>9</sup> However, I take issue with her failure to acknowledge that youngsters who are thrust into such circumstances can, and do, become heroes in the most Arendtian sense of that word.<sup>10</sup>

In “Reflections on Little Rock” Arendt describes with obvious dismay a newspaper photograph of “a Negro girl accompanied by a white friend of her father, walking away from school, persecuted and followed into bodily proximity by a jeering and grimacing mob of youngsters.”<sup>11</sup> Arendt concluded that the girl in the picture “obviously, was asked to be a hero—that is, something neither her absent father nor the equally absent representatives of the NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People] felt called upon to be.”<sup>12</sup> As previously discussed, in Arendt’s nomenclature, a hero is a person who possesses “a willingness to act and speak at all, to insert one’s self into the world and begin a story of one’s own.”<sup>13</sup> In other words, he or she is an existential agent. In Arendt’s description of the newspaper photograph, it is clear that while the girl was “asked to be a hero” Arendt does not see her as actually embodying that role. Instead, she is a minor character in much larger story and, as a result, the image is not interpreted as meaningfully memorializing of the actions she had taken or of the words she had spoken. The legacy that endures as a result of that picture is, according to Arendt, something else entirely: “It will be hard for the white youngsters, or at least those among them who outgrow their present brutality, to live down this photograph which exposes so mercilessly their juvenile delinquency.”<sup>14</sup> As a counterpoint to Arendt’s presentation of the nameless high school student whose photograph was taken that historic day at Little Rock Central High School, I am now going to turn to the story of Ruby Bridges.

### **Observations on New Orleans**

Ruby Nell Bridges was born on 8 September 1954. The fact of her biological natality is this: she was delivered by her cousin in a small cabin on the farm where her mother, father and paternal grandparents were sharecroppers. After her birth, her parents labored on the farm until 1957, when the threat of joblessness resulting from the shrinking rural economy caused the young couple to move to New Orleans, Louisiana. Ruby’s father, Abon, found work as a janitor and as an auto mechanic.

During the day, Ruby's mother, Lucille, tended to her growing brood of children and in the evenings she made money working as a cleaning lady. Ruby helped keep an eye on her younger siblings and also attended kindergarten.<sup>15</sup>

Despite the fact that the Supreme Court ruling four years earlier in the case of *Brown v. Board of Education* affirmed the unconstitutionality of separate public schools for African-American and white students, and that the events at Little Rock Central High School had already transpired, schools in Louisiana were still racially segregated. In an attempt to continue to slow the integration process, government officials in Louisiana administered an exam to some African-American children. If a child passed the test, he or she would qualify for admission to one of the all-white schools. Since the material included on the test was far above their current education level, it was expected that no child would be successful in his or her attempt. Six young girls did, however, make passing grades.<sup>16</sup> Two of the girls decided to remain in their segregated schools. A Federal judge assigned three others to begin classes the next fall at McDonogh No. 19 Elementary School; Ruby was the lone African-American student assigned to attend the William Frantz Elementary School.

With an expectation that the integration of the school would foster a violent reaction, and a lack of support for the measure from the Governor, Mayor and many others in positions of authority who were embarrassed that the six young girls had been able to pass the rigged exam, Deputy U.S. Marshals were brought to New Orleans to accompany the first-graders to school. On the morning of 14 November 1960, dressed in a starched, white dress with a large bow in her hair, Ruby was accompanied by her mother and four of those Marshals as they navigated a large crowd that taunted the little girl with racial slurs, derogatory songs popular in the South during the American Civil War, a cross with the word "segregation" scrawled in red paint and a small coffin with a black baby-doll inside. Their actions were overtly encouraged by people such as Leander Perez, the district attorney for nearby Plaquemines and St. Bernard Parishes, who had proclaimed at a recent

segregationist rally: “Don’t wait for your daughter to be raped by these Congolese. Don’t wait until the burr-heads are forced into your schools. Do something about it now.”<sup>17</sup>

Ruby may not have understood specifically that some people viewed African-Americans as rapist and “burr-heads” and others, like one protester who continually threatened to poison the little girl, believed them to be filthy and slop-eating.<sup>18</sup> However, she was most certainly conditioned to the broader, socio-cultural view that African-Americans should be treated as though they were inferior to their white counterparts. One woman explained how she prepared her granddaughter for such treatment.

They can scream at our Sally, but she knows why, and she’s not surprised. She knows that even when they stop screaming, she’ll have whispers, and after them the stares. It’ll be with her for life. . . . We tell our children that, so by the time they have children, they’ll know how to prepare them. . . . It takes a lot of preparing before you can let a child loose in the white world.<sup>19</sup>

Ruby expressed her understanding of these normative expectations in drawings from the period: white people were rendered in precise detail—well proportioned, with the correct number of toes and fingers, and faces that often depicted bright and happy smiles. Conversely, African-Americans were always physically smaller than Caucasians. They were often depicted as missing appendages or lacking facial features; most notably, Ruby frequently rendered them mute by excluding their mouths or drawing only a thin line in its place. When they had ears, they were cartoonishly large.<sup>20</sup>

Despite what she had been taught to believe about herself and about other African-Americans, renowned child psychiatrist and Pulitzer Prize-winning author, Robert Coles, stated that Ruby and others in the American civil rights movement who proceeded her prevailed

by summoning every bit of their humanity in the face of every effort made to deny any of it to them. In so doing they have become more than they were, more than they themselves thought they were, and perhaps more than anyone watching them can quite put to word: bearers and makers of tradition; children who in a moment—call it existential, call it historical, call it psychological—took what they had from the past, in their minds, out of their homes and made all those possessions something else: a change in the world, and in themselves, too.<sup>21</sup>

I agree with Coles's assessment that Ruby's integration of William Frantz on that day in November did bring a change to the world. However, I disagree that it also heralded the kind of existential epiphany he described because, in her innocence, Ruby mistook the jeering mob for Madi Gras revelers. As such, Ruby did not yet realize that she was being called upon to become a bearer and maker of tradition. However, as Ruby continued to face the same crowd every morning and every afternoon, her understanding of the situation grew and she became cognizant that her actions were exposing a gap between the social roles that African-Americans were expected to embody and who she, and other members of her community were, as individuals.

At first, Ruby wanted to subjugate any differences between the socio-cultural expectations and her lived experience, but she quickly came to a place where she was confident explicating the space between the two. At age eight, Ruby reflected on this change.

Maybe because of all the trouble going to school at the beginning I learned more about my people. Maybe I would have anyway; because when you get older you see yourself and white kids; and you find out the difference. You try to forget it, and say there is none; and if there is you won't say what it be. Then you say it's my own people, and so I can be proud of them instead of ashamed.<sup>22</sup>

With her growing pride came an even more profound realization, one that transcended race altogether: “The greatest lesson I learned that year . . . was the lesson Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., tried to teach us all. Never judge people by the color of their skin. God makes each of us unique in ways that go much deeper.”<sup>23</sup> The recognition of herself as being not simply different than who she was socio-culturally expected and conditioned to be, but as a distinct and wholly unique individual brought to fruition the kind of existential change in Ruby that Coles referenced and, in Arendtian terms, heralded her rebirth into a fully human life.

Like any existential rebirth, Ruby’s undertaking of a second natality demonstrated her extraordinary courage. As discussed in chapter 3, courage is necessary for several reasons; one of those reasons is that “who” we are—the authentic, individuated self—sits in contradistinction to what is expected of us as a community member, be that psychologically, theologically, sexually, legally, aesthetically, economically or so on. Choosing to eschew some aspect of those standards makes the actor, at least to some degree, an outsider. No one can fully anticipate ahead of time what response such outsider status may provoke from those who remain within the ascribed societal boundaries, although the crowds waiting outside of school for Ruby on that first day certainly offered a strong indication. Therefore, it was probably not a surprise when the white owners of the neighborhood grocery store barred Ruby’s family from shopping in their market or when Abon lost his job and her paternal grandparents were displaced after the “owner of the land they’d sharecropped for 25 years said everyone knew it was their granddaughter causing trouble in New Orleans, and asked them to move.”<sup>24</sup> At the same time that the family was enduring these negative responses, Ruby noted that “[p]eople from around the country who’d heard about me on the news sent letters and donations. A neighbor gave my dad a job painting houses. Other folks baby-sat for us, watched our house to keep away troublemakers, even walked behind the marshal’s car on my way to school.”<sup>25</sup>

While it was Ruby's assessment that her family could not have made it through such a difficult time without the kindness shown by these many strangers, neighbors and friends, Ruby received a very special kind of support from Barbara Henry. Mrs. Henry was Ruby's first-grade teacher. The position at William Frantz was her first job in New Orleans and, having recently moved to the city with her husband, she was excited for the opportunity. However, "her enthusiasm turned to stunned anxiety as she found herself facing the scenes now so well documented."<sup>26</sup> While the crowds outside of the school required Mrs. Henry to have a police escort between her car and the building, she had no such protection once she was inside. There, the school's principal was openly prejudiced and adversarial, and the other teachers ignored her except for the times they made malicious comments about her willingness to teach an African-American child.<sup>27</sup> Despite all of these difficulties, Mrs. Henry remained committed to her new job, and her commitment did not waiver even after she learned that the parents of the white children had decided to boycott the school and that Ruby was going to be her only student.

Together, Mrs. Henry and Ruby created their own space of appearance in the classroom they shared; we know it was such a space because it fulfilled Arendt's mandate that those who are within it reveal themselves "not merely like other living or inanimate things but make their appearance explicitly."<sup>28</sup> In this case, Ruby revealed herself to Mrs. Henry as being smart, resilient, brave and sensitive. "She was a petite pioneer," said Mrs. Henry. "How could you not fall in love with a child like her?"<sup>29</sup> At first, Ruby could not see Mrs. Henry for who she was explicitly. All she could see was that her teacher was young and white; having not previously spent time with any white people, Mrs. Henry made Ruby nervous. However, as they worked on each day's lessons, Ruby began to recognize that her teacher was dedicated, loving, kind, considerate and worthy of admiration. Over time, Ruby grew so attached to her that she began to imitate Mrs. Henry's mannerisms, including the Boston accent that soon overpowered Ruby's Southern drawl.<sup>30</sup>

Like all existential actors within the space of appearance, Ruby and Mrs. Henry relied on illocutionary acts like promising and forgiving.<sup>31</sup> Making promises binds existential agents to certain courses of actions; in other words, “promising looks forward as it seeks to establish islands of security in an otherwise uncertain and unpredictable future.”<sup>32</sup> Forgiveness is backwards-looking, and offers release from the unforeseeable and unintended outcomes of action. One of the most important promises made between Ruby and Mrs. Henry was one that was never spoken. Specifically, in Ruby’s entire first year at William Frantz, neither she nor Mrs. Henry missed a single day of school. In the classroom, they sat side-by-side or worked together at the blackboard. Since it wasn’t safe for Ruby to go to the cafeteria or the playground, they ate lunch together at their desks and then pushed those desks aside so that they could stretch or do jumping-jacks. In short, through their actions, they each promised the other that no matter what had to be endured, it would not be endured alone. Maybe because of the unique quality of their relationship, it does not seem as though Ruby and Mrs. Henry needed to offer each other forgiveness. However, as Ruby recounts, forgiveness was central to the story:

From her window, Mrs. Henry always watched me walk into school. One morning when I got to our classroom, she said she’d been surprised to see me talk to the mob. “I saw your lips moving,” she said, “but I couldn’t make out what you were saying to those people.”

“I wasn’t talking to them,” I told her. “I was praying for them.” Usually I prayed in the car on the way to school, but that day I’d forgotten until I was in the crowd. Please be with me, I’d asked God, and be with those people too.

Forgive them because they don’t know what they’re doing.<sup>33</sup>

By the start of the spring term, a few first graders had returned to William Frantz, and Mrs. Henry insisted that they have class with Ruby. The principal refused the request until Mrs. Henry suggested that they call the superintendent of schools to discuss the matter. At that point, the principal relented and allowed the other children

to come to Ruby's classroom for part of the day.<sup>34</sup> These visits continued until June when Ruby said good-bye to Mrs. Henry for the summer. When Ruby returned to William Frantz the next fall for second grade, she found herself in a fully integrated class. The protesters were gone, but so was Mrs. Henry. Her unexpected absence devastated Ruby, and no one was willing to ease the little girl's distress by telling Ruby where she had gone nor, for that matter, acknowledging what had occurred the previous year: "Years later I found out she [Mrs. Henry] hadn't been invited to return to William Frantz, and she and her husband had moved back to Boston. It was almost as if that first year of school integration had never happened. No one talked about it. Everyone seemed to have put that difficult time behind them."<sup>35</sup>

While it was true that Ruby had indeed lost Mrs. Henry, and that many other people were undoubtedly trying to live down the merciless actions they had taken the previous year, what Ruby did not yet realize was that her words and deeds had not been forgotten. To the contrary, they had been reified in three important works: John Steinbeck's 1962 book *Travels with Charley: In Search of America*; Norman Rockwell's 1963 painting "The Problem We All Live With;" and Robert Cole's 1967 study *Children of Crisis: A Study of Courage and Fear*.

