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HANNAH ARENDT ON ROME:

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To my kids at Blackstone—especially Brandon, Eddie, and Reggie—I hope you one day have the luxury of the stop-and-think in your lives.

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ABSTRACT

Hannah Arendt is regularly acknowledged as one of the most influential political theorists of the Twentieth Century and her concept of action is arguably her largest contribution. By acting we appear to one another as equals, introduce spontaneity into the world, and attempt to create something common and permanent. Yet as intrinsically appealing as 'action' sounds in Arendt's notion of the public, the precise ways in which we act and the ends that we act toward remain vague and ill-defined in her theory. The predominant response to Arendt on action is to turn to her treatment of the Greek world—but these analyses leave us with a vision of action as eruptive, unpredictable, and destabilizing. This interpretation of action does not square well with the rest of Arendt's thought—particularly her emphases on the need for predictability if human affairs are to flourish, and the role that thinking plays as a precursor to action.

Unlike the Arendt's Greek examples, her treatment of Rome provides a way out of this disjunction between action, stability in the world, and thinking. The Roman influence in Arendt's thought is vastly overlooked, but necessary for a holistic understanding of her project. Accordingly, this dissertation has a two-pronged aim: 1) to comprehensively detail Arendt's connection to and use of the Roman world in her body of work, and 2) to demonstrate how her analysis of Cicero in particular can illuminate dimensions otherwise obscured in her theory. An analysis of Arendt on Cicero will fill out the nature of the relationship between thinking and acting, as well as highlight the motivating principles that animate our actions in the world. I argue that Cicero's emphasis on fellowship—and the principles for action that accompany it—is strikingly similar to Arendt's understanding of solidarity. A pairing of the two provides new insights on the 'why' and 'what' of thinking and acting in Arendt's theory of the public.

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List of Abbreviations

Works by Hannah Arendt

ATC	"Authority in the Twentieth Century"
BPF	"Preface: The Gap Between Past and Future"
CC	"The Crisis in Culture: Its Social and Its Political Significance"
CH	"The Concept of History: Ancient and Modern"
CR	"Collective Responsibility"
EJ	*Eichmann in Jerusalem*
ET	"The End of Tradition"
EHR	"Epilogue: Reflections on the Hungarian Revolution"
EV	"A Reply To Eric Voegelin"
FK	"Franz Kafka: A Revaluation"
FHM	"From Hegel to Marx"
GTI	"The Great Tradition: I. Law and Power"
GTNT	"The Great Tradition and The Nature of Totalitarianism"
HC	*The Human Condition*
HDT	"On Humanity in Dark Times: Thoughts About Lessing"
IP	"Introduction *into* Politics"
MWPT	"Karl Marx and the Tradition of Western Political Thought"
LM	*The Life of the Mind*
OHA	"On Hannah Arendt"
OR	*On Revolution*
OV	*On Violence*
PRD	"Personal Responsibility Under Dictatorship"
QMP	"Some Questions on Moral Philosophy"
SP	"Sonning Prize Acceptance Speech"
TMA	"Tradition and the Modern Age"
TPT	"The Tradition of Political Thought"
WB	"Walter Benjamin: 1892-1940"
WA	"What Is Authority?"

Works by Cicero

de Ami.	*de Amicitia*
De fin.	*De Finibus*
De leg.	*De legibus*
De off.	*De officiis*
De ora.	*De oratore*
De rep.	*De re publica*
Tusc.	*Tusculan Disputations*

Introduction

Hannah Arendt is regularly acknowledged as one of the most influential political theorists of the twentieth century and her concept of action is arguably her largest contribution. By acting we appear to one another as equals, introduce spontaneity into the world, and attempt to create something common and permanent. Yet as intrinsically appealing as 'action' sounds in Arendt's notion of the public, the precise ways in which we act, and the ends that we act toward, remain vague and ill defined in her theory. Why is this the case? What is it about the notion of 'acting' that makes it so hard to pin down its content? The predominant response to this question is to turn to Arendt's treatment of the Greek world to excavate answers. These analyses leave us with a vision of action as eruptive, unpredictable, and destabilizing. This interpretation of action does not square well with the rest of Arendt's thought—particularly her emphasis on the need for predictability if human affairs are to flourish and the role that thinking plays as a precursor to action. My response to this conundrum is that Arendt is torn between what she sees as the example par excellence of the public sphere (the Greek *polis*) and the exemplary political actions that she attributes to the Romans. While the indebtedness of Arendt's thought to Greek sources has been argued for decades, the Roman influence is both vastly overlooked and necessary for a holistic understanding of her project. This dissertation

accepts that Arendt's notion of action may owe its linguistic and historical origins to the Greeks, but argues that the principles guiding action and the character of those actors are inherently Roman. This project has a two-pronged aim: 1) to comprehensively detail Arendt's connection to and use of the Roman world in her body of work, and 2) to demonstrate how her analysis of Cicero in particular can illuminate dimensions otherwise obscured in her theory. An analysis of Arendt on Cicero with fill out the nature of the relationship between thinking and acting, as well as highlight the motivating principles that animate our actions in the world. It is my intent to irrefutably bring the Romans into the conversation of Arendtian scholarship, but also in doing so to help reintroduce their unique contributions to the field of political theory more generally.

Why Not the Greeks?

This position is far from non-controversial. The vast majority of the work done on Arendt—either in direct relation to her concept of action and the content of the public or on her philosophical debts more broadly—largely ignores the influence of Roman thought. Because of her elevation of the polis model, and her extensive coverage of Plato and Aristotle, on the surface it seems counterintuitive to look to a different culture and philosophical viewpoint to elucidate her theory of action. However, even *The Human Condition*—traditionally seen as her 'Greek text'—is not without contradictions, and what is noteworthy is where those contradictions lay. Arendt mythologizes the polis. It was the space where men could appear to one another as equals in a public arena. This publicity allowed for the freedom from private life and the demands of necessity. The public and the actors within the walls of the polis were guaranteed the potential for permanence in the world—though immortality and glory, the telling of their deeds to future generations. The

polis becomes the model for the foundation of subsequent political life, and provides the standard by which we can assess our own context and potential for action.

Yet within this depiction of the Greek city-state some very significant problems arise for the mode of political life Arendt is attempting to put forth. First, though action in the public sphere is the central feature of the polis, the Greek notion of action is a limited one. More specifically, Arendt states, "action…engages in founding and preserving political bodies"—but the Greeks don't consider founding, or legislating, to be political acts (HC 8-9). They actually view founding and legislating to be pre-political acts of fabrication; as things that needed to be taken care of "before political activity could begin" (HC 194). It was in fact the Romans, "perhaps the most political people we have known," who incorporated the notions of founding and legislating—and by definition the conditions for action itself—into the correct sphere of activity.[1] Second, when Arendt is read closely the polis doesn't appear to provide as great a promise of permanence as Arendt initially attributes to it. Arendt states that both the *polis* and the *res publica* are guarantors "against the futility of individual life," and serve as "the space[s] protected against this futility and reserved for the relative permanence, if not immortality, of mortals" (HC 56). Based on this comparison, we might be led to think of both models as providing the physical permanence of locale and institutions that give shape and durability to the public space. For Rome this assessment is absolutely valid.[2] However, when we unpack the characteristics that she later attributes to the polis, this conclusion doesn't seem to stand as strong. In fact, for

[1] HC 7. Arendt refers, albeit breifly, to Rome's "political genius" in light of this inclusion (HC 195).

[2] "Not the Greeks, but the Romans, were really rooted in the soil, and the word *patria* derives its full meaning from Roman history. The foundation of a new body politic—to the Greeks an almost commonplace experience—became to the Romans the central, decisive, unrepeatable beginning of their whole history" (WA 120-21).

Arendt, "the polis properly speaking, is not the city-state in its physical location; it is the organization of the people as it arises out of acting and speaking together, and its true space lies between people living together for this purpose, no matter where they happen to be" (HC 198). Out of this passage, the polis exists as a far more flexible and potentially displaced arena of human activity, and not one that necessarily provides a physical basis or narrative that can insulate humanity's fragility. Both points taken together leave us with a confused understanding of her polis example and leave her notion of action—"the condition…of all political life"—both obscured and on remarkably unsteady ground.[3]

Why Rome and Why Cicero?

The 'why Rome' question is far more straightforward to answer than the 'why Cicero' one. On a purely contextual and chronological note, we know that Arendt planned to write a book on politics and action—and unsurprising in light of her estimation of the Romans in *The Human Condition*, we also know that this text was to draw predominantly from the Roman world. Jerome Kohn outlines Arendt's intended project in his Introduction to *The Promise of Politics*.[4] Arendt's essay "Introduction *into* Politics" was her initial attempt to formulate the terms of this book-length endeavor. Within this exploratory essay, what is clear is that Arendt draws significantly and primarily on Rome to fill out her account of political life. The full text was to be a clarification of "the *meaning* of political experience" and showcase "analyses of what Arendt means by action—venturing forth in speech and deed in the company of one's peers, beginning something anew whose end cannot be known in advance, founding a public realm (*res publica* or republic), [and]

[3] HC 7.
[4] See *vii-xix*

promising and forgiving others" (ix, viii). The Roman contribution to Arendt's interpretation of action and the public world is thus textually verifiable prior to *The Human Condition*[5]—and can be seen either explicitly or in the background of each of her subsequent works. An underlying hypothesis (though admittedly one that is impossible to prove) of this project is that one of the reasons Arendt never finished her 'Roman text' is because content-wise the theories that would have underlain it are present in everything else she penned—culminating most clearly in *The Life of the Mind*.

Beyond this bibliographical aside, even in her completed works Arendt consistently and emphatically refers to Rome as the model of political experience par excellence, and cites four main areas where the Romans served as true originators: they gave us the concepts of authority, culture, humanism, and an alternative understanding of law.[6] Because Arendt is so clear in her writings about the Roman origins of these concepts most commentators will at least acknowledge and accept the presence of these non-Greek elements in her work. However, almost no one treats these elements as foundational to her project in total. Arendt's use of Rome as a city and exemplar of political experience provides us with a groundwork upon which we can resituate the focus of her theory. This groundwork in and of itself does not provide us with the philosophical leverage to discover new avenues within her work, but it does provide the context for the thinker who does precisely that—Cicero.

In order to illuminate the content of the Roman influence on Arendt's theory we need a voice through which the former can speak. Cicero is the most appropriate figure for

[5] The initial plans and outlining of *Introduction into Politics* date to 1955. *The Human Condition* was published in 1958.