### **Steinbeck and the Cheerleaders**

In the book *Travels with Charley: In Search of America*, Pulitzer Prize-winning author John Steinbeck recounted the approximately 10,000 mile road trip he took with his poodle in a customized camper he named after Don Quixote's horse, Rocinante. The final leg of Steinbeck's journey brought him to a region of the country he dreaded visiting, seeing it as a place filled with pain, confusion, bewilderment and fear: the South. Steinbeck believed that the problems endemic to the South were rooted in the racial inequality that was being newly inflamed by the issue of public schools desegregation. As it turned out, Steinbeck would arrive in New Orleans, Louisiana in

time to witness a pivotal moment in the desegregation process: Ruby's first day at the William Frantz Elementary School.

What caught Steinbeck's attention that morning at William Frantz was not, however, the little girl dressed in white nor the Deputy U.S. Marshals who accompanied her and her mother. Instead, his sights turned towards another faction, "a group of stout middle-aged women who, by some curious definition of the word 'mother,' gathered every day to scream invectives at children."<sup>36</sup> The women Steinbeck described were the Cheerleaders who, beginning on that first morning in November, took turns unleashing their denigrating monologues filed with venom and bile, and then "simpered in happy, almost innocent triumph when they were applauded."<sup>37</sup> When the clapping of their appreciative fans was not sufficient, the women rushed home to see their performance broadcast on television and brought newspaper clippings to pass around, "reading them aloud with little squeals of delight."<sup>38</sup>

Although what he witnessed in New Orleans raised a "weary, hopeless nausea" in Steinbeck, he still felt a responsibility to recount the antics of the Cheerleaders.<sup>39</sup> His purpose in doing so was not, however, to communicate any greater historical or phenomenological meaning concerning their actual words or deeds. After all, Steinbeck's description of the Cheerleaders makes it clear that these women were not existential agents but, instead, "crazy actors playing to a crazy audience."

Anyone who has been near the theater would know that these speeches were not spontaneous. They were tried and memorized and carefully rehearsed. This was theater. I watched the intent faces of the listening crowd and they were the faces of an audience. When there was applause, it was for a performer.<sup>40</sup>

As such, penning descriptions of the Cheerleaders' performance was not an act of reification in the Arendtian sense of the word. Instead, when Steinbeck wrote about

the Cheerleaders, it was in order to use them as illustrative examples of the normative standards that were accepted and, most literally applauded, in New Orleans.

Steinbeck had come to realize that the standards embodied by the Cheerleaders had dire consequences beyond the continued receipt of a substandard education by minority children in segregated schools. Steinbeck illustrated these consequences in passages concerning the Coopers, the only African-American family who lived in Salinas, California, where he grew up.<sup>41</sup> One of the Cooper's three sons was in Steinbeck's class in school, while the others were a year ahead and a year behind him, respectively. The oldest of the boys was a star athlete who excelled at pole-vaulting. The middle son was academically gifted and topped the class in mathematics and Latin. The youngest boy had a talent for music, composing original pieces at an early age.<sup>42</sup> Beyond these specific talents, Steinbeck identified something more basic.

I realize now that there was something else about the Coopers that set them apart from other Negroes I have seen and met since. Because they were not hurt or insulted, they were not defensive or combative. Because their dignity was intact, they had no need to be overbearing, and because the Cooper boys had never heard that they were inferior, their minds could grow to their true limits.<sup>43</sup>

Steinbeck went on to immediately offer this contrast: "I have seen plenty since and have felt the shattering waves of violence and despair and confusion. I have seen Negro children who really cannot learn, particularly those who in their gelatin plate of babyness have been told they were inferior."<sup>44</sup>

Steinbeck's story about the Cooper boys gives us insight into that which he was seeking to reify, seeking to make sense of and to preserve, and why it was important to do so. In the end, Steinbeck was not interested in the courage demonstrated by little Ruby Bridges as she endured the assault leveled day after day

by the Cheerleaders.<sup>45</sup> Nor was he engaged by the bestial, barnyard noises of those women. Instead, it was the underlying normative standards of which they were embodied exemplars—standards, which if not challenged, retard the potential of an entire subset of the population. Thus, Steinbeck was meaningfully expanding on Arendt's definition of remembrance and reification. He did so not by seeking to understand what it meant that Ruby Bridges integrated the William Frantz Elementary School, but what it would have meant if she hadn't, if the moral limitations of a tradition—those which Alasdair MacIntyre names as injustice, cowardice, mob rule, ignorance and the like—were left unchallenged and the Cheerleaders were, therefore, allowed to continue being the bearers and makers of tradition.

### **Rockwell Gets Real**

*Travels with Charlie* was on the *New York Times* Best Seller list for a year, and occupied the top spot for a nonfiction work during the week of 21 October 1962. Inspired by what he read in that travelogue, Norman Rockwell painted "The Problem We All Live With," which depicted Ruby in her white dress and bow, carrying her school supplies.<sup>46</sup> She is shown walking conspicuously out-of-step between two rows of faceless, Deputy U.S. Marshals; her own face is placid. On the wall behind her is evidence of the outrage her actions are causing: splattered fruit and graffiti reading "Nigger" and "KKK." The painting was the first of its kind by the artist, who was best known for his idyllic renderings of small-town America that graced 322 covers of *The Saturday Evening Post* between 1916 and 1963. At the age of 70 and free from the constraints of the *Post's* editorial policies, which disallowed the depiction of minorities in anything other than service industry positions, Rockwell began exploring the darker aspects of life in America, thus offering his own brand of social commentary on the issues of civil rights, poverty and religious intolerance.

When “The Problem We All Live With” appeared in the 14 January 1964 issue of *Look* magazine, Rockwell’s rendering of the events in New Orleans invited much response of its own. Letters poured into *Look*; one missive representative of those received from writers opposed to desegregation called Rockwell “a traitor to the white race, and a traitor to the illustrious white founders of this country.”<sup>47</sup> Conversely, another letter requested a reproduction of the painting for Louis L. Redding, an African-American who had been a member of the NAACP legal team that had argued the *Brown v. Board of Education* case in front of the Supreme Court.<sup>48</sup> The painting was also shown in a Soviet newspaper article which trumpeted the headline, “Behind the Free World’s Façade: Democracy, American Style” and was followed by an article that, by today’s standards, reads as if it is satire: “The [American] papers report that even the youngest students attending these [integrated] schools have already learned to understand and spell the words most important for them: ‘boycott’ and ‘freedom.’”<sup>49</sup> The range of responses did not discourage Rockwell from his new interest in civil rights. His 1965 work *Murder in Mississippi (Southern Justice)* illustrated the murder of civil rights workers in Mississippi. In 1967’s *New Kids in the Neighborhood*, he depicted the next frontier of desegregation: the suburbs.<sup>50</sup>

The same year Rockwell produced *New Kids in the Neighborhood*, he made it clear in a letter that he wrote to fellow artist and friend, Joe Mugnaini, that the change in his work was about more than simply finding a new audience in *Look* magazine, which had continued to print Rockwell’s more socially conscious images. Instead, he drew a distinction between works representative of that which was normatively accepted and those which exemplified unique individuals differentiating themselves from those standards: “As I stated, I am interested in the human predicament. When I was doing the *Saturday Evening Post* covers it was from the *general human* interest viewpoint, but now I seem to be more excited and interested in the current problems in America and the world today. I don’t know the answer, but I am trying.” Rockwell went on to express his methodology as such: “I guess that my philosophical

approach to life is that I am fascinated with the *human individual* and his complicated environment, and I am trying to say something to help.”<sup>51</sup>

Just as Steinbeck meaningfully expanded Arendt’s definition of remembrance and reification through his choice to communicate something important about the currently accepted normative standards of the community, instead of reifying Ruby’s actual words and deeds, Rockwell’s work helps us to understand Arendt’s concept of transfiguration. As discussed in the previous chapter, transfiguration allows a reified object to become the vehicle through which the story of an existential agent can be reenacted for “a ‘fresh audience’ that will draw its conclusions based on present concerns.”<sup>52</sup> In this case, the reified object was Steinbeck’s book *Travels with Charlie*, as well as the news reports that ran in the papers and on televisions. Out of those “dead letters” the “living spirit” of Ruby’s words and deeds were resurrected in such a manner that Rockwell could become a spectator, witnessing the events in New Orleans even though he was not physically present at the point when and where they originally occurred. What Rockwell then chose to reify was the actions of the little girl who, in keeping with journalistic policies adopted to protect her, Steinbeck never even identified by name.<sup>53</sup>

The result of this transfiguration, of this reenactment, was that multiple years after the actual event, and working in a studio located 1,500 miles away from New Orleans, Rockwell crafted the iconic image of Ruby’s first day at William Frantz Elementary School. In doing so, he serves to remind us that while we do privilege eyewitness accounts in circumstances such as testimony in court hearings, we have a simultaneous tradition of accepting interpretations of actions and events from people who were not physically present at the moment they originally occurred. We see this quite obviously in religious iconography. After all, we would not discount the socio-historical and phenomenological power of Leonardo da Vinci’s painting *The Last Supper* simply because da Vinci did not actually break bread with Jesus and the apostles. We recognize a similar kind of power in Rockwell’s reification of Ruby.

## Robert and Ruby

Despite the fact that both Steinbeck and Rockwell's work received much attention, Ruby's entrance into the public realm had not, as her mother hoped, turned out to be a catalyst for ongoing opportunity in the young girl's life. Instead, the desire to forget the pain and strife that had surrounded desegregation in New Orleans brought with it a concomitant amnesia concerning the central role Ruby had played in the event. So, with no recognition and no fanfare, Ruby completed her schooling at William Frantz and then attended an integrated high school. After graduation, Ruby became a travel agent, got married and had four sons. In 1993, Ruby returned to William Frantz, but she was not there to give a speech or accept an award. Ruby was there to volunteer. Her brother had been murdered in a drug-related shooting; his young daughters attended William Frantz and Ruby wanted to be available to them as they struggled to recover from their father's death.<sup>54</sup>

What Ruby discovered when she returned to her old school was that it had entered a new era of segregation. William Frantz had become a substandard, underfunded, inner-city school attended almost exclusively by poor, African-American children from the local housing projects. Distressed by what she saw, Ruby started The Ruby Bridges Foundation with the hope of securing resources to help the students. Modest gains were made through the Foundation, but the big opportunities Ruby and her mother had long hoped for did not begin to materialize until 1995. That's when Robert Coles published the picture book *The Story of Ruby Bridges* and reporters began, for the first time in more than 30 years, to make inquiries into what happened to the little girl who'd been accompanied to first grade by U.S. Marshals. As Ruby stated, "No one expected to find me back at my old school."<sup>55</sup>

*The Story of Ruby Bridges* did not mark the first time Coles had written about Ruby. His 1967 book *Children of Crisis: A Study of Courage and Fear* detailed his regular visits with Ruby and the three other girls who were sent to McDonogh No. 19 Elementary School. Coles began meeting with each of them after he passed William

Frantz one morning in 1960 on his way to a medical conference from Keesler Air Force base, where he was the captain in charge of a neuropsychiatric unit.

Witnessing the histrionics of the mob outside of the school, Coles decided to contact the NAACP to offer assistance; according to Ruby, “Dr. Coles felt that it would be easier for me to endure the stress if I had someone to talk to outside of my family.”<sup>56</sup>

During the time that Coles was working with Ruby, he was studying material written by psychoanalysts including Harold Searles, Frieda Fromm-Reichmann and Erik Erikson.<sup>57</sup> However, Coles was also deeply attracted to the writing of Walker Percy who, as both an author and a physician, drew from works by Kierkegaard, Heidegger and William James in order to incorporate issues central to existentialism, phenomenology and philosophy of language into his work.<sup>58</sup> Coles was especially interested in the descriptions he found in Percy’s novels concerning “moments when we step out of the ordinary round of experience, moments he [Percy] calls ‘rotations,’ in order to gain new perspectives and regain authentic selfhood.”<sup>59</sup>

*Children of Crisis* bears the mark of these various influences. It is a rigorous study grounded in “direct, sustained observation of individual human beings living in a significant and critical period of history.”<sup>60</sup> However, it also reflects Coles’s growing realization concerning the availability of such moments of existential insight to all people regardless of their economic standing, education level and, in Ruby’s case, age; as such, they offer “powerful proof that no systematic explanation of behavior will suffice, no cultural or psychological or biological theory can fully account for such moments of illumination.”<sup>61</sup> In the end, it was this realization that forced Coles to change his entire frame of reference from one that was heavily influenced by Freud to one that seems to echo insights from *The Human Condition*, including the relationship between speech, action and agency, as well as the need for both courage and forgiveness. Patrick J. Ryan explains this shift as follows:

Coles described children as “moral protagonists and antagonists.” One of his most powerful protagonists was Ruby Bridges, who unflinchingly faced angry

mobs of racist whites to become the first African-American child to attend a white school in Louisiana. Coles understood Ruby's courage through the Freudian concept of "ego-ideal," though he no longer interpreted it as a prediscursive, unconscious structure of the mind, nor Ruby as merely the product of her condition. For Coles, the ego-ideal derived from the human agency required to practice and speak. Ruby knowingly gave "moral life" to existing bodies of thought—the Christian meanings of forgiveness, humility, and courage. She emerges as a hero of her own life, and a political actor within a movement that used the possibilities of childhood to transform the racial hierarchy of a nation.<sup>62</sup>

Coles also went beyond what is offered in *The Human Condition* by making it evident that Ruby's heroic actions were embodied expressions which, counter to claims made by Arendt, were effectively and affectively available to him as an observer. These bodily expressions were not, however, the ones you might expect to see from a child in Ruby's position, such as clinging to the adults who cared for and protected her or being haunted by nightmares. Instead, day after day, Ruby "marched rather firmly and stolidly" right into the school building; she rarely looked at the protesters except for the "slightest of hurried, backward glances."<sup>63</sup> Furthermore, "Ruby slept well, studied well at school, [and] played regularly after school."<sup>64</sup> Nonetheless, Ruby did manifest her ordeal through one set of irrepressible physical expressions.

Although she always told Dr. Coles that her appetite remained good, in truth, Ruby's intake decreased greatly. She avoided all foods—even those she had previously favored—unless they were processed and prepackaged. She refused to share her portion of any acceptable items, yet she would not consume them if she was alone.<sup>65</sup> These changes engaged Coles in a way which caused him pay closer attention to the specifics of Ruby's situation in order to better understand that which he was witnessing. In doing so, Coles came to understand that Ruby's occasional

glances back into the crowd of protesters were more than just an unreflective reaction to the commotion outside the school. Instead, they were “specifically directed and significant.”<sup>66</sup> Ruby was looking for the woman who routinely and loudly declared her intention to murder the little girl by choking her or by poisoning her food, the latter clearly being a threat which, as Ruby’s actions made clear, she was unable to dismiss.<sup>67</sup> Years later, however, Ruby attempted to do just that, recounting the same episode as follow:

At home, there was a period of time when I had trouble eating, too. All I wanted were potato chips and sodas. My parents told Dr. Coles about it, and he tried to talk to me. Then he remembered the woman in the crowd outside school each morning who said she was going to poison me. Dr. Coles thought I was afraid the woman would really do it. I’m not sure if I was afraid of that or not. Perhaps I was just a picky eater.”<sup>68</sup> (48-49)

In this case, it is hard to believe that Ruby suddenly, and for no reason, became so discriminating about what she would consume, especially when she adds that, once the school year was over and she no longer faced the protesters, her appetite returned to normal. As such, we are left with a case where the immediate observations and subsequent interpretation of an existential agent’s words and deeds by an observer are likely more precise than the recollection offered by that agent forty-five years after the original event.

After publishing *Children of Crisis: A Study of Courage and Fear*, Coles wrote four more volumes documenting how children and their families cope with periods of profound change. In 1973, volumes 2 and 3 were awarded the Pulitzer Prize for General Non-Fiction along with *Fire in the Lake: The Vietnamese and the Americans in Vietnam* by Frances FitzGerald. Coles then went on to develop his theories in more than fifty additional books and one thousand articles; those texts that reference Ruby can be found throughout his extensive canon and include *The Moral Life of Children*, *The Political Life of Children*, *The Spiritual Life of Children*, *The Call of*

*Service: A Witness to Idealism, Lives of Moral Leadership, Handing One Another Along: Literature and Social Reflection* and *Lives We Carry with Us: Profiles of Moral Courage*.<sup>69</sup> However, in 1995, Coles reified Ruby's words and deeds in a very different media than he had previously employed: *The Story of Ruby Bridges*, a picture book intended for children between the ages of five and nine.<sup>70</sup> With that work, Coles demonstrated the rightness of an argument he made in his book *The Moral Intelligence of Children*, an argument that again is very much in accord with Arendt: "Stories from real life as well as stories from movies, from literature, can stir and provoke the moral imagination. Didactic and theoretical arguments don't work well; narratives, images, observed behavior all do."<sup>71</sup>

In *The Call of Stories*, Coles substantiated his argument concerning the unique ability of narratives to aid in shaping our evaluative framework, and foreshadowed insights central to the Narrative Practice Hypothesis discussed in the previous chapter. Specifically, Coles elucidated how reading and responding to a character in a story allows us to inhabit his expectations, energy and emotions, as well as recognize and consider what occurs when that inner life is translated externally into action. Through this process, aspects of the character become integrated into our cognitive process, and influences how we interpret information, solve problems, control our behavior and make sense of the behavior of others. In other words, Coles explains, characters in stories "don't only occupy lives inside of books, but live in countless minds."<sup>72</sup> He continues this line of thought by stating that

The whole point of stories is not "solutions" or "resolutions" but the broadening and even a heightening of our struggles—with new protagonists and antagonist introduced, with new concerns or apprehension or hope, as one's mental life accommodates itself to a series of arrivals: guests who have a way of staying, but necessarily of staying out."<sup>73</sup>

In summation, Coles recounted the words of one of his students, who said that stories "become my images and sounds, part of me. You don't do that with theories.

You don't do that with a system of ideas. You do it with a story, because in a story—oh, like it says in the Bible, *the word becomes flesh*.”<sup>74</sup>

Much as Steinbeck's work had allowed the events at William Frantz to be reenacted for Norman Rockwell, Coles's book seemed to do the same thing for a whole new generation of spectators. This time, however, the amount and variety of interpretive works created in response far exceeded anything produced previously. In 1998, The Wonderful World of Disney debuted the made-for-television movie *Ruby Bridges: A Real American Hero*. Ruby recounted her own story in several media, including *Through My Eyes*, published in 1999 and *Ruby Bridges Goes to School: My True Story*, published in 2009. Additionally, Lori McKenna's 2000 album *Paper, Wings & Halo* featured the tribute song “Ruby's Shoes.” In 2006, the Alameda Unified School District in California opened the Ruby Bridges Elementary School. The Children's Museum of Indianapolis, one of the largest children's museums in the world, created a permanent exhibit in 2007 entitled “The Power of Children: Making a Difference.” The exhibit “takes visitors on a journey through the lives of three children who faced profound trials and emerged as heroes of the 20th century. The stories of Anne Frank, Ruby Bridges, and Ryan White exemplify for children and adults how every individual can make a difference.”<sup>75</sup> In acknowledgement and celebration of the 50th anniversary of the integration of the William Frantz Public School in 2010, the Norman Rockwell museum—which had founded its collection in 1975 with the purchase of “The Problem We All Live With” and where Ruby Bridges Hall served as a Trustee—mounted an installation of the reference photos, preparatory sketches and paintings, and letters of reaction from the public related to the painting. Concomitantly, the piece, toured the United States as part of the exhibition “American Chronicles: The Art of Norman Rockwell.”<sup>76</sup>

As part of the anniversary tour, the painting spent multiple months hanging on the wall outside of the Oval Office, which is the official workspace of the President of the United States. It was there at the request of Barak Obama who was clearly not

interested in the piece because it marked a monumental, late-career shift in Rockwell's portfolio and "had encouraged the cognoscenti . . . to give the elderly statesman of American illustration a second look."<sup>77</sup> Instead, he was engaged by the larger socio-historical meaning of what Rockwell depicted. He shared this sentiment with Ruby when she visited on 15 July 2011: "I think it's fair to say that if it wasn't for you guys, I wouldn't be here today."<sup>78</sup> The comment President Obama made to Ruby underscored the importance of the actions taken by the heroes of civil rights movement including those who, like Ruby, were only children at the time. Additionally, it reminds us of the enduring power of interpretive works created in response to the actions of existential agents—paintings, sculptures, statues and, of real interest in this study, poems, plays, historiographies and biographies. After all, it is probably equally fair to say that without *The Story of Ruby Bridges*, which brought the events at William Frantz Elementary School to a whole new generation of spectators who reevaluated, reinterpreted and newly reified what had occurred in light of present circumstances, Ruby may not have ever found herself as an honored guest at the White House. Instead, she may have remained nothing more than a volunteer quietly working to better the school she had once attended.

## **Conclusion**

Much like the African-American teenager photographed outside Little Rock Central High School, Ruby Bridges was also "asked to be a hero."<sup>79</sup> I sought to make it clear through my analysis that while Arendt was dismissive of the girl in the picture, Ruby most certainly answered the call to serve as a bearer and maker of tradition, fulfilling along the way each and every criteria explicated by Arendt: Ruby was conditioned to the accepted socio-cultural norms of her community, critically reflected on that inherited tradition, found the courage to begin a story of her own, found herself in the company of other existential agents within a space of appearance, made promises and offered forgiveness. I then employed key examples of the media through which

Ruby's actions were memorialized to both illustrate and expand on Arendt's theory of remembrance and reification.

Specifically, *Travels with Charley: In Search of America* demonstrated Steinbeck's decision to articulate the shared expectations, values and beliefs against which an existential agent acts in opposition. In doing so, he presented readers with the implicit choice of siding with the Cheerleaders whose actions, in accord with what Axel Honneth terms *Mißachtung* or "disrespect," inhibit subjugated people from realizing their full potential.<sup>80</sup> Or, readers could engage an alternative normative framework illustrated by the treatment offered to the Cooper boys by the residents of Salinas, treatment that allowed their minds to "grow to their true limits."<sup>81</sup>

From our vantage point, making a decision between the Cheerleaders and the Coopers may seem all but morally obvious. However, it is important to remember that, for many people reading Steinbeck's book at the time of its publication, it may have served as a necessary social simulator:

Just as flight simulators allow pilots to train safely, stories safely train us for the big challenges of the social world. Like flight simulators, fiction [and, I would argue, the other narrative genres used for reification] project us into intense simulations of problems that run parallel to those we face in reality. And, like a flight simulator, the main virtue of fiction is that we have a rich experience and don't die at the end.<sup>82</sup>

In the case, those who read *Travels with Charley* may not have ended up outside of a school screaming at small children because they would have been allowed to test-drive the possibility that those students weren't actually be burr-headed, slop-eating Congolese rapists but, instead, burgeoning pole-vaulters, mathematicians and composers. As such, Steinbeck's book may, as some have suggested, come at just the right historical moment to help us evolve towards a more just, cooperative and, ultimately, successful social structure.<sup>83</sup>

While Norman Rockwell's painting "The Problem We All Live With," offers us an example of Arendt's concept of transfiguration, it also encourages us to think about how that concept relates to the process of participatory-sense making. As discussed in chapter 5, those who study participatory sense-making have focused on face-to-face, dyadic encounters and have left unanswered the question of whether meaning can arise when a third-person or observational stance is taken by one of the participants. In the case of Arendt's existential agent and witnessing spectator, I stated that a third-person or observational stance did constitute a sufficient level of interaction for participatory sense-making because it is a special circumstance in which the dynamic between the agent and the spectator mimics the basic form of a conversation. Ruby Bridges and John Steinbeck are illustrative of this kind of interaction, even though Steinbeck's focus did shift away from the agent, herself. Furthermore, it was my contention that this inherently conversational dynamic is enhanced by being temporally extended, situated within a supporting framework and constructed in such a manner as to invite the participation of others.