[6] See WA 104, CC 211, 224. Arendt also attributes the development of a 'common sense' to the Romans (TPT 42). Each of these topics will be dealt with fully in Chapter One.

a variety of reasons, but there are three foundational connections between the two thinkers: parallel political experiences, shared preoccupations with the tension between thought and action, and compatible views on men's relationship to one another and to the world. As a contextual point, both Arendt and Cicero experienced a collapse of their social, cultural, and political worlds: Arendt when she was confronted with the emergence of totalitarianism, Cicero when he saw the Republic fall. Both thinkers were faced with not only the destruction of politics on a participatory and experiential level, but also on a philosophical scale—they witnessed the destruction of the accepted terms and spaces of public action and were left questioning what we as actors can do in response to crises. Second, both thinkers are preoccupied with the relationship between thinking and political practice. Despite scholarly interpretive bias, Cicero is not regurgitating Platonic philosophical thought in Roman garb.[7] Cicero *opposes* Plato's view of the relationship between politics and philosophy, and supplies a new interpretation that unites them without antagonism. Though *De re publica* and *De legibus* are written in the format and on the topics of Plato's *Republic* and *Laws*, they are *responses* to those works and as such highlight many of the shortcomings of the relationships discussed within them. Cicero's political philosophy is a novel one that can aid us in reevaluating the relationship between Arendt's *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa*—demonstrating how action is intrinsically tied to thinking.[8] Lastly, Arendt is concerned with our alienation from the world, and in her view Cicero provides us with the first account of how "thinking means following a sequence

[7] See Canovan (1992) 143, 219; Morford (2002) 13; Zetzel (2008) xi.

[8] In *The Human Condition*, Arendt rejects the tradition that elevated the *vita contemplativa* over the *vita activa*. Part of this dissertation's argument will be that Arendt rejects the *vita contemplativa* entirely and that Cicero's account of thought in relation to action demonstrates a way in which Arendt's revised version of the *vita activa* might be structured. This discussion is the topic of Chapter Four.

of reasoning that will lift you to a viewpoint outside the world of appearances as well as outside your own life" (LM 160). Unlike the Platonic theory of forms which draws one's gaze farther and farther away from the things in the world that have specific form, in "Scipio's Dream" Cicero shows how the act of thinking draws us temporarily outside of the world, but only insofar as we can look back and gain new insights on the conditions of the world itself. By situating the actor in between the realm of thought *and* the space of action, Cicero's philosophy gives focus, content, and principle to the terms of action alluded to in the title *Between Past and Future*. A reevaluation of Arendt's theory alongside Cicero's political philosophy will lessen or eliminate "the trouble" we as actors face when "every new human being…inserts himself between an infinite past and an infinite future, [and] must discover and ploddingly pave it anew…settling down in the gap between past and future" (BPF 13).

Investigating a New Thought Train: Getting Away from the Greeks

As previously mentioned, the interpretive stance of this project is unorthodox. In fact, save for a handful of works, there is a fairly entrenched and decades long bias against placing Rome—let alone Cicero—as a central feature in Arendt's work. Prior to Margaret Canovan's *Hannah Arendt: A Reinterpretation of her Political Thought* (1992), the secondary literature largely ignored the Roman influence on Arendt altogether. Interpretive blinders and a more general anti-Roman bias within the academic world[9] allowed for authors to blatantly ignore and deliberately cut Rome out of the Arendtian equation. As previously stated, in *The Human Condition*, Arendt referred to the Romans as "the most political

[9] For a pithy account of this intellectual trend from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, see Hammer's "The Romans in Political Thought" (2008).

people we have ever known"—yet in an analysis of said text Peter Fuss asserted that one of "the guiding themes" for Arendt was "that the Athenian citizenry of Pericles' time…constituted the greatest and *possibly the last* authentically "political" community in Western history" (158, italics mine). Accounts like this are simply nonsensical chronologically, but what is worse they limit the tools with which we can begin to clarify and understand Arendt's larger project. Similarly, in "Hannah Arendt and the Classical Republican Tradition" one might reasonably expect Rome to figure front and center in the discussion. Instead, Patricia Springborg goes on to explain how Arendt's republicanism was in fact Aristotelian and later informed by Machiavelli and the nineteenth-century German tradition—all without bothering to mention or spend time on the fact that Machiavelli wasn't concerned with Aristotle and certainly wasn't writing about the polis in *The Discourses on Titus Livy*. These reconstructions—and Fuss and Springborg are merely two examples of a nearly universal trend in the scholarship—deliberately leave out half of ancient tradition and do a severe disservice to our abilities to think clearly about history and to understand the content of Arendt's thought. Thankfully, over the past decade or so there have been definite advances in the attention given to Arendt's Rome. Unfortunately many, if not most, of these attempts to incorporate an account of Arendt's Roman 'thought train' have been either cursory in nature or merely summarized—and not analyzed—Arendt's arguments on authority or tradition.[10] As such, these attempts have not been sufficient to stem the overwhelming tide within the literature of thinking of Arendt as a primarily Greek-influenced thinker.

[10] These are the two primary and obvious themes that scholars seem most comfortable ceding ground to Roman influence on. See Canovan 201-204, 206-208, 218-224. See Bowen-Moore 135-141.

Canovan wages one of the earliest criticisms—and resituates her own stance on Arendt's Hellenism—against viewing Arendt's theory as polis-centric. She urges us to "abandon the conventional picture of Arendt judging modern politics in the light of a straightforward and unambiguous theory of action derived chiefly from an idealization of Athens" (138). The interpretive lens that Canovan reexamines Arendt under takes a historically nuanced stance on Arendt's methodological process. But while her attempt is a huge leap forward from those prior, it still fails to provide a satisfying account of Arendt's non-Greek sources. Canovan argues that in order to make sense of the historical examples in Arendt's works, we need to reevaluate what we imagine history as showing us. By this argument, Arendt was not "trying to revive ancient forms, but…using forgotten experiences as a source of enlightenment about fundamental human capacities" (140). She posits that we can view Arendt's use of historical cases in one of two ways: (1) as paradigm—the ability of a "phenomenological impulse to get behind abstractions to experience"; or (2) as 'pearl'—the "deliberately arbitrary use of fragments recovered from the past" that illuminate "the rich and the strange" (Canovan 4). Admirably, Canovan tries to make the case that Homeric Greece, Rome, and Christianity can each be viewed as paradigms in Arendt's thought, but in the end her application of these analytical categories falls short. She may use the language of extractable experience and 'paradigm' with regards to the non-polis cases, but her treatment is too cursory and superficial for them to be anything but shining examples of 'the rich and the strange'. In the overarching analysis, the polis remains the paradigm, and Rome serves merely a noteworthy, though disconnected, supplement to the lessons of that experience. To her credit, Canovan does provide a thorough summary of Arendt's presentation of the Roman concept of authority and

republicanism, but unfortunately also summarily dismisses the city as philosophically void of original content.[11]

As the editor of the most significant collected volume to date on Arendt's corpus, as well as a political theorist who has spent considerable time on the role ancient political thought plays in contemporary theory, Dana Villa also warrants our examination. Though in agreement with Canovan on the Roman origins of Arendt's republicanism,[12] Villa's actual consideration of Rome is limited to one-liners.[13] His treatment of *The Human Condition* is resolutely and unapologetically polis-centric. For him, Arendt is "the foremost modern proponent of a Greek-inspired participatory politics" and asserts that it is even a "banality to observe" that her notion of political experience was modeled on their example (Villa 2001 247, 249). While the case could be made that an indictment against Villa for pushing aside Roman influence in a text explicitly devoted to the Greeks (*Socratic Citizenship*) is a misplaced criticism, there is a particular lapse in his employment of 'culture' that opens up space for critique. Villa states that Arendt "tends to view authentic politics as a form of culture" where "where citizens must approach the *res publica*" with a certain "care for the world" (Villa 2001 25 4). Though he does state in passing that this "worldly, lasting quality" of culture is Roman—he also explicitly attributes it to the Greeks. This move is both inaccurate with regard to what Arendt actually wrote, and it undercuts a distinctly Roman political contribution and misleadingly hands it over to a people who never possessed it by her account. For Arendt both the "word and concept" of culture are absolutely Roman in

[11] Canovan 143, 219
[12] Villa 2000 15
[13] He refers to a "distant past" that is inclusive of both Greece and Rome (Villa 2000 13); mentions Cicero along with a panapoly of other republican thinkers (Villa 2000 15); and employs the term *res publica* in relation to a discussion of care for the world (Villa 2001 254).

origin (CC 211). It was in fact the Greeks who didn't know "how to take care of and how to preserve" their own heritage or develop "nature into a dwelling place for a people…[or] take care of the monuments of the past"—but the Romans (CC 212-213). Yet Villa sidesteps this point and seemingly equates Greek and Roman contributions as interchangeable. Moreover, he then goes on to confusingly 'illuminate' his usage of *res publica* with the figure of Pericles—who most certainly was never a member of such a "public thing." Though this examination does no harm to Villa's overall thesis on Socratic citizenship, it does highlight a fairly significant problem in the interpretive approaches regarding Arendt's relationship to the Romans. In almost any other author, this sort of misreading could be considered negligible, but when seen in the work of one of the foremost Arendtian scholars this example highlights how pervasive the bias to discount Roman influence is in the broader literature.

The danger in dismissing Roman sources is that they have the ability to draw out consequential aspects of Arendt's thought—by leaving them out, many interpreters simply end up getting her theory wrong. A prime example of an instance where leaving out the Roman influence matters greatly can be observed in George Kateb's account of action in "Political Action: Its Nature and Advantages." He makes the case that for Arendt "the content of…action is politics itself. The deliberation and decisions have to do with the safety of the preconditions of deliberation and discussion, whether the project is to create a new form of government, or to maintain an existing form" (133). This assertion is largely agreeable and helpful in formulating a response to 'what does it mean to act?', but his conclusions are led astray because of his inattention to the inconsistencies of Arendt's deployment of the polis as example and his sole reliance on her use of the Greeks as

evidence.[14] That action focuses on politics is true. That action centers on the preservation and foundation of a political space is also valid. But that the Greeks failed to include the acts of legislating and founding in their account of politics is also true—so how can we then say that the evidence for the content of action and politics can be located purely in the Greek model? The problem with leaving the Romans out of such a discussion is exactly the problem that Kateb runs into: If there is no concept of foundation and permanence (which the Romans provide in spades), what you're left with is a politics of "eruption" and "new beginning" and the conclusion one reaches from this estimation is that action must be "rare and either episodic or short-lived" (134, 144). This conception of action tells us nothing about its ability to animate a common, shared, or even mildly permanent public world—it only elucidates those occasional blips that disrupt that notion of political life.[15] While the argument put forth may be internally consistent, it isn't representative of Arendt's larger theoretical project.

Against this backdrop of Hellenic bias, there are a few aberrations in Arendtian scholarship. However, more often than not when they do question and reject Arendt as a predominantly Greek thinker, they don't turn to Rome for illumination. Roy Tsao, in "Arendt Against Athens: Rereading the Human Condition", also takes issue with the scholarly bias in Arendt's presentation of action and argues that her theory "fundamentally

[14] Kateb does briefly mention the Romans, but only in passing and as evidence backing up other non-Roman arguments. For example, he quotes Arendt on the Romans and the power of promise making via contracts, but he doesn't expand on the passage and immediately jumps to another text (143).

[15] There are some exceptions within these Hellenocentric accounts of action, most notably Markell's (2006) assessment of action and beginning. This project shares the interpretation that beginning also encompasses those actions that are "present in moments that satisfy our expectations, follow existing patterns, or continue observable regularities;" that "nothing about beginning requires a break with the terms of an existing order, or resistance to regularity as such" (7).

departs from the one she attributes to the Greeks" (98). However, he then proceeds to make the case for the Kantian influence on her mode of action. Tsao does give brief mention to Arendt's insistence on the Romans as the political people par excellence,[16] but he uses them only as evidence to demonstrate Arendt's disjunction with the Greeks and not to more fully explain their contributions to the theory as such.

Jacques Taminiaux is one of the few scholars who takes a directly oppositional stance to the dominant trends in Arendtian scholarship and turns to Rome for theoretical clarity. By his account, if we take on board the Roman influences in her work and examine the incongruities in Arendt's understanding of action "neither the alleged spontaneism nor the alleged Graecomania hold up under examination" (Taminiaux 165). In order to redeem action we must solve its 'Greek' problems of irreversibility and unpredictability[17]—and in Arendt's theory the answers to both predicaments come from Rome. Action's irreversibility can be remedied through forgiveness, and its unpredictability through promise making. Though the most prominent example of forgiveness in Arendt's theory comes to us via Jesus of Nazareth, Taminiaux rightly homes in on the passage where she actually attributes it to the Roman principle of "spar[ing] the vanquished" and "commutt[ing] death sentences" (171). Promise making in politics is a direct byproduct of Rome's legal system and the inviolability of covenant making (Taminiaux 171). The Greeks not only lacked the ability to forgive and make promises in politics, but in neglecting them also eliminated the possibility of faith and hope to make appearances in public affairs. To take Taminiaux's argument even further, if faith and hope are the characteristics that provide us with the "full experience" of natality—the "miracle that saves the world, the realm of human affairs,

[16] Tsao 109, 114
[17] In this sense Taminiaux can be seen as solving the problems laid out by Kateb.

from…ruin"—then the fact that the Greeks didn't possess these attributes also draws into question the Hellenocentricity of Arendt's concept of natality.[18] By highlighting the shakiness of Greek-dominant interpretations Taminiaux provides a great vantage point to reassess two foundational parts of Arendt's political thought—action and natality.

Despite the efforts of Tsao and Taminiaux to break with the dominant interpretive trends, a pitfall that they (as well as their scholarly adversaries) encounter is the clumping together of 'Rome' as a unified example in Arendt's thought—without taking up the thinkers and writers that created this 'Roman' paradigm. Not one of the above-mentioned authors takes up Cicero, Virgil, or Marcus Aurelius (just to name a few of the Roman thinkers Arendt explicitly draws from) as individual and unique contributors. By mischaracterizing Rome as a singular thing it is no wonder that the vast majority of these authors skip over the importance of the contribution that Rome's thinkers made to Arendt's theoretical project. It would be unimaginable for any Arendt scholar to treat all of 'Greece' as a singular entity—a move of this sort would make us blind to vast and integral points in Arendt's work, and make us unable to disentangle the distinct contributions from Socrates from those made by Plato or by Aristotle that enliven and go to the very heart of her theory. What exactly are we missing theoretically when we do this with Rome?

There are two noteworthy exceptions to this criticism.[19] Dirk Moses highlights Arendt's "preoccupation with the republican lineage…[of] ancient Rome," and provides an insightful analysis of her theory of the public that connects it with Cicero's writings on

[18] HC 247

[19] There are a handful of additional other scholars that focus on Arendt and her use of specific Roman thinkers. See Seery (1999) on Virgil in relation to founding, and McClure (1997) on Arendt's use of Cicero with regard to judgment.

empire (872-73).[20] Dean Hammer also explicitly brings Cicero's role in Arendt's thought into serious consideration. Hammer's largest contribution is to construct Cicero as a valid resource within Arendt's corpus. He draws out numerous parallels between the two thinkers that allow us to reassess our evaluation of a multitude of Arendt's theories. Arendt's depiction of Cicero's otherworldliness in "Scipio's Dream" provides a novel vantage point for actors to reorient themselves between thought and action—to truly 'think what we are doing' and who we are acting for (Hammer 2008). Cicero's concept of culture provides us with fertile ground to flesh out the content of Arendt's care for and love of the world (Hammer 2002 140). Their shared view on the centrality of common sense in judging and the necessity of a cultivated mind has the capacity to shed new light on what Arendt means by thinking and judging (Hammer 2002 142). More importantly however, Hammer's interpretive reorientation provides new opportunities to think through some of the stickier and more obscure portions of Arendt's thought. This alignment between Cicero and Arendt can aid us to better understand how philosophy and contemplation relate to politics and action, how history and tradition—even if we've been severed from them—can be used to reorient ourselves in the world. And when we do contemplate our shared world from an alternate position, with what principles might we go about resuscitating it? Hammer provides a good jumping off point for these concerns, but there is still much work to be done in addressing them. As such, the primary focus of this dissertation will be to lay out a coherent account of Arendt's Roman foundations from which we can reassess the aim and animating principles of her political thought. More importantly, incorporating Cicero

[20] This isn't to agree with Moses' conclusions. However, his article does highlight how treating Arendt on Cicero and Rome seriously can lead to new paths of interpretation in her thought.

into the analysis will allow us to give shape and content to the type and character of action that we undertake when we act in public.

Before detailing the trajectory of this argument, there needs to be a brief discussion of the terms and scope regarding my treatment of Arendt and her style more generally. On a methodological note, I want to be clear that the aim of this project is 'to get Arendt right'—to do justice to her theoretical project. I fully recognize that many of her accounts of history and the individuals and events that animate it can be both highly editorialized and idiosyncratic—and on certain occasions even border on fictive. The point of this exercise is not to take Arendt to task on the factuality of these interpretive liberties, but to see how the oddness of those accounts may in fact lead us to a fuller understanding of her project as a whole.

The first chapter, "Arendt's Roman Foundation: Authority, Culture, Humanism, and a New Public Space," focuses on the intellectual and political debts that, in Arendt's estimation, we owe to the Roman world. Though many of these features have been taken up individually in Arendtian scholarship they have not before been treated as a coherent whole. She labels four distinct and original insights. First, the Romans supplied a tangible and experientially derived foundation for political life: authority. Second, they introduced the concepts of culture and humanism. Finally, she argues that the Romans departed significantly from the Greeks in their understanding of law. In this light I contrast *lex* and *nomos* in order to see how the former changed the very character of the law via its reliance on contracting, promising, and forgiveness. The attributes laid out in this chapter demonstrate how a Roman public stands in conceptual opposition to a Greek one, thus

providing a rich new locus to explore what it means to act in the Arendtian sense of the term.

Chapter Two, "Arendt and the 'Cicero Problem': Disentangling the Relationship Between the Roman World and Greek Philosophy," traces Arendt's treatment of Rome as a site of conceptual engagement and her views on Cicero as its leading thinker. A longstanding and predominant bias in both Political Science and Classics is that the Romans were largely derivative of the Greeks. Thankfully this view has been recently, but unfortunately also very gradually, falling out of favor. Dismissing this interpretive bias from the start, this chapter argues that Arendt viewed the Romans, and Cicero specifically, as a fruitful and viable source of thought. However, Arendt's writings do not universally reflect this position and to prove my thesis, the chapter outlines the chronological evolution of her views on the topic. The chapter concludes by thoroughly demonstrating that by the end of her life Arendt came to view Cicero as an original contributor—and one whose work she explicitly builds upon—to a new theory of action and thought.

The third chapter, "Cicero's Political Philosophy: Thinking, Fellowship, and the Purpose of Political Life," focuses on precisely those parts of his project that can be seen to have parallels in Arendt's work. Because of prior scholarly bias there does not exist a substantial amount of analysis that takes Cicero seriously as an original thinker. As such, this chapter serves a foundational purpose and outlines the three primary components of a Ciceronian political philosophy: the explication of thinking and acting as seen in "Scipio's Dream;" a presentation of our duties and responsibilities to one another; and the character of the forward-looking drive of political agents.

The following chapter, "Arendt the Ciceronian: Situating Ourselves in the World," takes up Arendt's fraught relationships to the tradition and outlines her methodology for incorporating elements of our past into a tangible and relevant rubric. Here I argue that Arendt rejects the *vita contemplativa* entirely and in its stead constructs a new *vita activa*—one that recognizes thinking and acting in the world to be equal and necessary activities that work in tandem with one another. This chapter then concludes with a presentation of how this relationship between thinking and acting is most clearly manifested in Arendt's thought by Cicero's thought-trains and the practice of relativization.

Having posited an answer to the question of how we act, the final chapter turns to the question of why we act. Chapter Five, "Arendt's Roman Models: Authority, Action, and Solidarity," focuses on both the theoretical and institutional considerations of action. The first portion of this chapter details a novel theory of authority—located in both structure and practice—that emerges from a parallel reading of Arendt on the council system and on Rome. In order for our shared world to have permanence it must focus on preservation as well as allow for spontaneity at the same time. By analyzing her two concepts of authority—one as demonstrated in Rome, the other in the council system—we are presented with a public that draws its source of authority from two points. One source is foundational and directed toward the past; the other is immediate and emerges from our interactions with one another. This dual construction of authority relies on our taking into account of both of its elements before we commit ourselves to act. This type of thinking makes us active agents within ourselves as well as in the world, and eliminates the possibility of thoughtlessness. The type of public that results is one that takes into account what we have done, and then seeks to improve it by judging what needs to be done in order

uphold the terms of our relationships with one another. This chapter concludes by examining the way in which Cicero's principle of fellowship can be read into Arendt's concept of solidarity. This in turn sheds light on a firm principle for action in Arendt's theory. What we are left with is a novel and illuminating understanding of action and an account of Arendt's Roman heritage through which all of her works can—and should—be reexamined.

CHAPTER ONE

Arendt's Roman Foundation: Authority, Culture, Humanism, and a New Public Space

> The Romans were the twin people of the Greeks, first because they derived their origin as a people from the same event, the Trojan War, and second insofar as they considered themselves descendants not of Romulus, but of Aeneas, just as the Greeks believed themselves to be descendants of the Achaeans.[1]

If we are to think of the Romans as the Greeks' twin then we should also imagine that relationship as fraternal, and not identical. Though each claimed the same lineage, and are inexorably linked historically and philosophically, it would be a grave mistake to undercut or ignore the distinct contributions of the neglected and less popular sibling. The Roman political experience was vastly different from the Greek one—in its foundations, animating principles, and conceptual structures. The *res publica* was not simply the *polis* by another name, and the contributions that Roman politics made to Arendt's thought should not be underestimated. In this chapter we will outline the four distinct and original insights on the composition and nature of public life that Arendt attributes to "the most political people we have known."[2] First, they supplied a tangible and experientially derived foundation for political life. This foundation served as a wellspring of authority that infused all aspects of public life. The Roman concept of authority depends upon the tripartite relationship between the physical and legal foundation of the city, the preservation of the tradition built upon this moment, and a civic religion that was coeval with and inextricable

[1] IP 173
[2] HC 7

from political life. This "Roman formula" created a stable and coherent place in the world for political action, and guaranteed that space for future generations.[3] The Romans also introduced the concepts of 'culture,' in the sense of caring for the world, and humanism. Despite borrowing heavily from the Greeks in philosophy, the Romans did not simply regurgitate what the Greeks wrote, but preserved it, tempered it, and altered it to suit their own political experience[4]—leading to a new understanding of care for a common world, and a changed location for philosophy within it. Finally, the Romans departed significantly from the Greeks in their understanding of law, and the subsequent nature of the relationships that animated the public sphere were constructed along very different lines. In this light we will look at the Roman *lex* and the Greek *nomos* in order to see how the former changed the very character of the law through the Roman understanding of contracting, promising, and forgiving. The attributes laid out in this chapter will demonstrate Arendt's recognition of the wholly Roman contributions to the political world, and will illuminate how a Roman 'public' stands in conceptual opposition to a Greek one, thus providing a rich new locus to explore what it means to 'act' in the Arendtian sense of the term.