In general, it can be assumed that the participation of others would occur through face-to-face, dyadic encounters; the only aberration suggested here, if it may even be considered as such, can lie in the fact that the locus of sense-making would be predetermined to center on what the spectator had previously witnessed. For example, it is easy to imagine Steinbeck being absorbed in conversation with his wife about what he saw in New Orleans, and for that interaction to meet all of the basic criteria for participatory sense-making. However, that kind of encounter is not at all what has been described in the foregoing discussion on transfiguration. As a result, it invites future study into the question of whether an interpretive work can serve as a conduit to an interaction between an agent and a new spectator in the manner Arendt describes. In other words, did *Travels with Charley* serve to locate Rockwell at William Frantz on a November morning in 1960 with enough sufficiency for him to have an encounter with Ruby analogous to the one in which Steinbeck was engaged

that day? If not, what necessary corrections must be made to Arendt's construction of the concept of transfiguration in order to create a more coherent account of a catalytic event's reenactment before a new audience?

Finally, it was Goethe who said, "The world only goes forward because of those who oppose it."<sup>84</sup> While I agree that acts of opposition are necessary in order to revitalize the social world, they are not sufficient in and of themselves; instead, I have sought to demonstrate that the reification of those catalytic words and deeds by others is equally necessary. After all, Ruby's integration of William Frantz would not, as Robert Coles asserts, have forwarded the progress of the world that day in November if, by some unknown act, everyone present was suddenly rendered unable to remember or recount what had occurred. Or, to put it another way, it is not difficult to imagine that countless words and deeds with the potential to change the world are enacted on a daily basis. Unless, however, they are remembered and reified, their fleeting and ephemeral nature causes them to disappear as if they had never been and, therefore, before they would have had any meaningful effect on the broadly accepted normative standards of the community in which they were enacted.

Coles's work furthered this point by demonstrating that, as Arendt rightly argued, the media in which the words and deeds of existential agents are memorialized greatly impacts their potential level of cultural salience and subsequent entrenchment. Specifically, Coles recounts Ruby's actions multiple times in the almost thirty years following the publication of *Children of Crisis: A Study of Courage and Fear* in 1967. While it may be assumed that those works were impactful for the small subset of individuals who engage sociological or psychological texts, it was not until he reified her story in the form of a literary narrative—and, more exactly, in what Hutto terms a "folk psychological narrative"—that her actions could be reevaluated and reinterpreted in light of present circumstances. The result was that Ruby's story spawned many more interpretive works. Most of those works were aimed at children still in the process of developing their basic evaluative framework and, therefore,

when a child interacts with that material in ways that are actively supported by her caregivers, it shapes her understanding of that which should be considered right, normal and acceptable. In this case, that includes the understanding that even very young children can be heroes in the Arendtian sense of the word.

To conclude this project, it is worth briefly returning to the theoretical material for which Ruby's story served as an illustrative example: the text of *The Human Condition*. There, Arendt reminds us that consideration of the exigencies of existence must be ongoing in light of "our newest experiences and our most recent fears."<sup>85</sup> This, she explains, means foregoing "the heedless recklessness or hopeless confusion or complacent repetition of 'truths' which have become trivial and empty" and, instead, "to think what we are doing."<sup>86</sup> Yet, even for those of us who devote ourselves to such endeavors, thinking about what we are doing is not enough. Instead, a life of the mind must be an embodied, embedded, extended and enacted experience made manifest in the world through our very words and deeds and, when called upon to do so, in our capacity to bear witness to the actions of others.

## NOTES

### Chapter 1

1. Hans J. Morgenthau, "Hannah Arendt 1906–1975," *Political Theory* 4, no. 1 (February 1976): 6.

2. Morgenthau notes: "If one reads 'Men In Dark Times' one might think of her as a literary critic and historian. If one peruses her 'Origins of Totalitarianism' one thinks of a political historian. In 'The Human Condition' one encounters a philosopher. If one leafs through 'Crises of the Republic' one encounters a political philosopher. And if one considers the forthcoming three volumes of the Gifford lectures tentatively entitled 'Knowing,' 'Judging,' 'Willing' one is of course in the presence of a systematic philosopher." *Ibid.*, 6.

3. *Ibid.*, 8.

4. Arendt came to the idea of writing *Introduction Into Philosophy (Einführung in die Politik)* during a 1955 visit to Karl Jaspers in Germany. Arendt envisioned it as a companion to Jaspers's text *Einführung in die Philosophie*, which Jaspers had published in 1950. An English translation of Jaspers's text was published in 1951 by Yale University Press under the title *Way to Wisdom: An Introduction to Philosophy*.

5. Arendt quoted in Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 325.

6. *Ibid.*

7. It should be noted that the text was published under the titled *The Human Condition* in America and *Vita Activa* in Europe.

8. Young-Bruehl, *For Love of the World*, 459.

9. Mary McCarthy, editor's postface in Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 244, 246.

10. For more information about the editing and publishing of *Thinking and Willing*, see Mary McCarthy's editor's postface in *The Life of the Mind* and pp. 469–70 in *For Love of the World*.

11. See “Understanding and Politics,” published in *Partisan Review* in 1953.
12. McCarthy, editor’s postface, *The Life of the Mind*, 243.
13. Young-Bruehl, *For Love of the World*, 470.
14. *Ibid.*, 470.
15. Arendt takes the concepts of action and speech from Aristotle who, in the form of *praxis* and *lexis*, deemed them to constitute the *bios politikos*, the political life. Out of the *bios politikos* arose the realm of human affairs, which, like parts of Arendt’s public realm, excluded anything of pure necessity or use-value.
16. Arendt, *Human Condition*, 184.
17. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 176.
18. As I will discuss in the chapter 3, Patricia Bowen-Moore is culpable of such conceptual overextension. Additionally, although not addressed in this project, the same problem is found in Anne O’Byrne’s 2010 text, *Nativity and Finitude*.
19. Seyla Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*, rev. ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield), 110.
20. *Ibid.*, 173.
21. Hannah Arendt, *Essays in Understanding, 1930–1945*, ed. Jerome Kohn, (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1994), 320–22.

## Chapter 2

1. Hans Jonas, “Acting, Knowing, Thinking: Gleanings from Hannah Arendt’s Philosophical Work,” *Social Research* 44, no. 1 (Spring 1977): 30.
2. Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 33–34.

3. Arno Schilson, “The Major Theological Themes of Romano Guardini,” in *Romano Guardini: Proclaiming the Sacred in a Modern World*, ed. Robert Anthony Krieg (Chicago: Archdiocese of Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1995), 33–35.

4. Young-Bruehl, *For Love of the World*, 36.

5. Hannah Arendt, Joanna Vecchiarelli Scott, and Judith Chelius Stark, *Love and Saint Augustine* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

6. Young-Bruehl, *For Love of the World*, 76.

7. *Ibid.*, 495.

8. Another example is found in the book *Hannah Arendt: A Reinterpretation of Her Political Thought*. There, while not specifically discussing the issue of natality, Margaret Canovan—the same scholar who penned the introduction to the second edition of *The Human Condition* when it was published in 1998—states

Arendt went on thinking about Augustine for the rest of her life, and in the aftermath of totalitarianism she felt a particular kinship with one who had lived, as he did, in the dark times of the collapsing Roman Empire. Her response to her own “dark times”, however, came to involve a thorough-going rejection of anything resembling his approach.

Margaret Canovan, *Hannah Arendt: A Reinterpretation of Her Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 8.

9. Joanna Vecchiarelli Scott and Judith Chelius Stark, “Introduction: ‘New Beginnings,’” in *Love and Saint Augustine*, by Hannah Arendt, Joanna Vecchiarelli Scott, and Judith Chelius Stark (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 126. The same issue exists, but to a much lesser extent, with Arendt’s book *Rahel Varnhagen: The Life of a Jewess*. First drafted in the early 1930s, it was not published in English until 1958. Its late publication, and the fact that it is a biography and not a work of philosophy, means that it is most often included as part of the post-Holocaust Arendtian canon.

10. Of course, it is now well known that Arendt and Heidegger were also romantically involved, but she was first and foremost enamored by his intellectual abilities; even in 1969, writing at a distance of more than forty years, Arendt described Heidegger as “the hidden king [who] reigned in the realm of thinking.” Hannah Arendt, “Martin Heidegger at Eighty,” *New York Times Review of Books* (October 21, 1971): 51; qtd. in *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World*, by Elisabeth Young-Bruehl (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 44.

11. This is an understandable concern, especially when one reads works by the likes of Thomas Pangle, a well-known American political scientist. On page 49 of his book *The Spirit of Modern Republicanism: The Moral Vision of the American Founders and the Philosophy of Locke*, he both dismisses Arendt as a “café intellectual” and maligns her for being the popularizer of what he terms the “Heideggerian project,” which, although he says Arendt diluted and humanized, was still intended to “effect a rupture with the entire Western tradition.”

12. Joanna Vecchiarelli Scott and Judith Chelius Stark, preface to *Love and Saint Augustine*, by Hannah Arendt, Joanna Vecchiarelli Scott, and Judith Chelius Stark (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), vii–xvii. Even acknowledging that the 1996 version of the dissertation would certainly have differed from one that Arendt herself would have completed for publication, I believe it still offers an indication of the development of her thoughts about natality.

13. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (1962 repr., New York: Harper Perennial Modern Thought, 2008), 289.

14. Scott and Stark, “Introduction: ‘New Beginnings,’” in *Love and Saint Augustine*, 168. I am not implying that Heidegger completely ignores the issue of *Dasein*’s birth. However, he ultimately concludes that the significance of birth is connected to and disclosed through *Dasein*’s status as Being-towards-death.

15. Hannah Arendt, "What is Existential Philosophy," trans. Robert and Rita Kimber, from "Was ist Existenz-Philosophie?" published as part of *Sechs Essays* in 1948. This translation is in Hannah Arendt, *Essays in Understanding, 1930–1945*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company 1994). It was originally published under the title "What is *Existenz* Philosophy" by the *Partisan Review* XVIII, no. 1 (1946). This quote is on p. 176.

16. *Ibid.*, 187.

17. Hannah Arendt, preface to *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1951) vii, ix.

18. Hannah Arendt, *Totalitarianism: Part Three of The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1968), 176–77.

19. Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers, *Correspondence: 1926–1969*, ed. Lotte Kohler and Hans Saner, trans. Robert Kimber and Rita Kimber (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1992), 262.

20. Arendt and Jaspers, *Correspondence*, 264.

21. Hannah Arendt and Martin Heidegger, *Letters 1925–1975*, ed. Ursula Ludz, trans. Andrew Shields (New York: Harcourt, 2004), letter #89, pp.123–24.

22. Arendt and Jaspers, *Correspondence*, 457.

23. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 246.

24. Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, 56.

25. Hans J. Morgenthau, "Hannah Arendt 1906–1975," *Political Theory* 4, no. 1 (February 1976): 7.

26. Hans Jonas, "Acting, Knowing, Thinking: Gleanings from Hannah Arendt's Philosophical Work," *Social Research* 44, no. 1 (Spring 1977): 30.

27. Arendt, *Human Condition*, 63–64.

28. *Ibid.*, 48

29. Ibid., 72

30. Mary O'Brien, qtd. in *Turning Operations: Feminism, Arendt, and Politics*, by Mary G. Dietz (New York and London: Routledge), 125. There are also feminist writers who, like Terry Winant, Nancy Hartsock, Jean Bethke Elshtain and Sara Ruddick, claim Arendt's feminine body is the wellspring of freedom, political and otherwise. The problem with the gynocentric approach taken by this group of thinkers is, according to Dietz, that they are still working with a strict male-female binary, without questioning the validity of system. The only difference is that, unlike those reading Arendt phallogcentrically, Winant and the rest "gender Arendt along the feminine side of the binary rather than the masculine side. The key to this gendering lies in accepting natality as the central category of politics . . . and then configuring it literally as women's experience of giving birth and mothering, or figuratively as a feminist concept derived from women's 'life activity.'"

31. See Arendt's text of *On Violence*, as well as her essay "Reflections on Little Rock."

32. Elisabeth Young-Bruehl thinks that if anything beneficial has come from the intersecting of Arendt's work and those theories, it is for the feminists. She concludes her essay "Hannah Arendt Among Feminist" by saying, "In her intellectual greatness, Arendt has had her greatest value to feminism, I think, precisely because feminists have said clearly 'she was not one of us' and proceeded from there to an examination not of her but of *feminism* in light of her life and work."

33. Arendt, *Human Condition*, 177.

34. Ibid., 176 (emphasis added).

35. Ibid., 177.

36. Including *On Revolution*, "Introduction *Into* Politics," and "Freedom and Politics: A Lecture," which was republished as part of *Between Past and Future*.