Authority

Out of the four Roman elements to be discussed in this chapter, the concept of authority—for Arendt—is the most directly related to the public sphere insofar as it secures the space of judgment and its terms of action. It is also the most conceptually tangled. All of Roman political experience is derived from a singular, unrepeatable,

[3] TPT 51
[4] The Roman relationship to Greek philosophy will be dealt with in Chapter Two.

foundational moment.[5] From this founding spring the laws, institutions, and lineage of the Roman people. It is "the one political experience which brought authority as word, concept, and reality into our history"—and is thus entirely Roman in origin (WA 136, 104). She argues that authority can be invested in either the person or the office;[6] and that in either case what defines authority as *authority* is the "unquestioning recognition by those who are asked to obey" (OV 45). This formulation presents authority as a binary option: it is located in *either* the office *or* the person, *either* an authority in the public sphere *or* an authority in the private one. In the Roman case, authority takes its public form in the shape of influence, wisdom, and historical weight—and as such, it cannot stand by itself. Authority is built upon the interplay between foundation, tradition, and religion. Any attempt to understanding them apart from one another is counterproductive, of not impossible, in Arendt's view.[7]

According to Arendt, the foundational moment—immortalized by Virgil in *The Aeneid*—marks the coeval start of Roman tradition, religion, and the emergence of authority. The 'Roman formula' of these three variables entails that "the authority of those who witnessed its foundation as a unique historical event" have their testimony "kept alive by tradition"—much of which is preserved through religious observance (TPT 51). The substance of the foundation is far from trivial, as these three aspects depend upon it for their legitimacy and stability. Though it is true that this myth is dependent on Greek tradition, it is also the case that the canonical Roman understanding was constructed and

[5] TPT 59, WA 121
[6] She uses the examples of the parent (in the home) or the teacher (in school), and the senate (in public life), to demonstrate this distinction.
[7] TPT 49, 59

manipulated in order to solidify Aeneas' Trojan—and non-Greek—origins.[8] Adopting the Trojan War and its Greek baggage as their starting point provided the Romans access to the Hellenic cultural and political world, all the while "announc[ing] Rome's distinctiveness from that world" and demonstrating their ability to "convert[ed] Hellenic traditions to meet their own political and cultural purposes" (Gruen 31). In turn, the resulting tradition and devices employed in its construction became crystalized in remembrance and passed down from generation to generation. This keeps the record of the past and its actors' deeds alive insofar as they are not forgotten, but also alive in the sense that the authority they generate helps to dictate the terms of the present. Thus, this tradition became "the thread which safely guided [them] through the vast realms of the past, but…also [served as] the chain fettering each successive generation to a predetermined aspect of the past" (WA 94). However, tradition is not simply a backward looking tool for emulation and mimicry. Being strongly oriented to the past allows for actors to locate themselves in relation to the future as well. The 'guidance' of tradition provides the basis for action in the present, as it gives direction for what—laws, principles, culture—ought to be preserved via augmentation. Tradition also provides examples of how to accomplish such ends all the while preserving the space required for future actors to perpetuate the same. As Arendt argues, "to be engaged in politics meant first and foremost to preserve the founding of the city of Rome," and those deeds became "transformed into an example" for future actors (WA 120, 123).[9] In this sense, tradition does not exist as a static thing, but as a continuously supplemented narrative.

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[8] See Gruen, Erich S. "The Making of the Trojan Legend" in *Cultural and National Identity in Republican Rome*. It is his thesis that Aeneas' heritage, direction, and scope of voyages were ambiguous until becoming standardized in 3rd or 4th century Roman accounts.

[9] Politically, these examples have an explicitly educational quality to them (WA 119).

Roman religion is tied up with tradition in this formulation because it was seen as a "holy duty to preserve what had been handed down" (TPT 49). As Arendt quotes from Cicero: "In no other realm does human excellence approach so closely the paths of the gods as it does in…the preservation of already founded communities" (WA 121). To honor tradition was to tie present action to the past. To practice one's religion meant to take on civic duties and to preserve one's state, and in this sense "religious and political activity could be considered as almost identical" (WA 121). Religion and politics did not occur apart from one another in Roman life. Auspices were read before political endeavors were undertaken,[10] magistrates—not priests—presided over many religious ceremonies, and religion was cast in decidedly utilitarian terms.[11] "Political and religious life were interlocked, while each contributed its own focus and source of authority" (Lintott 183). To practice this civic religion and uphold tradition means that the authority of the founding is bolstered. The trinity of authority-tradition-religion—"the greatest triumph of the Roman spirit"—works because each pillar stabilizes the other (TPT 51). By Arendt's account, this trinity was so effective at creating stability that when the Roman Republic, and then the Roman Empire, fell the Catholic Church adopted it for its own use—and it was this "Roman formula" that allowed the Church to endure unchecked in its authority until the Reformation (TPT 50, WA 125-128). This augmentation or continual construction of

[10] Arendt points out that unlike the Greek use of oracles, "the religiously binding force of the *auspices*…does not hint at the object course of future events but reveals merely divine approval or disapproval of decisions made by men" (WA 123).

[11] See Lintott 182-190 on the specific relationship between magistrates, priests, the people, and cults. As for religion as utility, Lintott cites Cicero on the necessity of intermingling civic and religious life as provision for the populaces' respect for and adherence to law, oaths, and treaties (182).

tradition binds men to the past, as well as to one another because they share the common bonds of space, memory, narrative, and purpose.[12]

The space provided for by authority is physical as well as conceptual. Authority gives "the world the permanence and durability which human beings need precisely because they are mortals" (WA 95). Authority and tradition work in a mutually reinforcing fashion and create the temporal world where they in turn become conceptually enacted. The common knowledge of tradition, as well as the shared space of the public and its institutions, are revered and thus preserved because of authority—and that authority is bolstered and augmented by the acts that occur in those spaces and that supplement that tradition. The relationship between authority, tradition, and religion lends continuity to Roman political life and provides a context and guide for action in general—allowing its adherents to act in such a way as to allow for both preservation and newness to occupy the same space. Arendt states that authority and a narrative of tradition provide assurance that "those who are newcomers by birth are guided through a pre-established world into which they are born as strangers" (WA 92).[13] The institutions and spaces created in reference to tradition and authority provide a physical and permanent reference point from which actors can orient themselves in relation to the world—in its past instantiation and future direction. This common space provides not only a location for the coming together of men,

[12] See TPT 50, WA 120, 125.
[13] Chapter Five will touch on how authority provides the backdrop for our capacities for action and natality.

but provides the content of their 'inter-est'—the common goals and definable connections that bind individuals to both their world and one another.[14]

The above explication provides us with the dynamic that existed between authority, tradition, and religion, but it still does not illuminate what this notion of authority fully encompasses. Yes, authority required augmentation of the present to the past.[15] Yes, there is an inherently conservative—in the preservatory sense—quality to it. But why is it important that we locate ourselves in relation to the past? What purpose does authority serve politically? And how does the Roman concept of authority help us to better understand the nature of the public world? Unlike colloquial understandings of authority or authoritarian structures, where those in 'authority' stand above those they rule, the authority of this Roman trinity stands behind those that it guides. Arendt uses the metaphor of the pyramid to demonstrate this relationship: "The peak of the pyramid did not reach into the height of a sky above…the earth, but into the depth of an earthly past" (WA 124).[16] This notion of authority is bound up with historical acts and laws, which exist—and are preserved—to create a common space for all.[17] Arendt never explores the problematic historical context for this interpretation—that of the obvious and deeply entrenched class distinctions in republican Rome—but regardless, the conceptual takeaway remains valid. Her emphasis on the place and role of authority in the Roman political world draws our attention to the fact that unlike the mechanisms of obedience and

[14] EV 406. See also LM 74: "plurality is one of the basic existential condition of human life on earth—so that *inter homines esse*, to be among men, was to the Romans the sign of being alive, aware of the realness of the world."
[15] Similarly, "the word *auctoritas* derives from the verb *augere*, "augment," and what authority of those in authority constantly augment is the foundation" (WA 121-22).
[16] A more detailed discussion of the structure(s) of authority will be presented in Chapter Five.
[17] WA 91

rule at play in structures like tyrannies, totalitarian regimes, or even the Church, no one stands outside of or in absolute control of the state's authority or laws in this formulation. Roman Senators were still subject to the laws that passed through their chambers. All members of the Roman Republic deferred to the same source of authority—one that was rooted to their common and tangible worldly past—and occupied the same public space under the same laws, traditions, and religion. *Men* founded this concept of authority in order that *all citizens* could experience freedom and equality on account of it.

Authority conjures up images of beginnings, of origins, of foundations—which have the nasty habit of being bloody and extralegal. And to be sure, both stages of the Roman foundation story have more than their fair share of violence mythologized within them.[18] However, the authority that springs from these events is also separated from the means to achieve them. The foundation serves as a break—as the start of something new. That 'something new' is an authority that can be appealed to apart from violence or force or coercion. For Arendt, the Roman concept of authority is incompatible with force or violence and instead relies upon "an obedience in which men retain their freedom" (WA 106). This sense of obedience has strength precisely because it rejects the terms of violence or coercion, and opts instead to harness the powers of tradition and civic religion to create order and foster permanence in the world.[19] Violence gives birth to authority, but authority itself secures and guarantees the space and terms for peace and stability in the world. Authority provides the foundation of a political world, but unlike the action that takes place within that world, it exists prior to and cannot function on the same terms. Authority exists apart from equality and outside the world of dialogue and persuasive argument. It stands in

[18] By stages I mean both Aeneas' and Romulus' contributions to the foundation myth.
[19] WA 104, 124-25

opposition to both equality and persuasion because of its hierarchical nature.[20] This opposition is not to be understood in the sense of authority as being against or anti-equality, but opposition insofar as it is *incompatible* with equality. Authority creates the terms for political equality, and thus must be deferred to and accepted in order for the equality of a body politic's members to be assured of their equal status.[21] Likewise, authority is incompatible with persuasion because it stands apart from the space where persuasion takes place among equals. It is the very presence and recognition of authority that secures the space for politics to occur.