37. Shaun Gallagher, "Understanding Others: Embodied Social Cognition," in *Handbook of Cognitive Science: An Embodied Approach*, eds. P. Calvo and T. Gomila (London: Elsevier Science, 2008), 443. Also see Anthony J. DeCasper and Melanie J. Spence, "Prenatal Maternal Speech Influences Newborns' Perception of Speech Sounds," *Infant Behavior and Development* 9 (1986): 133–50.

38. Christina Schües, "The Birth of Difference," *Human Studies* 20 (1997), 247.

39. Hannah Arendt "Labor, Work, Action," in *Amor Mundi*, ed. J. W. Bernauer (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1987), 32.

40. Arendt, *Human Condition*, 83.

41. *Ibid.*, 84.

42. See Arendt, *Human Condition*, 107–08, and "Labor, Work, Action," 33–34.

43. Arendt, *Human Condition*, 120.

44. *Ibid.*, 322.

45. *Ibid.*, 88.

46. *Ibid.*, 63.

47. *Ibid.*

48. *Ibid.*, 51.

49. *Ibid.*, 74, also 75–77.

50. *Ibid.*, 71.

51. Seyla Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*, rev. ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 128.

<sup>52</sup> Jakob Lindgaard, ed. *John McDowell Experience, Norm, and Nature* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2009), introduction by Lingaard, pp. ix and xiii.

53. John McDowell, *Mind and World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 111.

54. See Lecture V, “Action, Meaning and the Self” in John McDowell, *Mind and World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996).

While Arendt focuses more on Kant’s writings concerning judgment, she also addresses Kantian spontaneity. In “Introduction *into* Politics,” Arendt states that “freedom consists of what we call spontaneity, which, according to Kant, is based on the ability of every human being to initiate a sequence, to forge a new chain.” She adds that “freedom of action is the same thing as starting anew and beginning something” and that, according to Augustine, the ontological basis for this freedom is located in that fact that “man himself is a beginning, an initium, insofar as he has not always existed but first comes into the world by birth.” In this way, Arendt—like McDowell—pairs Kantian spontaneity with a notion of a second natality. Arendt, “Introduction *into* Politics,” in Jerome Kohn, ed., introduction to *The Promise of Politics*, by Hannah Arendt (New York and Toronto: Random House, 2005), 126.

55. John McDowell, *Mind and World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 115.

56. *Ibid.*, 123.

57. *Ibid.*, 124.

58. *Ibid.*, 125.

59. Rüdiger Bubner, “*Bildung* and Second Nature,” in *Reading McDowell: On Mind and World*, ed. Nicholas H. Smith (New York: Routledge, 2002), 211.

60. John McDowell, “Response,” “*Bildung* and Second Nature,” in *Reading McDowell*, 296

61. *Ibid.*

62. *Ibid.*, 115–17.

63. *Ibid.*, 117.

64. *Ibid.*, 118.

65. *Ibid.*, 117–19.

66. In a footnote on page 136 of *The Human Condition*, Arendt says: “I have been unable to ascertain when and where the expression *homo faber*, certainly of modern, postmedieval origin, first appeared. Jean Leclercq (‘Vers la society basfe sur le travail,’ *Revue du travail*, Vol. LI, No. 3 [March, 1950]) suggests that only Bergson ‘threw the concept of *homo faber* into the circulation of ideas.’” Indeed, on page 139 of Henri Bergson’s book *Creative Evolution*, he states:

If we could rid ourselves of all pride, if, to define our species, we kept strictly to what the historic and the prehistoric periods show us to be the constant characteristic of man and of intelligence, we should say not *Homo sapiens*, but *Homo faber*. In short, *intelligence, considered in what seems to be its original feature, is the faculty of manufacturing artificial objects, especially tools to make tools, and of indefinitely varying the manufacture.*

The emphasis is his, and this is his only reference to the term *homo faber* in the book.

67. Arendt, “Labor, Work, Action,” 34.

In *The Human Condition*, Arendt titles the first section on the chapter concerning labor “The Labour of our Body and the Work of our Hands.” In a footnote, she cites the phrase as coming from section 26 of John Locke’s *Second Treaties of Civil Government* (79). The quote is actually from section 27:

Though the earth, and all inferior creatures, be common to all men, yet every man has a *property* in his own *person*: this no body has any right to but himself. The *labour* of his body, and the *work* of his hands, we may say, are properly his. Whatsoever then he removes out of the state that nature hath provided, and left it in, he hath mixed his *labour* with, and joined to it something that is his own, and thereby makes it his *property*. It being by him removed from the common state nature hath placed it in, it hath by this *labour* something annexed to it, that excludes the common right of other men: for

this *labour* being the unquestionable property of the labourer, no man but he can have a right to what that is once joined to, at least where there is enough, and as good, left in common for others. (19)

It should also be noted that although Arendt presents her chapter title as if it is a direct quote, she actually changes the pronoun from the “his” to “our.”

68. McDowell, *Mind and World*, 115–17.

69. Arendt, *Human Condition*, 52.

70. *Ibid.*, 52.

71. *Ibid.*, 94.

72. *Ibid.*, 9.

73. Arendt, “Labor, Work, Action,” 39–40.

74. Arendt, *Human Condition*, 10–11.

75. *Ibid.*, 180–81.

76. Similarly, in McDowell’s work, “Action realizes a possibility which the agent possesses, thanks to his or her natural faculties. . . . Through acting we typically allow ourselves to be understood by others, where we belong, where we stand, and what as a whole we would like to achieve with others.” Bubner, “*Bildung* and Second Nature,” 213

77. Arendt, *Human Condition*, 184.

78. *Ibid.*, 184.

79. *Ibid.*, 198–99.

80. Gert J. J. Biesta, “Radical Intersubjectivity: Reflections on the ‘Different’ Foundation of Education,” *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 18 (1999): 210–11.

81. Benhabib, *Reluctant Modernism*, 112; “The Web of Relationships and the Enacted Stories” is also the title of chapter 25 of *The Human Condition*.

82. Arendt, *Human Condition*, 176–77.

83. *Ibid.*, 199.

84. Bubner, “*Bildung* and Second Nature,” 211.

### Chapter 3

1. Seyla Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*, rev. ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 112; “The Web of Relationships and the Enacted Stories” is also the title of chapter 25 of *The Human Condition*.

2. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 247.

3. *Ibid.*, 176.

4. John McDowell, *Mind and World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 123.

5. *Ibid.*, 125.

6. *Ibid.*, 124, 115–17.

7. *Ibid.*, 125–26.

8. Benhabib, *Reluctant Modernism*, 110.

9. Patricia Bowen-Moore, *Hannah Arendt’s Philosophy of Natality* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1989), 21.

10. *Ibid.*, 38–39.

12. *Ibid.*, 43.

13. *Ibid.*, 64.

14. In his review of *Hannah Arendt’s Philosophy of Natality*, Charles Hersch does an excellent job of explicating the thematic entanglement that I mentioned. He states:

Bowen-Moore ties natality to so many of Arendt’s ideas that the concept begins to lose its meaning. Natality is revealed to be the key to Arendt’s views of childhood, education, politics, freedom, forgiveness, promising, history, love, thinking, willing, and judging: “Arendt conceives the essence of

education to be natality” (p. 32); “forgiveness is . . . granted by the gift of action, that is, by natality” (p. 61); thinking is “mental natality” (p. 81); “the will and the experience of freedom share the condition of natality” (p. 86); judging is “entirely nascent” (p. 94); and the diagonal line that Arendt uses to talk about time is a “nascent metaphor” (p. 98). All this natality leads one to wonder what the term precisely means. This problem is compounded by Bowen-Moore’s tendency to make the concept a subject, as when she speaks of “natality’s fondness for the world” (p. 103).

Charles Hersch, “Arendt on Human Beginnings,” *The Review of Politics* 52, no. 4 (Autumn 1990): 644–45.

15. Arendt, *Human Condition*, 247.

16. *Ibid.*, 176–77.

17. Although she does address the topic in later works, in *The Human Condition*, Arendt does not specifically discuss language acquisition or education. There is only one footnote in the text which lends nominal support to Bowen-Moore’s interpretation of education as training for revealing oneself in the public realm. Referencing Phoenix’s speech to Achilles in book nine of the *Iliad*, Arendt writes that Phoenix is clearly referring “to education for war and *agora*, the public meeting, in which men can distinguish themselves. The literal translation is; ‘[your father] charged me to teach you all this, to be a speaker of words and a doer of deeds,’” footnote, p. 25.

18. Arendt, *Human Condition*, 9.

19. *Ibid.*, 9.

20. *Ibid.*, 94.

21. *Ibid.*, 173, and McDowell, *Mind and World*, 117–19.

22. McDowell, *Mind and World*, 125–26 (emphasis added).

23. Benhabib, *Reluctant Modernism*, 110.

24. Arendt, *Human Condition*, 189
25. *Ibid.*, 322.
26. *Ibid.*, 206.
27. *Ibid.*, 199.
28. See Arendt, *Human Condition*, 61–62.
29. Kris Kristofferson and Fred Foster, “Me and Bobby McGee” (lyrics and music), originally recorded by Roger Miller, 1969; later recorded by Janis Joplin and released on *Pearl*, Columbia, January 1971.
30. Arendt, *Human Condition*, 186–87.
31. *Ibid.*, 192.
32. *Ibid.*, 180–81.
33. *Ibid.*, 186–87.
34. *Ibid.*, 173, and McDowell, *Mind and World*, 117–19.
35. Arendt, *Human Condition*, 178.
36. *Ibid.*, 184.
37. Jürgen Habermas, “Hannah Arendt’s Communications Concept of Power,” *Social Research* 44, no. 1 (Spring 1977): 6.
38. *Ibid.*, 8
39. *Ibid.*, 6–7.
40. *Ibid.*, 16.
41. *Ibid.*, 17.
42. Hannah Arendt, “Labor, Work, Action,” in *Amor Mundi*, ed. J. W. Bernauer (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1987), 41.
43. Hannah Arendt, “Labor, Work, Action,” in *Amor Mundi*, ed. J. W. Bernauer (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1987), 41; a similar but less concise quote is found in *The Human Condition*, 190.
44. Arendt, “Labor, Work, Action,” 41.

45. Patchen Markell, "The Rule of the People: Arendt, *Arche*, and Democracy," *American Political Science Review* 100, no. 1 (February 2006): 10.

46. Arendt, "Labor, Work, Action," 42.

47. Maurizio Passerin D'Entrèves, *The Political Philosophy of Hannah Arendt* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 82.

48. Arendt's conception of forgiveness is limited to acts of what she terms "trespassing." She says on page 240 of *The Human Condition* that "trespassing is an everyday occurrence which is in the very nature of action's constant establishment of new relationships within a web of relations, and it needs forgiving, dismissing, in order to make it possible for life to go on by constantly releasing men from what they have done unknowingly." She contrasts "trespassing" against "willed evil" or "radical evil," both of which must be dealt with by God. The line that delineates acts of trespass from radical evil is whether the offense is punishable. This demarcation makes sense if one considers that Arendt endured World War II and the Holocaust. Even though key figures involved with those atrocities were tried in court, it is difficult to imagine that you can ever sufficiently punish someone for their involvement in events that left 10 million-plus people dead. Even if they are put to death, I don't think it's possible to say that the score is settled. As such, their ultimate retribution must be meted out by God. For Arendt, this is not only a moral necessity, it is a practical one as such offenses "transcend the realm of human affairs and the potentialities of human power, both of which they radically destroy wherever they make their appearance."

With that said, it should still be noted that Arendt ended up revising her view on radical evil in the wake of the trial of Adolph Eichmann. In a letter to Gershom Scholem dated July 24, 1963, Arendt wrote:

You are quite right: I changed my mind and do no longer speak of "radical evil." It is a long time since we last met, or we would perhaps have spoken

about the subject before. . . . It is indeed my opinion now that evil is never “radical,” that it is only extreme, and that it possesses neither depth nor any demonic dimensions. It can overgrow and lay waste the whole world precisely because it spreads like a fungus on the surface. It is “thought-defying,” as I said, because thought tries to reach some depth, to go to the roots, and the moment it concerns itself with evil, it is frustrated because there is nothing. That is its “banality.” Only the good has depth and can be radical.

Hannah Arendt, *Jew as Pariah: Jewish Identity and Politics in the Modern Age*, ed. Ron H. Feldman (New York: Grove Press, 1978).

49. Arendt, *Human Condition*, 237. Although most of us are familiar with Mickey Mouse as the sorcerer’s apprentice is 1940 Disney film *Fantasia*, Arendt is probably referencing the poem *Der Zauberlehrling*, written by Goethe in 1797, and still widely read in Germany. Once the young apprentice in Goethe’s piece realizes the magic he invoked is no longer under his direction, he cries, “Lord and master, hear my call! / Ah, here comes the master! / I have need of Thee! / From the spirits that I called / Sir, deliver me!” A version of the phrase “the spirits that I called” is a German idiom used to describe a situation, especially in politics, where one’s actions have started a process that has since moved out of his or her control.

50. Seyla Benhabib, *Critique, Norm, and Utopia: A Study of the Foundations of Critical Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 138–39.

51. *Ibid.*, 137–39.

52. Benhabib, *Reluctant Modernism*, 124–27.

53. D’Entrèves, *Political Philosophy*, 85.

54. Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, “Justice: On Relating Public and Private,” *Political Theory* 9 (1981): 338.

55. *Ibid.*

56. Leslie Paul Thiele, "The Ontology of Action: Arendt and the Role of Narrative," *Theory & Event* 12, no. 4 (2009), <http://muse.jhu.edu/> (accessed August 18, 2010).

57. Arendt, *Human Condition*, 175–76.

58. *Ibid.*, 175.

#### Chapter 4

1. Frédéric Vandenberghe, *A Philosophical History of German Sociology*, trans. Carolyn Shread (New York: Routledge, 2009), 8–9.

2. Tom Bottomore, ed., *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 411.

3. The Institute for Social Research at the University of Frankfurt was founded in 1923 as the first research center affiliated with a major German university whose focus was Marxist thought. Members of the "Frankfurt School" shared various degrees of affiliation with the Institute, itself; some members—such as Georg Lukács—had only peripherally involvement, but all of the theorists were unified by their interest in studying the conditions that facilitated social change.

4. Georg Lukács, "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat," in *History and Class Consciousness* (London: Merlin Press, 1967), accessed January 23, 2011, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lukacs/works/history/hcc05.htm>.

5. Axel Honneth, "Reification and Recognition: A New Look at an Old Idea," in *Reification: A New Look at an Old Idea*, by Axel Honneth, ed. Martin Jay (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 22.

6. *Ibid.*, 17.

7. *Ibid.*, 18.

8. Joel Anderson, translator's note and translator's introduction to *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, by Axel Honneth, trans. Joel Anderson (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), vii and xi.
9. Honneth, *Reification: A New Look at an Old Idea*, ed. Martin Jay (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 57–58.
10. Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, trans. Joel Anderson (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 133–34.
11. *Ibid.*, 134.
12. Martin Jay, introduction to *Reification: A New Look at an Old Idea*, by Axel Honneth, ed. Martin Jay (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 10.
13. See Judith Butler's article "Taking Another's View: Ambivalent Implications," in *Reification: A New Look at an Old Idea*, by Axel Honneth, ed. Martin Jay (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).
14. Kelly Oliver, *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 4.
15. Karen J. Warren, ed., "The Power and the Promise of Ecological Feminism," in *Ecological Feminist Philosophies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 21.
16. Warren, "Ecological Feminism," 20.
17. Kelly Oliver, "Witnessing and Testimony," *Parallax* 10, no. 1 (2004): 79.
18. Honneth, *Reification*, 57–58.
19. Arendt, *Human Condition*, 90-91.
20. Hannah Arendt, "The Crisis in Culture," in *Between Past and Future* (New York: Viking, 1961), 215.
21. Arendt, *Human Condition*, 173.

22. This is not to imply that someone who serves as a spectator may not, at some other time, find herself in the role of an existential actor. It is simply to say that Arendt does not expect us to play both parts at the same time.

23. See Arendt, *Human Condition*, 160–61; Book One: “Thinking,” in *The Life of the Mind* (Orlando: Harcourt, 1978), 93–94; and “Crisis in Culture,” 215–16.

24. The other two works were *Between Past and Future: Six Exercises in Political Thought* (New York: Viking, 1961) and *On Revolution* (New York: Viking, 1963).

25. Hannah Arendt, qtd. in *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World*, by Elisabeth Young-Bruehl (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 276.

26. Jerome Kohn, co-editor’s note in *The Origins of Totalitarianism: Fifty Years Later*, by Hannah Arendt, *Social Research* 69, no. 2 (Summer 2002), <http://www.socres.org/vol69/issue692.htm>. Kohn explains that six lectures were delivered in 1953 to the faculties at Princeton University and the Institute for Advanced Studies; a German radio address on Marx was also given in 1953, and three lectures were delivered in 1954 at the University of Notre Dame. Jerome Kohn, ed., introduction to *The Promise of Politics*, by Hannah Arendt (New York and Toronto: Random House, 2005).

27. Hannah Arendt and Martin Heidegger, *Letters 1925–1975*, ed. Ursula Ludz, trans. Andrew Shields (New York: Harcourt, 2004), letter #86, p.121.

28. Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 279.

29. Hannah Arendt, qtd. in *For Love of the World*, by Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, 278–79.

30. Margret Canovan, introduction to *The Human Condition*, 2nd ed., by Hannah Arendt (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), xi.

31. Axel Honneth, "Work and Instrumental Action," trans. Mitchell G. Ash, *New German Critique* 26, Critical Theory and Modernity (Spring–Summer 1982): 39 (emphasis added).
32. Ibid., 40.
33. Ibid., 41–42.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid., 41.
36. Arendt, *Human Condition*, 140 (emphasis added).
37. Honneth, "Work and Instrumental Action," 40–41.
38. Ibid.
39. Hannah Arendt, "Labor, Work, Action," in *Amor Mundi*, ed. J. W. Bernauer (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1987), 41.
40. Immanuel Kant, "Analytic of the Sublime," Book II of *The Critique of Judgment*, trans. James Creed (Radford, VA: Wilder Publications, 2008), 123.
41. Eleanor Catton, *The Rehearsal* (New York: Reagan Arthur Books / Little, Brown, 2008) 138.
42. Arendt, *Human Condition*, 274.
43. Ibid., 57.
44. Ibid.
45. Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, ed. Ronald Beiner (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1982), 44.
46. Lisa Jane Disch, *Hannah Arendt and the Limits of Philosophy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 158.
47. Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future: Six Exercises in Political Thought* (New York: Viking, 1961), 237.
48. Ibid., 235.
49. Ibid., 234.

50. Ibid., 237.

51. Arendt, *Human Condition*, 173.

52. Ibid., 304–5.

53. Ibid. 155.

54. That page contained only two epigrams intended to introduce the book on judging. According to Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, one epigram was from Act Five of *Faust* by Goethe. The other was a quote from Cicero that translates, “The winning cause pleased the Gods, but the losing cause pleased Cato.” According to Young-Bruehl, Arendt associated this quote with the German political journalist Friedrich Gentz. However, in the United States, this quote is associated with the Arlington Confederate Monument, where it is inscribed. The monument was a gift from the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC), who sought to memorialize those who died fighting in the Civil War. The quote from Cicero is meant to cast President Lincoln as an unjust depot acting outside the will of a higher power. Young-Bruehl, *For Love of the World*, 533.

55. Arendt, *Life of the Mind / Thinking*, 57.

56. Ibid.

57. Michael G. Gottsegen, *The Political Thought of Hannah Arendt* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 130.

58. Heather L. LaMarre, Kristen D. Landreville, and Michael A. Beam, “The Irony of Satire: Political Ideology and the Motivation to See What You Want to See in *The Colbert Report*,” *International Journal of Press/Politics* 14 (April 2009): 215.

59. Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, “Justice: On Relating Public and Private,” *Political Theory* 9 (1981): 338.

60. Linda Zerilli, “The Arendtian Body,” in *Feminist Interpretations of Hannah Arendt*, ed. Bonnie Honig (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), 175.

61. Ibid., 171, 175.

62. Julia Kristeva, *Hannah Arendt*, trans. Ross Guberman (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 177–79.

63. Thomas F. Tierney, *The Value of Convenience: A Genealogy of Technical Culture*, SUNY Series in Science, Technology, and Society (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 15, 22.

64. Zerilli, “The Arendtian Body,” 171.

65. Hannah Arendt, *Jew as Pariah: Jewish Identity and Politics in the Modern Age*, ed. Ron H. Feldman, (New York: Grove Press, 1978), 246.

66. Ibid., 246.

67. Young-Bruehl, *For Love of the World*, 272–73. For Arendt’s discussion of “exception Jews” see “The Jews and Society” in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1951).

68. “FACULTY ADDS WOMAN; Princeton Names Miss Arendt as Visiting Professor,” Special to *The New York Times*, *New York Times*, November 12, 1958, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, accessed September 9, 2011, <http://proquest.umi.com.ezproxy.lib.usf.edu/pqdweb?did=82216642&sid=1&Fmt=1&clientId=20178&RQT=309&VName=HNP>, p. 272.

69. Arendt, *Human Condition*, 5.

70. Ibid.

71. The only time that gender occupies a place of importance within *The Human Condition* is when it comes to creating the circumstances for the second natality, which is existential instead of biological. In that instance, Arendt argues that male and female bodies, in their physical difference, offered the original plurality necessary for the existence of the space of appearance. Arendt identifies the difference between the male and the female body as something which was given and not made; in this case, it was given by a divinity who, Arendt argues, created two

genders (“Male and female created He *them*.”). She situates her argument in opposition to a reading of biblical creation in which God forms man and, from him, woman is derived. By insisting on two genders that were created separately, we refrain from enduring an endless version of the same, a sort of Adamic simulacra, but receive instead—to paraphrase Arendt—a multitude of humans who come into being as a result of multiplication instead of simply duplication. This argument, however remains one of theory and not biology.

72. Arendt, *Human Condition*, 47. I am largely going to set aside consideration of the social realm for the remainder of this project. My justification for doing so is that Arendt continually asserts, and I agree, that although the dominance of the social realm remains a looming specter, it is not yet a reality. For further consideration of the social realm, specifically as Arendt formulates it in *The Human Condition* and in a chapter titled “The Social Question” from *On Revolution*, see *The Attack of the Blob: Hannah Arendt’s Concept of the Social* by Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, as well as chapters in *The Political Philosophy of Hannah Arendt* by Maurizio Passerin D’Entrèves, *Hannah Arendt: An Introduction* by John McGowan, and *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*, by Seyla Benhabib.

73. Anti Homosexuality Bill, 2009, Bill No. 18, Uganda, accessed April 16, 2011, <https://docs.google.com/leaf?id=0B7pFotabJnTmYzFiMWJmY2UtYWYxMi00MDY2LWI4NWYtYTVIOWU1OTEzMzk0&hl=en>.

74. Arendt, *Human Condition*, 112.

## Chapter 5

1. Arendt, *Life of the Mind / Thinking*, 133.

2. Joel Anderson, translator's note and translator's introduction to *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, by Axel Honneth, trans. Joel Anderson (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), vii and xi.
3. Axel Honneth, "Work and Instrumental Action," trans. Mitchell G. Ash, *New German Critique* 26, Critical Theory and Modernity (Spring–Summer 1982): 39.
4. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 42–43, 45.
5. For an enlightening, first-person account of the cognitive revolution, see George A. Miller, "The Cognitive Revolution: A Historical Perspective," *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 7, no. 3 (March 2003): 41–44.
6. Leslie Marsh and Christian Onof, "Introduction to the Special Issue 'Perspectives on Social Cognition,'" *Cognitive Systems Research* 9, nos. 1–2 (March 2008): 1.
7. Shaun Gallagher, "Two Problems of Intersubjectivity," *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 16, nos. 6–8 (2009): 289.
8. For work on TT, see writings by Jerry Fodor, Alison Gopnik and Alan Leslie. For work on ST, see writings by Alvin Goldman, Robert Gordon, Jane Heal, Shaun Nicols and Stephen Stich.
9. Stephen Stich, "Why is Mindreading Like Love?" lecture presented at the San Marino Collegium / Summer School on Social Cognition and Social Narrative, Republic of San Marino, July 7, 2008.
10. Joëlle Proust, "Simulation Theory," lecture presented at the San Marino Collegium / Summer School on Social Cognition and Social Narrative, Republic of San Marino, July 7, 2008.
11. Shaun Gallagher, "Strong Interaction and Self-Agency," *Humana.Mente: Journal of Philosophical Studies* 15 (January 2011): 55–76.