In the ancient world, the Roman Senate exemplified this meaning of authority for Arendt. Specifically, it was the institution of the Senate and the offices of the senators that wielded authority.[22] "In essence, the people voted, the Senate influenced, and the magistrates ruled" (Murphy 49). As such, Senatorial authority can be understood as the exercise of influence, but not power. The Senate may have provided judges for disputes and criminal trials, controlled the purse strings and foreign policy direction of the state, and taken up the administrative tasks internal to the republic, but in all of those functions it operated as a consultative body.[23] Arendt cites Mommsen in order to clarify this role. The Senate's authority exists somewhere in between advice and command; "an advice which one may not safely ignore," and which needs no "external coercion to make itself heard" (WA 123). Roman senators were there to discuss and hand down opinion. "It was the only

[20] See WA 93. The terms of this hierarchical structure, and the implications that it has on the shape and dynamic of the public will be discussed at length in Chapter Five.
[21] Gottsegen (1994) aptly characterizes this concept: "The authoritative is authoritative because the citizen's regard makes it so" (117).
[22] To clarify, authority is not located in the person in the public world, but in the office or institution that said person occupies. In this sense, a person may represent authority, but it is not rooted in him. The source of authority remains in the institution, not the individual.
[23] See Lintott 22, 65, 86, 196-97; Murphy 48.

political council at Rome where free, or largely free, political discussion could take place," and as such the opinions formed were—at least in theory—supposed to be *in*formed, free from bias, and handed down with care (Lintott 86). These opinions were not to be "inspired by the *potestas* of the populace," but instead to exist as "some kind of impartial opinion[s] which would relate to the commonweal" (OHA 332). As in all matters of practice the integrity of an institution depends on the proper execution of its rules and behavioral expectations by its practitioners—and the shortcomings of Rome's aristocracy and Senate need not be underestimated. Yet the principles of this institution and the temporal place that it gives to the concept of authority in political life need not be dismissed because of the deficiencies of those who occupied it. The institutional sanctification of free deliberation, the separation of political influence from the direct means of power or force, and the role of authority in stabilizing the public sphere form a distinctly Roman understanding of civic life.

However, to understand just how Roman the contribution of authority as a concept is, we must first understand just how Greek it is not.[24] According to Arendt, the Greeks lacked a concept of authority because they rejected the centrality of immediate political experiences in defining public life. The problems associated with this rejection of experience as a guiding force in the world pertain to both the space where action occurs, as well as to the content of action itself. As stated in the introduction, the Greeks characterized founding and legislating as fabrication, and as such regarded them as acts that had no place

[24] Arendt also argues that both of the other pillars, tradition and religion, from the Roman formula are also missing from the Greek case. On the topic of religion and having a space in the city, see WA 121 and Gruen 47. As for the complex relationship between tradition and the Greeks, which will be dealt with at length in Chapter Two, see relevant passages explaining the Romans' adoption and transformation of Greek thought and literature into their tradition: WA 120, TPT 54.

in the public sphere.[25] They were understood as pre-political—as things that needed to be taken care of "before political activity could begin" (HC 194). Their founders left their respective city-states after they finished legislating for others[26]—creating a disjuncture between the origins and terms of the public space and the experience of political action. Though action in the public sphere is the central feature of the polis, the Greek notion of action turns out to be a limited one precisely on these terms.

The Greeks lacked a concept of authority because there was no experiential connection between a foundational moment and the resultant body politic—their foundation was credited to someone else and merely handed over to them, not enacted by their ancestors for them and to whom they were duty-bound thereafter to uphold the principles thereof. The Greeks were not unaware that their concept of politics was lacking something formative with regard to its basis. Plato and Aristotle each sought "to introduce something akin to authority into the public life of the Greek polis," but they ultimately failed because their limited examples—that of the tyrant or the head of a private household—were incapable of creating a stable authority or tradition.[27] Tellingly enough, "what he [Plato] was looking for was a relationship in which the compelling element lies in the relationship itself and is prior to the actual issuance of commands" (WA 109).[28] A shared source of authority provides this pre-relational element and, as we saw above, foundation understood as a political act serves as a very effective basis from which

[25] GTI 717
[26] See the myths of Solon or Lycurgus as examples of the 'legislating and leaving' pattern.
[27] WA 104, 119, 105
[28] Applied to the Roman case, we can see that the "compelling element" is obedience to the authority of an institution (the Senate) and the relationship is one of the people with that institution, and not with the persons occupying the offices therein.

authority can grow and provide the space for those relationships of ruling and being ruled to flourish.

In Arendt's formulation, it took the "political genius" of the Romans and their emphasis on the validity of human experience to incorporate the notions of founding and legislating into the realm of action and public life.[29] In fact, they so fully incorporated those concepts into their understanding of politics that an actor could not 'act' politically without referencing authority and tradition.[30] The Romans provide a much fuller and more concrete understanding of what it means to act by relocating these concepts. For example, because the Greeks placed founding outside the realm of political action, they also deprived the event of founding of action's miraculous and spontaneous character. Foundational moments are unexpected and rare. They are the definition of an Arendtian action-oriented event.[31] The Greeks did a disservice to both their concept of politics and theory of action by disconnecting foundation from its agentive elements. The parallel of the Greek and Roman views on colonization demonstrate the implications of this disconnect. Colonization and the foundation of new bodies politic were "to the Greeks an almost commonplace experience," but to the Romans foundation was the "central decisive, unrepeatable beginning of their whole history" (WA 121). The Greeks view founding as a necessary prerequisite for action—but it stands apart from action, it is commonplace and loses its sense of specialness. It doesn't generate a public. Founding in this sense is simply the provision of a space that imposes a given set of terms on action. Yet from the Roman example we can see

[29] Arendt refers, albeit briefly, to Rome's "political genius" in light of this inclusion (HC 195).
[30] TPT 47
[31] The ability of event and institution to exist side-by-side and to allow for spontaneity and durability to co-exist will be discussed at length in the final chapter.

how founding as action can be understood as public-generating and politically renewing. If we understand foundation as pre-political then beginnings become so 'commonplace' that they lose their meaning—a meaning that renders political life continuous. However, if we take into account action's potential to be spontaneous as well as foundational, then action's scope is expanded. Foundation is an action, in all of its eruptive and short-lived glory. However, it is no longer limited to the merely disruptive, but can be seen as regenerative and sustaining as well. Founding in the Roman case is forever tied to the start of a tradition, authority, and religion. Action can be both new, was well as continually creative. This expanded understanding of action also provides legislation with its rightful place as an example of action in the public world. If legislation is not, at least in part, *what we do* in politics, then what are we doing when we act? By giving legislation a home in the public sphere the Romans provide us with examples of what it means to act and conduct oneself in that space. They also demonstrate how action cannot be limited to strictly spontaneous and eruptive events and that politics cannot be simply a string of disconnected new beginnings. Action for the Romans occurred *within* and *because of* the confines of a stable institutional setting. An examination of action under the terms and conditions provided by authority, tradition, and religion has the potential to show us how action can be both miraculous as well as world reifying.

Culture

By Arendt's account the second distinctly Roman contribution to political thought comes to us through the concept of culture.[32] There are three components contained within

[32] CC 211

this concept: culture is related to the literal cultivation of the earth, its objects give shape and meaning to our shared world, and it introduced taste as a criterion of political judgment. Culture is "an attitude of loving care" for the world, and comes to us from the Latin *colere*: "to cultivate, to dwell, to take care, to tend and preserve" (CC 212, 211). It is conceptually rooted to the earth as soil[33] and the idea of 'agri'culture—of tending to the earth so that it produces what men need to make it "fit for human habitation" (CC 211). The element of care is central to Arendt's concept tracing here, and she directly pits the Romans against the Greeks on this score. Roman culture rooted in "the most natural and most peaceful of man's activities, the tilling of the soil," "stands in sharp contrast to all efforts to subject nature to the domination of man [i.e. Greece]" (CC 213, 211-12). Even more strongly put: "The Greeks did not know what culture is because they did not cultivate nature but rather tore from the womb of the earth the fruits which the gods had hidden from men" (CC 213). For Arendt, the Greeks fabricated, but the Romans tended and cultivated. Because the aim of cultivation was to care for and tend to the earth in order to make it a true dwelling place and home, culture gradually evolved from its literal origins in the earth and eventually encompassed caring for the common and created world more generally. Care for and preservation of the arts fall under these auspices, and 'culture' in its more colloquial connotation began to take shape.

One of the ways that men create a shared space is through their capacity to develop and preserve those items that have been brought into the public world. In this sense, Arendt's definition of culture—or more precisely, her understanding of the cultural world—incorporates an immense and diverse number of objects. "It contains tangible

[33] WA 120-21

things—books and paintings, statues, buildings, and music—[but also] comprehends, and gives testimony to, the entire recorded past of countries, nations, and ultimately mankind" (CC 202). Similarly to tradition, a large part of what makes culture 'culture' is our propensity to want to save and preserve those tangible things that we have experienced and interacted with in the past. Each new encounter with the cultural world builds upon previous ones and eventually results in a catalogue of cultural objects that constitute the shared world of a particular group of people. Despite providing a space for individuals to encounter one another outside of life's necessities, culture is not a proxy or substitute for the world of action and the public sphere. The way in which culture creates a space is different than the way that action does so. A cultural space revolves around the created object, not around men. Men can interact through those items, but not directly with one another. For example, if person A and person B are each listening to the same score of music, they may be occupying the same space—a concert hall—but they are interacting with and appreciating the music independently of one another. Their connection to one another is mediated by a cultural object, and thus cannot be classed as a shared *inter*action. As such, a cultural object's "most important and elemental quality…is to grasp and move the reader or the spectator" (CC 203). Creation of culture is due not only to the fabricators/artists and their objects, but just as much, if not more so, to the spectator's receptiveness to and relationship with those objects.[34] This culture achieves its worldliness by outlasting its creator and his aim in creating it;[35] it becomes removed from the threats of

[34] CC 213

[35] Arendt takes an incredibly long view about the role of time in the creation of a cultural object. Truly cultural objects have achieved a state of "relative permanence and even eventual immortality. Only what will last through the centuries can ultimately claim to be a cultural object" (CC 202).

both action and necessity, and thus sheltered from immediate disappearance and the consumptive life process. Only once an item has been removed or sheltered from those imposing forces does culture begin to exist.[36] Though this cultural world is distinct from the public realm, the two are intrinsically interconnected:

> culture indicates that the public realm…offers its space of display to those things whose essence it is to appear and to be beautiful…[It] indicates that art and politics, their conflicts and tensions notwithstanding, are interrelated and even mutually dependent…The common element connecting art and politics is that they are both phenomena of the public world (CC 218).

One of the main benefits of Arendt employing Roman political experience in her thought is that the roles of tradition and culture become tangibly connected to and preserved by the public world. A duty of actors in the public sphere is to preserve the space for beauty in the cultural one. The groundwork laid by 'culture as care' provides us the context for our eventual return to a Roman-influenced theory of action.

In addition to relating to the cultivation of the world, culture must also be understood in terms of cultivating the mind and developing taste and judgment. Arendt cites Cicero as the first to apply this notion of cultivation to "matters of spirit and mind" and from him we get the concept of *cultura animi*: the "right love of beauty, the proper kind of intercourse with beautiful things…which makes man fit to take care of the things in the world" (CC 212, 215). Cicero takes literally the notion of a 'cultured' 'mind'—and spins the cultivation of the earth that we discussed above into an intellectual pursuit that hones and develops our mental capacities to care for the world and its objects. He ascribes to philosophy the role of 'cultivator' and assigns the exercise of taste as the cultivated mind's

[36] CC 209

proper activity.[37] Though it is worth noting that the Greeks also placed a great deal of emphasis on the evaluation of beauty and the exercise of taste, the Roman addition of 'culture' to the equation puts a vastly different spin on the relationship between taste, beauty, and the world. For the Greeks, the search of beauty led them *away* from the world, whereas for the Romans the activity of taste and the appreciation of beauty tied them directly to the appearances and cultivation of beauty *in* the world.[38] It is precisely this Roman connection between the exercise of taste and the cultivation of that world that allows Arendt to posit the connection between judgment in taste and judgment in politics—after all, both are worldly phenomena and both require the presence of men. For Arendt, taste is the "political capacity that truly humanizes the beautiful and creates a culture" (CC 224). To assess and judge the world by a standard separate from it—but readily available to those who exist together in it—provides actors with a mooring, a common vocabulary and shared set of experiences. Taste provides us the opportunity to "appreciate[s] without desiring to own, judge[s] without placing a price, and is disinterested without being uninterested" (Hammer 142). The exercise of taste can be understood as political because it also results in the opinions and judgments that men give voice to in the public realm; it is from this "judicious exchange of opinion" that we arrive at a communal course of action about both the appearance of the world and the relationships that exist among those within it (CC 223). In fact, the argument will later be made that it is this model of cultivation—both in the tangible object, as well as the cultivated member of

[37] CC 215, 224

[38] The relationship between the Romans and Greek philosophy will be dealt with at length in the next chapter. For the moment it is sufficient to note that this Roman notion of 'philosophy' takes on a vastly different character than that of the Greek. See also CC 212-14, Hammer 140-41.

the public sphere—that provides the groundwork for Arendt's notion of plurality. If plurality is the condition of living together in the world,[39] then to live *well* and responsibly in that context requires individuals "who know[s] how to choose [their] company among men, among things, among thoughts, in the present as well as in the past" (CC 226). As we will see later on, it is viewing this 'cultivated person' as actor that has the potential to animate integral features of Arendt's political thought.

Humanism

The third major conceptual contribution of the Roman world is humanism.[40] Again, Arendt serves up Cicero as its illuminating example insofar as he embodies her concept of the humanistic political position. Arendt focuses on a passage in *Tusculan Disputations* where Cicero states that he would "prefer…to go astray with Plato rather than hold true views with his opponents" (CC 224-225). By choosing companionship over truths Cicero demonstrates the principle of valuing the company of men over the knowledge of absolutes. By elevating the pursuit of fellowship over that of truth or philosophy he shows how men and not theory should be the central concern of the choices we make in the world.[41] What Cicero values about Plato is not his philosophical orientation, but the prototype of discussion and companionship that Plato's dialogues represent. By stating that he would rather accept the company of Plato than the truth through other means (or with

[39] Arendt calls plurality "the law of the earth" (LM 19).
[40] "…there is again no word in the Greek language corresponding to the Latin *humanitas*" (CC 224). Hammer 2008 attributes the word's origins to Cicero (56).
[41] Despite Cicero's claim about valuing Platonic companionship—an exercise of taste—this example cannot be read as an attempt to marry Greek political philosophy to Roman political life. Cicero's tangled relationship with Greek philosophy will be dealt with in Chapter Two.

other men), Cicero is indeed coming out *against* the Greek elevation of the pursuit of truth over the world of action and human concerns. For Arendt, the introduction of humanism into politics—and the role of Cicero in exemplifying it—serves as a significant point of departure. Though culture and the exercise of taste have the ability to humanize and make tangible a concept like beauty—drawing it back from the otherworldly form of the Greeks—Cicero's humanism manages to temper human beings' relationship to one another and to truth in the world. "The integrity of the person as person; [for] human worth and personal rank, together with friendship" take on a political cast (CC 224). Humanism ushers out absolutes from politics and ushers in human beings.

The Roman concept of *humanitas* also provides the basis for a renewed understanding of politics. It "applied to men who were free in every respect, for whom the question of freedom, of not being coerced, was the decisive one" (CC 225). In this sense, humanism brings together the exercise of taste, cultivation, and fellowship. We are free to exercise our own taste when judging the appearance of the world. We are free to cultivate those things and relationships that we see as fit and beneficial. We are free to sacrifice absolute truths for companionship, and to value the public active life over the private contemplative one. However, unlike how we colloquially and even theoretically think of 'freedom', freedom in relation to *humanitas* requires a tempering of men's dispositions in order to be exercised. Arendt points out that, "*humanitas*, as Cicero understood it, was closely connected with the old Roman virtue of *clementia*" (CC 297 n17). However, *clementia* does not particularly equate to politics as we tend to view it. Instead, it requires that freedom and our conduct within the public be tempered by "indulgent, forbearing

conduct towards the errors and faults of others," by mildness, clemency, and kindness.[42] Action in this context has nothing to do with Greek notions of glory, or even Roman *gravitas*. It is not spontaneous or eruptive. As we will see later, the shape and content of the public generated by this type of action provides not only new understanding as to the character of that action, but will also allow us to see what principles animate it.[43]

Taste is to the cultural world, as common sense is to the political world. The mode of evaluation deployed in a humanistic political sphere is common sense. It "operates chiefly in the public realm of politics and morals" and is Roman in origin (TPT 42).[44] It has the power to take individual sense perceptions and connect them to a shared world, and thus to those that we share that world with. Common sense is our "sixth sense that fits our five senses into a common world" (LM 81). It emerged as "the highest criterion in the management of public-political affairs" because of its ability to provide a general direction and source of guidance to men's actions (TPT 42). Not only does common sense represent our senses and assessments of our surroundings, but it also serves as a catalogue of past senses and experiences that those before us have logged. In this sense, common sense and tradition are intertwined because the remembrance of and participation in that tradition provides common signposts from which we orient ourselves. However, men are not simply bound to one another because they each look to the same standard or guide—this may provide a similar orientation to that thing, but it does not tie them directly to one another. The recognition of our 'common sense' as human beings provides the basis for our bond to

[42] http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=clementia&la=la#lexicon
[43] This discussion will take place in Chapter Five during the analysis of Cicero's notion of fellowship and Arendt's concept of solidarity.
[44] While fully recognizing that Arendt generally uses common sense as a springboard from which to discuss Kant, judgment, and taste, it is not insignificant that she also cites its Roman origins, and it will thus be given a separate non-Kantian treatment here.

one another because it relies on our acknowledgement of both our sameness—we are sentient beings experiencing a shared world—and our distinctness—we each bring a new perspective to that common space. Living in the world and deploying our common sense directly links us to each other because its presence "indicates that in the human condition of plurality men check and control their particular sense data against the common data of others" (TPT 41). The deployment of common sense allows us to judge those experiences that we encounter in the world, and "judging is one, if not the most important activity in which this sharing-the-world-with-others comes to pass" (CC 221).

A Roman Public Space

Lex vs. *Nomos*

The fourth and final insight that Arendt attributes to the Roman experience is the ability of their legal constructs to overcome the deficiencies of the Greeks'. For Arendt, "there is no more elemental difference between Greece and Rome than their respective attitudes toward territory and law" (HC 195 n21). The Greek concept of *nomos* was embedded in the boundaries set by the physical walls of the city. This delineated space provided the space for politics to occur—though its construction was not political in itself. As was discussed earlier, these walls and laws were seen as acts of fabrication, and thus also conceived of in terms of violence. The Roman understanding of *lex* centered on the relationships that emerge between men as they meet to discuss, agree, and ally themselves with one another. *Lex* originates in extemporaneous acts of speech; speech that leads to action's formalization in agreements.[45] This formalized (codified) action then provides the

[45] Arendt explicitly recognizes that speech, "proposals and counterproposals" are central to both Greek and Roman notions of politics; "the crucial distinction, however, is that only for

space for actors to come together and interact amidst one another again and again. Arendt cites law as the "elemental difference" between the Greeks and Romans because for the Greeks law is born from work and tied to a set locale, and for the Romans it emerges between men and is preserved through action itself.

The Greek concept of *nomos* "derives from *nemein*, which means to distribute, to possess (what has been distributed), and to dwell" and originates from the separation between individual private households (HC 63 n62). As it grew to encompass the whole of the city it maintained its expressly "spatial significance" and represented "neither the content of political action…nor was it a catalogue of prohibitions" (HC 63). Instead, *nomos* signified the separation of the private and the public; the interior and the exterior; the enclosure of the city's walls and all that lay beyond them. *Nomos* is an act of fabrication—lawmaking as craft, not politics. The Greeks required a space for politics to occur, but they needed someone other than the actors who would eventually populate that space to build it: "a definite space had to be secured and a structure built where all subsequent action could take place, the space being the public realm of the *polis* and its structure the law" (HC 194-95).[46] The disconnect between the foundation of the public space and the movements of the actors that inhabit it warrants additional examination. *Nomos* as the law of the polis hinges on two features: (1) the actual building of the wall that separates the city from the surrounding area and (2) the laws that provide for that physical space through their rules and structures. If neither the creation of that space or the legislating of its terms are to be

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the Romans does legislative activity, and with it the laws themselves, belong to the realm of politics" (IP 178-79).

[46] The language surrounding the description of both the *polis* as a physical entity and *nomos* as the laws that give legal structure to that entity tend to bleed into one another. For clarification's sake, think of *polis*/*nomos* as both being the end products of crafts and each resulting in the creation of a wall of sorts—one physical, the other conceptual.

considered political, then the actors who inhabit that physical and conceptual space only experience politics as boundary-delineating. The Greek concept of *nomos* provides little to no explanation of what goes on between men or what the content of politics is within this space because it demonstrates how men can be separated from one another, not what ties them all together. The Greeks "set limits to action by means of the *nomos* and to interpret the law not as a link and a relationship, but rather as an enclosing border that no one should overstep;" it "could never serve to build a bridge between one nation and another, or between one political community and another within the same nation" (IP 186, 182). The *polis* and its law simply provide us with a snapshot of the *type* of space required for agents to come together—stable, open, freed from the demands of necessity.[47] Arendt focuses on *nomos* and the space of the polis in order to demonstrate the type of space amenable to political life, but she certainly does not mean for us to take away the idea that law-as-boundary is the only way to achieve it. In order to understand how else this space might be created, as well as what takes place among the public's actors, we need to look elsewhere.

The Roman concept of law, *lex*, provides a starkly different orientation for the foundation of political life and actors in the public world. *Lex* "indicates a formal relationship between people rather than the wall that separates them from others" (HC 63 n62). It is from this instantiation of law that Arendt states: "The Roman politicization of the space between peoples marks the beginning of the Western world—indeed, it first created

[47] "The great advantage of the polis organization of public life was that the polis, because of the stabilizing force of its wall of law, could impart to human affairs a solidity that human action itself…can never possess. Because it surrounded itself with a permanent wall of law…[it] ensure[d] that whatever happened or was done within it would not perish with the life of the doer or endure, but live on in the memory of future generations" (GTI 716).

the Western world as *world*" (IP 189). This world springs up between individuals, and in it law acts as a glue;

> binding together or separating them as shared or conflicting interests. Interests in this context have no connotation of material needs or greed, but constitute quite literally the *inter-esse*, that which is *between* men. This in-between, common to all and therefore of concern to each, is the space in which political life takes place" (GTI 722-23).