12. Brian Cantwell Smith, qtd. in “Methodological Situatedness; or, DEEDS Worth Doing and Pursing,” by Joel Walmsley, *Cognitive Systems Research* 9, nos. 1–2 (March 2008): 150–51.
13. Gallagher, “Strong Interaction and Self-Agency,” 59.
14. Arendt, *Human Condition*, 40.
15. *Ibid.*, 9.
16. *Ibid.*, 57.
17. *Ibid.*, 57.
18. *Ibid.*, 114.
19. *Ibid.*, 50; also see pp. 57–58 and 208–9. Arendt does not explore further the issue of tickling, except to say that it “obviously prevent[s] our senses’ functioning normally.”
20. *Ibid.*, 115; also see p. 112.
21. Daniel D. Hutto, *Folk Psychological Narratives: The Sociocultural Basis of Understanding Reasons* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008), 28, and Shaun Gallagher and Daniel D. Hutto, “Understanding Others Through Primary Interaction and Narrative Practice,” in *The Shared Mind: Perspectives on Intersubjectivity*, ed. Jordan Zlatev, Timothy P. Racine, Chris Sinha, and Esa Itkonen (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2008), 31.
22. Arendt, *Human Condition*, 52.
23. *Ibid.*, 112.
24. *Ibid.*, 50–51.
25. See Chris Eccleston and Geert Crombez, “Pain Demands Attention: A Cognitive-Affective Model of the Interruptive Function of Pain,” *Psychological Bulletin* 125, no. 3 (May 1999): 356.
26. International Association for the Study of Pain, 2012, accessed July 10, 2011, [www.iasp-pain.org](http://www.iasp-pain.org).

27. Ibid.
28. Amanda C. de C. Williams, "Facial Expression of Pain: An Evolutionary Account," *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 25, no. 4 (2002): 446–47.
29. Ibid., 454.
30. Ibid., 445.
31. Arendt, *Human Condition*, 112, 141.
32. Arendt, *Life of the Mind / Thinking*, 33.
33. Ibid., 32-33.
34. Ibid., 31-32.
35. Ibid., 32.
36. Ibid., 27-29.
37. Ibid., 21.
38. Ibid., 28.
39. Ibid.
40. Ibid., 31.
41. Ibid., 32.
42. Ibid., 31.
43. See Colwyn Trevarthen, "Communication and Cooperation in Early Infancy: A Description of Primary Intersubjectivity," in *Before Speech: The Beginning of Communication*, ed. Margaret Bullowa (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 321–48.
44. Gallagher, "Two Problems of Intersubjectivity," 292.
45. Andrew N. Meltzoff and M. Keith Moore, "Imitation, Memory, and the Representation of Persons," *Infant Behavior and Development* 17, no. 1 (January–March 1994): 97.
46. Peter R. Hobson, "The Emotional Origins of Social Understanding," *Philosophical Psychology* 6, no. 3 (1993): 227, accessed July 12, 2011,

<http://search.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.lib.usf.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=9606244291&site=ehost-live>.

47. Qtd. in Hobson, "Emotional Origins."

48. Meltzoff and Moore, "Imitation, Memory, and the Representation of Persons," 94.

49. Csibra Gergely and György Gergely, "Natural Pedagogy," *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 13, no. 4 (2009): 148–53.

50. Ibid., 148.

51. Ibid., 151.

52. Ibid., 149.

53. See Jennifer M. D. Yoon, Mark H. Johnson, and Csibra Gergely, "Communication-Induced Memory Biases in Preverbal Infants," *PNAS* 105 (2008): 13690–95.

54. Gergely and Gergely, "Natural Pedagogy," 148.

55. Ibid.

56. György Gergely, Katalin Egyed, and Ildikó Király, "On Pedagogy," *Developmental Science* 10, no. 1 (2007): 139–46.

57. Gergely and Gergely, "Natural Pedagogy," 151.

58. Meltzoff and Moore, "Imitation, Memory, and the Representation of Persons," 94.

59. Shaun Gallagher and Dan Zahavi, *The Phenomenological Mind: An Introduction to Philosophy of Mind and Cognitive Science* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 211.

60. Shaun Gallagher and Rebecca Seté Jacobson, "Heidegger and Social Cognition," in *Heidegger and Cognitive Science*, ed. Julian Kiverstein and Michael Wheeler, *New Directions in Cognitive Science and Philosophy Series* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, UK: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), 222.

61. Meltzoff and Moore, "Imitation, Memory, and the Representation of Persons," 95.
62. Arendt, *Human Condition*, 9.
63. Meltzoff and Moore, "Imitation, Memory, and the Representation of Persons," 97.
64. Shaun Gallagher, personal correspondence with author on January 16, 2013.
65. Christian Keysers and Valeria Gazzola, "Towards a Unifying Neural Theory of Social Cognition," *Progress in Brain Research* 156 (2006): 394.
66. Shaun Gallagher, personal correspondence with author on January 16, 2013.
67. Hanne De Jaegher and Ezequiel Di Paolo, "Participatory Sense-Making: An Enactive Approach to Social Cognition," *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* 6 (2007): 485–507.
68. *Ibid.*, 490.
69. *Ibid.*, 494.
70. Hannah Arendt, "Introduction *into* Politics," in *The Promise of Politics*, ed. and intro. Jerome Kohn (New York and Toronto: Random House, 2005), 117.
71. *Ibid.*, 198–99.
72. Gert J. J. Biesta, "Radical Intersubjectivity: Reflections on the 'Different' Foundation of Education," *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 18 (1999): 210–11.
73. Arendt, *Human Condition*, 199.
74. *Ibid.*, 183.
75. *Ibid.*, 9.
76. Arendt, *Human Condition*, 90–91.
77. Hannah Arendt, "The Crisis in Culture," in *Between Past and Future* (New York: Viking, 1961), 215.

78. Arendt, *Human Condition*, 161.
79. Arendt, "The Crisis in Culture," 215–16.
80. Arendt, *Life of the Mind / Thinking*, 93.
81. Patchen Markell, "The Rule of the People: Arendt, *Arche*, and Democracy," *American Political Science Review* 100, no. 1 (February 2006): 6.
82. Shaun Gallagher, personal correspondence with author on February 2, 2012.
83. Ibid.

## Chapter 6

1. See Shaun Gallagher, "Strong Interaction and Self-Agency" in *Humana.Mente* 15 (January 2011): 55–76, and Shaun Gallagher and Daniel Hutto, "Understanding Others through Primary Interaction and Narrative Practice," in *The Shared Mind: Perspectives on Intersubjectivity*, ed. Jordan Zlatev, Timothy P. Racine, Chris Sinha, and Esa Itkonen (Amsterdam: John Benjamins), 17–38.
2. Galen Strawson, "Against Narrativity," *Ratio* 17, no. 4 (December 2004): 428.
3. Ibid., 429.
4. Ibid., 437.
5. Allen Speight, "Arendt on Narrative Theory and Practice," *College Literature* 38, no. 1 (Winter 2011): 115. It should also be noted that Speight names Paul Ricoeur's *Time and Narrative* and Charles Taylor's *Sources of the Self* as having been influenced by the content of *The Human Condition*.
6. Arendt, *Human Condition*, 184.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid., 198–99.
9. Ibid., 190.

10. Hannah Arendt, "Labor, Work, Action," in *Amor Mundi*, ed. J. W. Bernauer (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1987), 41.
11. Arendt, *Human Condition*, 184.
12. *Ibid.*, 176.
13. Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 3rd ed. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 2.
14. *Ibid.*, 219, 221.
15. *Ibid.*, 223.
16. *Ibid.*, 221.
17. *Ibid.*, 219.
18. *Ibid.*, 213.
19. *Ibid.*, 215.
20. *Ibid.*, 205, 218–19.
21. Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 160.
22. *Ibid.*
23. John Lippitt, "Getting the Story Straight: Kierkegaard, MacIntyre and Some Problems with Narrative," *Inquiry* 50, no. 1 (February 2007): 45.
24. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 212.
25. For example, even within the text of the *After Virtue*, MacIntyre quotes Louis O. Mink, saying: "Stories are not lived but told. Life has no beginnings, middles, or ends." MacIntyre dismisses this objection by responding as follows: "to someone who says that in life there are no endings, or that final partings take place only in stories, one is tempted to reply, 'But have you never heard of death?'" Although MacIntyre's retort is snappy, it does not address the issue that actually underlies the sheer impossibility of fulfilling MacIntyre's narrative expectation (p. 212).
26. Arendt, *Human Condition*, 19.

27. Ibid., 97 (emphasis added).
28. Ibid., 191.
29. Ibid., 95.
30. George Kateb, "Ideology and Storytelling," *Social Research* 69, no. 2 (Summer 2002): 330.
31. Lisa Jane Disch, "More Truth than Fact: Storytelling as Critical Understanding in the Writings of Hannah Arendt," *Political Theory* 21, no. 4 (November 1993): 668.
32. Ibid., 687–88.
33. Veronica Vasterling, "Cognitive Theory and Phenomenology in Arendt's and Nussbaum's Work on Narrative," *Human Studies* 30, no. 2 (June 2007): 87; and Mel A. Topf, "Hannah Arendt: Literature and the Public Realm," *College English* 40, no. 4 (December 1978): 360–61.
34. Peter Lamarque, "On Not Expecting Too Much from Narrative," *Mind & Language* 19, no. 4 (September 2004): 394.
35. David Herman, "Storytelling and the Sciences of Mind: Cognitive Narratology, Discursive Psychology, and Narratives in Face-to-Face Interaction," *Narrative* 15, no. 3 (October 2007): 314.
36. Arendt, *Human Condition*, 186.
37. Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, ed. Ronald Beiner (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1982), 44.
38. Hannah Arendt, *Totalitarianism: Part Three of The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1968).
39. Veronica Vasterling, "Cognitive Theory and Phenomenology in Arendt's and Nussbaum's Work on Narrative," *Human Studies* 30, no. 2 (June 2007): 86.
40. Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 63.
41. Disch, "More Truth than Fact," 688.

42. Arendt, *Human Condition*, 168. In a footnote, Arendt comments that this passage refers to a poem by Rainer Maria Rilke. While that may indeed be the case, it is difficult to ignore the fact that the most well-known instance of transfiguration did not concern the regenerative power of art, but was the one undertaken by Jesus Christ. Documented in the texts of the Synoptic Gospels, the Transfiguration of Jesus is viewed by theologians as prefiguring the death and resurrection of Jesus.

43. Arendt, *Human Condition*, 169; also see p. 95.

44. Lisa Jane Disch, *Hannah Arendt and the Limits of Philosophy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 156.

45. Hannah Arendt, Book One: "Thinking," in *The Life of the Mind* (Orlando: Harcourt, 1978), 93–94; and "Crisis in Culture," 96.

46. Disch, "More Truth than Fact," 687.

47. *Ibid.*, 688.

48. Arendt, *Human Condition*, 39.

49. Elisabeth Young-Bruehl and Jerome Kohn, "Truth, Lies, and Politics: A Conversation," *Social Research* 74, no. 4 (Winter 2007): 1046–47.

50. *Ibid.*, 1046.

51. Arendt, *Human Condition*, 113 n. 61 and 211 n. 42.

52. *Ibid.*, 175.

53. Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future: Six Exercises in Political Thought* (New York: Viking, 1961), 257.

54. Isak Dinesen, *Out of Africa* (New York: Random House, 2002), 3.

55. Lynn R. Wilinson, "Hannah Arendt on Isak Dinesen: Between Storytelling and Theory," *Comparative Literature* 56, no.1 (Winter 2004): 84.

56. *Ibid.*, 85.

57. Arendt favors Greek tragedies (see *The Human Condition*, 187, 187 n. 11 and n. 12, and 205 n. 33). Additionally, she continually returns to the work of

Sophocles, quoting his plays in the essay “Culture and Politics” for 1959, in *Between Past and Future* (1961), *On Revolution* (1961), and *The Life of the Mind* (1978). For an excellent study on Arendt’s interest in the tragic theater of the Greeks, which also situates her work within the larger context of the philhellenism of her mentors Karl Jaspers and Martin Heidegger (in *Tragedy is Not Enough* and *Introduction to Metaphysics*, respectively), see chapter 2 of Robert C. Pirro’s book *Hannah Arendt and the Politics of Tragedy* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2001).

58. Julia Kristeva, trans., *Hannah Arendt: Life Is a Narrative*, by Frank Collins, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 33.