Even though their interests may separate individuals, they are still bound to one another through the law and the relational foundation that it provides. The shift in our understanding of law as boundary and law as connection has remarkable implications for the terms of political life. "The Roman *lex*…actually means "lasting tie"…[and] is something that links human beings together, and it comes into being not by diktat or by an act of force but rather through mutual agreements (IP 178). This version of law doesn't create or set terms in order for politics to occur—*lex is* politics. Its very formulation demonstrates the character of action that animates the public world. Law "does not unite the quarreling parties simply by erasing" the differences between the conflicting parties, but instead substitutes their "state of hostility" with a contract (IP 179, 180). Men are bound together through their agreements: as individuals with one another; as citizens to their state; and collectively as states to other states. Force, violence and fabrication are set aside in this account—and therefore from the relationships that it renders.[48] It is from this self-generating and self-reinforcing image of politics that we can see why Arendt would view *lex* as a far more theoretically promising concept than *nomos*. "Such a concept of law perfectly suits a notion of the political which emphasizes 'acting in concert'…the rationality of law…[results] from its ability to open and establish a political space in which acting

[48] *Lex* as it puts an end to violence will be dealt with in the following section on contracting/promising and forgiveness.

together can be realized" (Volk 776). Shared political space doesn't simply entail a common public arena—a literal common ground for citizens to meet. The shared space that *lex* creates has not only physical but more intangible aspects to it. Political life requires a *who* just as much as a *where*. *Lex* generates a formal community of allied partners that occupy this public space together.

The Roman Remedy for Action's Shortcomings: Promising and Forgiving

The problem with action is that it is both unpredictable and irreversible.[49] Action is unpredictable because the actor can never be certain what the consequences of his actions—or the domino effect of the reactions that it sparks—will be for himself or others. It is irreversible because once an actor appears to the public world and commits a deed, he cannot take it back or reverse its course. Arendt provides two 'remedies' for these shortcomings. Action's unpredictability can be solved through promise making and its irreversibility can be remedied through forgiveness. However, "neither of the above-mentioned modes of redemption were recognized by the Greeks as intrinsic potentialities of action" (Tamineaux 170). We must turn again to Rome in order to find these remedies.

A formalized version of promise making is contracting, and as we saw above the coming together of disparate partners in formal and mutual agreement occupies the core of *lex*. Promise making in politics is a direct byproduct of Rome's legal system and the inviolability of covenant making. It is not only that "the treaty and the alliance are central concepts of Roman origin," but that they stand in direct opposition to what the Greeks understood to be political acts (IP 177-78). The foundation of Rome was built out of contract and agreement so much so that *lex* "very quickly came to mean "contract":

[49] HC 237

whether between private citizens or as a treaty between nations" (IP 178). The Roman version of the Trojan War did not end in annihilation, "but in an alliance and a treaty" between Aeneas and the Latins (IP 176). The Twelve Tables—the agreement between the patricians and the plebeians codifying civil guarantees for all citizens of Rome—was the product of extreme class unrest. "The law is something that established new relationships between men" and "links human beings to one another…in the sense of an agreement between contractual partners" (IP 180). What results from these contracts and treaties is an ever-expanding public,[50] and an ever-increasing number of individuals who are considered partners and fellow citizens, that in turn have an equal stake in the viability of that space. Contracting as promise making solves for unpredictability insofar as it gives the actors involved a degree of certainty or assurance about the actions of the other partner.

However, because this public world "grew not between citizens of equal rank within a city, but rather between aliens and unequally matched peoples who first came together in battle," a great deal of faith and trust is required of its participants (IP 178). The type of politics that emerge from such an arrangement requires faith[51] and the ability to make and keep promises on the part of the actors involved because without that faith in the sanctity

[50] If we take the mission statement of *The Aeneid* seriously, then we ought to understand Rome as attempting to "incorporate the entire earth into a system of treaties" (IP 183).
[51] "Roman notion of community as a *societas*, the living-together of *socii*, men allied on the basis of good faith" (TPT 50). The notion of faith in politics is also resolutely non-Greek. The Greeks not only lacked the ability to forgive and make promises in politics, but in neglecting them also eliminated the possibility of faith and hope to make appearances in public affairs (HC 247). To take this argument even further, if faith and hope are the characteristics that provide us with the "full experience" of natality—the "miracle that saves the world, the realm of human affairs, from…ruin" (HC 247)—then the fact that the Greeks didn't possess these attributes also draws into question the Hellenocentricity of Arendt's concept of natality.

of the alliance, the *in-between* falls apart. If that contract and alliance is upheld though, a new space comes into being; thus from *lex* comes community:

> From these allies of Rome's, from these *socii*, almost all of which were enemies who had been conquered at some point, there emerged the Roman *societas*, which has nothing to do with society but rather with a cooperative community that fostered relationships between partners (IP 185-86).

The more often a contract is upheld, the greater legitimacy and authority it garners for itself—and its partners with one another—the stronger the bond and trust becomes between those allies.[52] Here we can view law itself as community-fortifying; it initially came into being not among friends and compatriots, but among enemies, and resulted in the creation of a long-lived and cohesive political world. The resulting community is initially composed of individuals and groups who "do not share the same narrative of life, the same rituals, the same conventions, the same traditions," but who nonetheless must now "find some way to adjust conflicting forms of life" (Murphy 44). The bonds of law give way to the foundations of justice and a continually fortified community, and in this sense expand what and who qualifies to be included as participants in the public. This political and legal expansion supplements the hold of Roman authority, and eventually leads to the incorporation of new narratives and peoples into Rome's 'tradition.'[53] *Lex* as 'promise making' thus creates a stable, but not static, condition of political life. Actors are provided with some guarantee against action's inherent unpredictability, and with each new contract more actors become entangled within the webs of that relationship. "It succeeds in this not

[52] Arendt refers to this as "the power of stabilization inherent in the faculty of making promises" (HC 243).

[53] This system of alliances did not entail the conquered or colonized peoples to submit to a singular "Roman" culture, but instead provided the terms for cultural autonomy and assimilation. This is very much in keeping with our earlier discussion of *humanitas* as "an attitude of receptiveness to a variety of intellectual cultures and to the variety of truths that they embodied" (Murphy 53).

by planning their future—a legalistic temptation which would put in jeopardy their plurality and its constant renewal—but simply by establishing "islands of predictability" and erecting "guideposts of reliability" in what remains" an otherwise inconstant world (Tamineaux 171).

The second way in which the Romans inaugurated a solution to action's fragility was through forgiveness. Once an act has been committed, and the result is either undesirable or regrettable, neither the actor nor his partners have any safe way in which to move forward without the concept of forgiveness. Action "possess[es] the self-defeating quality of causing the formation of a chain of unpredictable consequences that tend to bind the actor forever…he is both actor and victim in this chain of consequences" (TPT 58-59). A war may be won by annihilating the other side, but then only one party survives. Without forgiveness there is no way for both sides of a conflict to move forward—alone or together. This applies to both foreign and domestic conflicts, and in large part is what makes the act of contracting work. If hostile actors refuse to forgive the past actions of one another, then a contract—and its implied promise to move past prior grievances—is meaningless. "Forgiving is among the greatest human virtues" insofar as it

> releases us and others from the chain and pattern of consequences that all action engenders; as such, forgiving is an action that guarantees the continuity of the capacity for action, for beginning anew, in every single human being who, without forgiving and being forgiven, would resemble the man in the fairy tale who is granted one wish and then forever punished with that wish's fulfillment (TPT 58, 59).

Though the most prominent example of forgiveness in Arendt's theory comes to us via Jesus of Nazareth, she actually attributes the origins of forgiveness to "the Roman principle to spare the vanquished (*parcere subiectis*)—a wisdom entirely unknown to the Greeks—or the right to commute the death sentence" (HC 239). Perhaps unusually, though certainly

illuminating, she cites the Roman treatment of Carthage as a prime example of Roman clemency.[54] It is Arendt's argument that the total destruction of Carthage is the exception that proves the rule regarding the Roman's propensity to forgive in the public sphere: "What was destroyed was, above all else, "a government that never kept its word and never forgave" and thus embodied an anti-Roman principle against which Roman statesmanship was powerless" (IP 184). If Carthage was unable or unwilling to forgive its adversaries in the past, then there was no reason that Rome should have trust or faith in Carthage's ability or willingness to be an ally or partner of theirs in the present and in the future. This illustrates deftly how the ability to keep faith was inexorably associated with contracting, and thus the fundamental basis of Roman political commitments.

The resultant nature of the Roman legal-political world turns out to be resoundingly different from that of the Greeks. For one, the world is simply experienced differently by actors who view law as connective and world-generating. For another, the types of perspectives allowed into that world are of a very different character. Though the Greeks acknowledged that there can be no political community "without a plurality of perspectives," their understanding of the constitution of said community "was not broad enough to include the perspective of enemies or even of foreigners" (Tamineaux 175). This lack of inclusion not only limited the voices that were present within their public space, but it actually placed clear limitations on the size and character of their political world. Both

[54] Moses (2013) provides an account of Arendt on Roman law and contract making, especially in relation to her Carthage example (See Moses 883-84). His argument focuses less on the individual relational element to be gleaned from Arendt's theory and more on the potential of her interpretation to be read as a justification for Empire building. Without dismissing the valid points his article makes regarding Arendt's (problematic) blind spots to Rome as an example, this project seeks to focus solely on the actor-level implications for promise making and action and not the state-level, historical account provided by Moses.

Greek and Roman political experience were born from conflict, but only the former chose to "preserve their own nature" and "retreat inside their walls" when hostilities concluded (IP 178). The Romans used the contractual resolution of hostilities to secure "a new political arena…according to which yesterday's enemies became tomorrow's allies" (IP 178). The resulting 'new world' consisted not only of the Roman perspective, but was inclusive of their partners' as well.[55] This cohabitation of a political space by previously conflicting parties entailed that that space be representative of each side's perspective. The type of inclusion required though peace treaties and contracts signifies a transformation from a previous state of affairs into "a new thing that made its appearance in the course of hostilities and is shared by both doers and sufferers" (IP 177). "For the Greeks, however, such a transformation of a hostile encounter was limited exclusively to poetry and memory and achieved no direct political effect" (IP 177).

Arendt fully recognizes that the Roman solution was not a panacea to the shortcomings of Greek political philosophy or our current political crisis. For one, and despite Rome's canonizing of tradition, their political thought is almost entirely absent from subsequent tradition. Though "the Roman influence remained strong in the strictly legal tradition," "in the philosophical tradition of political thought, it remained as uninfluential as other Roman experiences" (GTI 720). However, recognizing this as true does not necessarily prove to be a hindrance for us or her theory. Simply because an experience was overlooked by history does not mean that it lacks revelatory capabilities—it only means that others have not looked to it for them. As Arendt states in *The Crisis in*

[55] IP 188-89

Culture, "…the thread of tradition is broken, and we must discover the past for ourselves—that is, read its authors as though nobody had ever read them before" (204). Considering that Arendt saw our political world as one at a crisis point, then it might be precisely because the Roman experience has been overlooked by the tradition that we ought to return to it now with fresh eyes and gain new perspective.