59. Vasterling, “Cognitive Theory and Phenomenology,” 87.

60. Ibid.

61. Disch, “More Truth than Fact,” 672.

62. Hannah Arendt, *Men in Dark Times* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1968), 22.

63. Arendt, *Human Condition*, 173, and John McDowell, *Mind and World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994; reissued with a new introduction, 1996), 117–19.

64. See Csibra Gergely and György Gergely, “Natural Pedagogy,” *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 13, no. 4 (2009): 148–53.

65. Gallagher and Hutto, “Understanding Others,” 28–29.

66. Daniel D. Hutto, *Folk Psychological Narratives: The Sociocultural Basis of Understanding Reasons* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008), 28, and Gallagher and Hutto, “Understanding Others,” 31.

67. Hutto, *Folk Psychological Narratives*, 37.

68. Ibid., 38.

## Chapter 7

1. Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 279–80.

2. *Ibid.*, 280.

3. *Ibid.*, 318.

4. In “The Crisis in Education,” Arendt notes that the line between childhood and adulthood is not absolute, but determined by various factors such as the nature of the individual, her age, the expectations of the community and so on. She does comment, however, that in “our civilization” maturation is reached at the point where a person graduates from college.

5. Hannah Arendt, “The Crisis in Culture,” in *Between Past and Future* (New York: Viking, 1961), 215, 193.

6. Hannah Arendt, “Reflections on Little Rock,” in *The Portable Hannah Arendt*, ed. Peter Baehr (New York: Penguin Putnam, 2000), 236.

7. *Ibid.*, 236.

8. *Ibid.*, 235.

9. Young-Bruehl, *For Love of the World*, 309, 315–18. Even as recently as 2007, Princeton University’s Program in Law and Public Affairs hosted two panels jointly titled “Hannah Arendt and Little Rock: Reflections on the 50th Anniversary of the Desegregation of Central High School” to debate what she had penned. The first panel sought to “contextualize Arendt’s Reflections on Little Rock with her political thought, emphasizing her delineation of the private, public, and social realms, as well as the European backdrop of her thought.” The second panel addressed more broadly the implications of the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision and federal intervention in Little Rock for the American civil rights movement. “Events: Hannah Arendt and Little Rock: Reflections on the 50th Anniversary of the Desegregation of Central High School,” Princeton Program in Law and Public Affairs, April 27, 2007, retrieved March 28, 2012, <http://lapa.princeton.edu/eventdetail.php?ID=90>.

To see more on the publication of “Reflections on Little Rock,” see Young-Bruehl, *For Love of the World*, 308–18.

10. Young-Bruehl, *For Love of the World*, 317.

11. Arendt, “Reflections on Little Rock,” 236.

12. *Ibid.*, 236.

13. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 186–87.

14. Arendt, “Reflections on Little Rock,” 236.

15. See “Ruby Bridges,” Biography.com, 2012, accessed February 20, 2012, <http://www.biography.com/people/ruby-bridges-475426>, and Robert Coles, *Children of Crisis: A Study of Courage and Fear* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1967), 74–75.

16. “Ruby Bridges,” <http://www.biography.com/people/ruby-bridges-475426>.

17. Davison M. Douglas, “Bush v. Orleans Parish School Board and the Desegregation of New Orleans Schools,” prepared for inclusion in the project *Federal Trials and Great Debates in United States History*, Federal Judicial Center, Federal Judicial History Office, 2005, 8.

18. Coles, *Children of Crisis*.

19. *Ibid.*, 337.

20. *Ibid.*, 46–48. Despite what she’d been taught, Ruby did seem to have a role model, someone she admired because he possessed a kind of personal sovereignty and material abundance that was unusual in her community: her paternal grandfather. In Ruby’s portrait, her grandfather is large and strong, illustrated with precision and shown with a broad and welcoming smile. His skin is completely filled-in with brown crayon, which is significant because Ruby avoided using the colors brown or black except to depict soil. Ruby described what she had drawn as follows: “That’s my momma’s daddy and he has a farm that’s his and no one else’s; and he

has just come home to have his supper. He is tired, but he feels real good and soon he is going to have a big supper and then go to bed” (p. 48).

21. Coles, *Children of Crisis*, 365.

22. *Ibid.*, 51.

23. “The Story,” Ruby Bridges Official Website, 2004, accessed January 27, 2011, <http://www.rubybridges.com/story.htm>.

24. *Ibid.*

25. *Ibid.*

26. “Barbara Henry Addresses the School,” *Roxbury Latin Newsletter*, 2010, accessed February 21, 2012, <http://www.roxburylatin.org/news/detail.aspx?pageaction=ViewSinglePublic&LinkID=4845&ModuleID=72>.

27. Barbara Henry, qtd. in *Through My Eyes*, by Ruby Bridges (New York: Scholastic Press, 1999).

28. Arendt, *Human Condition*, 198–99.

29. Bridget MacDonald, “West Roxbury’s Barbara Henry taught Ruby Bridges during Civil Rights era,” *Wicked Local, GateHouse News Service*, January 20, 2010, accessed February 23, 2012, <http://www.wickedlocal.com/roslindale/news/x1301087296/West-Roxbury-s-Barbara-Henry-taught-Ruby-Bridges-during-Civil-Rights-era#ixzz1nDYadi1z>.

30. Ruby Bridges, *Through My Eyes* (New York: Scholastic Press, 1999), 40–41.

31. Hannah Arendt, “Labor, Work, Action,” in *Amor Mundi*, ed. J. W. Bernauer (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1987), 42.

32. Maurizio Passerin D’Entrèves, *The Political Philosophy of Hannah Arendt* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 82.

33. “The Story,” <http://www.rubybridges.com/story.htm>.

34. Henry, qtd. in *Through My Eyes*, 51.
35. "The Story," <http://www.rubybridges.com/story.htm>.
36. John Steinbeck, *Travels with Charley: In Search of America* (New York: Penguin, 1986), 249.
37. *Ibid.*, 259.
38. *Ibid.*, 256.
39. *Ibid.*, 259.
40. *Ibid.*, 258–59.
41. *Ibid.*, 259.
42. *Ibid.*, 246.
43. *Ibid.*, 247.
44. *Ibid.*
45. Robert Sharenow's 2007 novel for teen readers, *My Mother the Cheerleader*, offers a different perspective on the Cheerleaders in the form of a story about a thirteen-year-old girl whose mother was a protester at William Frantz. Robert Sharenow, *My Mother the Cheerleader* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007).
46. Jack Doyle, "Rockwell & Race, 1963–1968," PopHistoryDig.com, September 22, 2011, accessed April 12, 2012, <http://www.pophistorydig.com/?tag=ruby-bridges-norman-rockwell>.
47. "Look Correspondence: Civil Rights: Lebon, G.L.: fan corresp with racist content re: 'The Problem We All Live With,'" G. L. LeBon, January 6, 1964, Norman Rockwell Museum Digital Collection, 2010, ST1976.20029.012, <http://collections.nrm.org/highlights.jsp>.
48. "Look Correspondence: Civil Rights: Committee for Fair Practices: corresp. re: dinner for Louis Redding; reproduction of 'The Problem We All Live With,'" Ellen P. Williams, February 3, 1964, Norman Rockwell Museum Digital Collection, 2010, ST1976.20029.03, <http://collections.nrm.org/highlights.jsp>.

49. "Civil Rights: United States Information Agency: corresp. re: Pravda newspaper clipping on 'The Problem We all Live With,'" Stan G. Barsky, March 3, 1964, Norman Rockwell Museum Digital Collection, 2010, ST1976.20029.03, <http://collections.nrm.org/highlights.jsp>.

50. Laura Claridge, *Norman Rockwell: A Life* (New York: Random House, 2001), 455.

51. Norman Rockwell and Joe Mugnaini, letter dated November 14, 1967, qtd. in e-mail to author from Corry Kanzenberg, Curator of Archival Collections at the Norman Rockwell Museum, January 29, 2011 (emphasis added).

52. Lisa Jane Disch, *Hannah Arendt and the Limits of Philosophy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 156.

53. Steinbeck, *Travels with Charley*, 256.

54. Bridges, *Through My Eyes*, 56–57.

55. "A Message from Ruby," Ruby Bridges Foundation, 2012, accessed February 28, 2012, <http://rubybridgesfoundation.org/welcome/a-message-from-ruby/>.

56. Bridges, *Through My Eyes*, 46.

57. Bruce A. Ronda, in his book *Intellect and Spirit: The Life and Works of Robert Coles*, notes that Arendt confided in Coles that Erik Erikson's psychoanalytic biographies of Martin Luther and Mahatma Gandhi, "were two of the best novels she had ever read." Coles stated that Arendt intended the comment as a compliment, "although she allowed she would never put it that way to Erikson." Bruce A. Ronda, *Intellect and Spirit: The Life and Works of Robert Coles* (New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1989), 97.

58. Susan Hilligoss, *Robert Coles* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1997), 4; Ronda, *Intellect and Spirit*, 7.

59. Ronda, *Intellect and Spirit*, 6.

60. Coles, *Children of Crisis*, vii.

61. Ronda, *Intellect and Spirit*, 73.
62. Patrick J. Ryan, "How New Is the 'New' Social Study of Childhood? The Myth of a Paradigm Shift," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 38, no. 4 (Spring 2008): 574.
63. Coles, *Children of Crisis*, 79.
64. *Ibid.*, 76.
65. *Ibid.*, 77–79.
66. *Ibid.*, 79.
67. *Ibid.*
68. Bridges, *Through My Eyes*, 48-49.
69. For examples of the range of Coles's work, see: *Bruce Springsteen's America: The People Listening, a Poet Singing* (New York: Random House, 2003); *Rumors of Separate Worlds: Poems* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1989); *Flannery O'Connor's South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980); and *Still Hungry in America*, with photos by Al Clayton (New York: World Publishing Company, 1969).
70. Robert Coles, *The Story of Ruby Bridges*, illust. George Ford (New York: Scholastic, 1995).
71. Robert Coles, *The Moral Intelligence of Children* (New York: Random House, 1997), 4–5. It should be noted that this book is dedicated to four people who Coles calls "living examples" of moral conduct. One of those people is Ruby Bridges.
72. Robert Coles, *The Call of Stories: Teaching and the Moral Imagination* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1989), 129.
73. *Ibid.*, 129.
74. *Ibid.*, 128.

75. "The Power of Children: Making a Difference," The Children's Museum of Indianapolis, accessed February 4, 2011, <http://www.childrensmuseum.org/themuseum/powerofchildren/html/index.html>.

Ryan White was a hemophiliac, who became infected with HIV from a contaminated blood transfusion. He was diagnosed in 1984, a time when HIV and AIDS were widely thought to be contractible from casual contact. Once his diagnosis became known, Ryan was barred from returning to school. When Ryan was later readmitted, protest ensued, families withdrew their children, Ryan and his family was threatened and lengthy legal battles commenced. Although it was a terrible time for Ryan, he helped change the public perception of HIV and AIDS. Since his death in 1990, charities formed in his honor have raised multiple-millions of dollars for research, and the United States Congress passed The Ryan White Comprehensive AIDS Resources Emergency (CARE) Act, which increased the availability of care for uninsured, under-insured and low-income people with AIDS.

76. "American Chronicles: The Art of Norman Rockwell," Norman Rockwell Museum, 2012, January 29, 2011, <http://www.nrm.org/2009/12/american-chronicles-the-art-of-norman-rockwell/>.

77. Claridge, *Norman Rockwell*, 468.

78. Sebastian Smee, "Obama asks to borrow Rockwell painting," Sebastian Smee: Surveying the Art Scene in Boston and Beyond (blog), Boston.com, July 16, 2011, [http://boston.com/ae/blogs/sebastiansmee/2011/07/obama\\_asks\\_to\\_borrow\\_rockwell.html](http://boston.com/ae/blogs/sebastiansmee/2011/07/obama_asks_to_borrow_rockwell.html).

79. Arendt, "Reflections on Little Rock," 236.

80. Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, trans. Joel Anderson (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 134.

81. Steinbeck, *Travels with Charley*, 247.

82. Jonathan Gottschall, *The Storytelling Animal: How Stories Make Us Human* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2012), 58.

83. Sam Kean's article "Red in Tooth and Claw Among the Literati" offers an good overview of the intersection of evolutionary science and literary theory. Sam Kean, "Red in Tooth and Claw Among the Literati," *Science* 332 (May 6, 2011), retrieved April 17, 2012, <http://www.sciencemag.org>.

84. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, qtd. in *Love of the World*, by Young-Bruehl, 473.

85. Arendt, *Human Condition*, 5.

86. Ibid.

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