A second and potentially more damning problem with a return to Rome—or Greece for that matter—is the fact that both were "world[s] where [only] some were free" (GTI 715). If we are looking for a new perspective on our own political lives, then returning to a world where the condition of unfreedom was far more prevalent than that of the citizen is not necessarily the most logically obvious course. But at least on the topic of legal constructs, the historical context is not as initially problematic as it may seem. Though *nomos* remains tied to the historical context and physical locale of the *polis*, the concept of *lex* provides us with more leverage theoretically. As we have seen, *lex* exists on account of men and the in-between space that arises when they meet as citizens. All that is required to enlarge the applicability of this concept is to expand our gallery of available actors. More citizens, more participants—but the theoretical underpinnings of their relationships together remain the same.

In addition to the 'law as relationship' model, the three other Roman contributions to Arendt's thought provide a novel basis to reevaluate the nature of action and the potential inherent in a reimagined political world. Clearly a return to 'authority' in the form of a Roman founding or Senate is neither practical nor desirable—and nor is it argued for by Arendt. However, the concept of authority—as it's associated with new beginnings and stability within the world—has incredible potential in what it can show us about the

creation and preservation of political worlds, as well as the ways in which we understand those spaces as being created by and home for action. Equally conceptually fruitful is Cicero's role in Arendt's thought. In the next two chapters we will see how Cicero—as political thinker and actor—helps to animate otherwise overlooked thought-trains within Arendt's work. However, before we can delve into the theoretical particulars, we must first disentangle the quagmire of a relationship that exists between Cicero, Rome, and Greek philosophy—not to mention Arendt's complex views on them as a whole.

CHAPTER TWO

Arendt and the 'Cicero Problem': Disentangling the Relationship Between the Roman World and Greek Philosophy

Arendt's presentation of Cicero is at times contradictory, often problematic, and overall just plain inconsistent. On the one hand, she lauds him for his humanism, actions as a politician, and views on culture. On the other, there are occasions where she asserts that he was merely a mouthpiece for Greek philosophy in the Roman world—at times stating that he was simply derivative of the Greeks, at other points describing him as an historical thinker and not a philosopher. To complicate matters still, there are other occasions where she portrays Cicero as someone who "vehemently" disagreed with Greek philosophy.[1] How can one be engaged with philosophy, but only be an historian, or be philosophically derivative, all the while vehemently disagreeing with the philosophy supposedly being regurgitated? Despite the inconsistencies in her portrayal of Cicero, the passages where Arendt cites Cicero as anti-Greek certainly draw into question the seriousness with which we can take the places were she claims he's derivative. The significance of where Cicero's departures from the Greeks lay, as well as the importance of viewing him as a political actor will be pieced together in this chapter in an attempt to create a more coherent view of

[1] TPT 53

Cicero as a figure and a thinker in Arendt's work. The emphasis of this chapter will be to validate Cicero as a thinker with an original philosophic contribution and demonstrate the problems that the experience of Roman politics poses to a purely Greco-centric interpretation of his philosophy.

The task at hand is less straightforward than it seems at first take. Just as Arendt's image of Cicero is murky so too are her references to his world. Before we proceed to disentangle Arendt's complex view of Cicero, we must first look at her general characterization of the Roman world in relation to Greek philosophy. This step will provide a narrative within her work that we can use to situate her reading of Cicero. Within this context we will briefly examine Arendt's treatment of Augustine on freedom and demonstrate how this analysis can function as a key to understanding her complex relationship to philosophy and the Roman world more generally. It is the hypothesis of this reading that Arendt's treatment of Augustine gives us analytical leverage that can be used to clarify her stance on Cicero as well. From here we will unpack Arendt's presentation of Cicero more directly—drawing attention to a shift that emerges over time within her works. Finally, this chapter will spend some much needed time clarifying the nature of Cicero's relationship to Greek philosophy. It is not in dispute that Cicero revered Greek philosophy, and indeed borrowed heavily from it at times. However, this indebtedness does not entail that Cicero was simply dressing Greek philosophy in Roman robes. In this light, we will look at three cases to demonstrate Cicero's relation to and employment of Greek philosophy. First we will examine Cicero's use of Polybius as an example of an instance where he took his lead from Greek theory, and then built upon it when formalizing his own account. Then we will deconstruct two primary accusations hurled at Cicero's "political

philosophy"—that it was Platonic or Stoic—and demonstrate how he departed from each of these schools, and constructed a philosophy of his own.

On Greek Philosophy and the Roman World

The first move Arendt makes when discussing the Greek philosophical tradition in relation to the Roman world is to point out that Greek philosophy would never have become the foundation of Western political thought without the Romans' efforts. As was outlined in the last chapter, the Romans required tradition—alongside authority and religion—to give their world shape, direction, and durability. Their political tradition was rooted in the act of foundation, but their intellectual one adopted much of the philosophy on offer from the Greek world. This attraction and need for authoritative sources both from within and out of politics canonized Greek philosophy in the form of tradition. Because "…the Romans felt they needed founding fathers and authoritative examples in matters of thought and ideas as well" as politically, they "accepted the great "ancestors" in Greece as their authorities for theory, philosophy, and poetry" (WA 124). Their acceptance entailed that "our tradition, properly speaking, begins with…Greek philosophy as the unquestionable, authoritative binding foundation of thought" (TPT 54). It would be a fruitless exercise to attempt to dispel Arendt's interpretation of Greek philosophy in Rome at this stage. The Romans institutionalized Greek philosophy and gave it "a kind of foster home;" and as such "philosophy, like the arts and letters, like poetry and historiography, had always been a Greek import" (LM 152, 158). They were particularly well positioned to assimilate existent schools of thought because of the conceptual roles—and

requirements—that "both authority and tradition had already played…in the political life of the Roman republic" (WA 120).

Arendt's initial pass at the nature of the relationship between Greek philosophy and Rome within this conceptual structure is to cast it as one of complete and total reverence. In her characterization Rome acknowledges Greek political philosophy "as their highest authority in all matters of theory and thought," and as a result she states that "a Roman philosopher" would never "have dared "to raise his hand against his [spiritual] father"" (WA 120, 124). One could interpret this portrayal as going beyond one of reverence, and morphing into one of sheer obedience to a formative tradition. No Roman philosopher—a strange term itself in this context—dares even question the wisdom of his Greek sources. Consequentially all Roman philosophical attempts were "derivative [in] character" (WA 124). The resultant image is one not only where Greek philosophy became the foundation of the philosophical tradition, but where its authority actually stunted the philosophical development of its torch bearers. The Romans were simply "overwhelmed…by Greek philosophy and concepts" (WA 126). This paralysis "made it impossible for Rome to develop a philosophy, even a political philosophy, and therefore left its own specifically political experience without adequate interpretation" (TPT 54). But despite this reverence for the authority of Greek philosophy among Roman philosophers, Roman society generally was more dismissive about the value and place of philosophic pursuits. The place left for philosophy was tertiary at best, taking a backseat to both politics and economic interests. Philosophy became converted into fodder for common opinion, relegated to the old, or simply tolerated as a pastime. "Common opinion on philosophy" may have been "formed by the Romans," but, if anything, their conversion of philosophy into matters of opinion only

reinforced philosophy as a non-serious or worthwhile pursuit (LM 151). Public endeavors were the central focus of a life well lived. The experiences and accomplishments garnered in the political world were the benchmarks for evaluating the successes and failures of an individual—promoting the elevation of practice over any type of theoretic distractions. This dynamic left philosophy with very little room to develop anew and the philosophies that did make it into the political sphere, and inform the opinions of its politicians, were of fairly untempered Greek stock.[2] Yet overall, philosophy was viewed "with some suspicion as long as the public thing was still intact" (LM 152). Outside of politics, philosophy was either merely "a noble pastime for the educated and a means of beautification of the Eternal City" or else the vocation of the old insofar as it "was supposed to teach men how to die" (LM 152, 79).

If we were to take these passages from Arendt on their own we would be left with a rather dismal view of philosophy in the Roman world. It was derivative, a hobby, a thing that could help prepare the old for death—and perhaps more damning, demonstrated a general intellectual ineptitude on the part of the Romans as a people to view their political experiences through any original interpretive lens. Fortunately, this is not all that Arendt says about the role and nature of philosophy in Rome. Arendt points out that "Roman writers…rebelled occasionally against the anti-political tendencies of the Socratic school," but then concludes that regardless of these attempts "their strange lack of philosophic talent prevented their finding a theoretical concept of freedom which could have been adequate to their own experiences and to the great institutions of liberty present in the Roman *res publica*" (WF 166-67). Although this passage—as well as those above—appears

[2] Cato the Younger and his staunch Stoicism represent an exemply model of this phenomenon.

dismissive of Rome as a locus of philosophic insights, Arendt's language points us in a slightly contradictory direction. Take for example her phrase "Roman philosopher" that we saw earlier: What exactly can that even mean in this context? The phrase seems confusing if we are to believe that Rome was incapable of producing its own original material. Arendt is too careful and precise with her vocabulary for this to be a conceptual or terminological lapse. She is not going to say 'philosopher' when she means 'historian' or someone who merely catalogues the ideas and contributions of others. Second, she mentions that there were some who "rebelled," at least in part, against the tradition. Surely someone described as 'rebelling' can be said to be metaphorically 'raising his hand against his philosophical forefathers.' Furthermore, in her albeit brief mention of Greek philosophical schools in Rome she does not present an argument compatible with her previous description of the latter as "derivative" and "overwhelmed." When she brings up the Stoics and the Epicureans she states that, "they had a tendency, at least in their late *Roman versions*, to transform all philosophy into moral teachings" (QMP 65, emphasis mine). In this instance the Romans *transformed* the philosophies inherited from their tradition into something new—their roots were Greeks, but the Roman versions were transformative, not simply derivative.

Arendt fails to elaborate on these claims, so we cannot state with any precision what she meant by them or what specific individuals fall into this category of Roman philosophers and writers. What these curious passages and turns of phrase do reveal is that there are cracks within Arendt's presentation of philosophy in Rome—ones that deserve examination and elaboration. It is from this point that we begin our substantive critique of Arendt's presentation. She argues that it was precisely because of the sway and

power of Greek tradition over Rome that they were left devoid of original philosophical contributions. Yet, as we saw in the last chapter, tradition requires interaction in order for it to be preserved and remain viable—it is the opposite of static reproduction and requires continual augmentation. Roman philosophers and, as we shall see, Cicero in particular did not simply reproduce Greek philosophy for Roman audiences. They reinterpreted that tradition; borrowing and repurposing the parts that illuminated problems central to the Roman experience and infusing that tradition with their own insights. This interaction between Greek tradition and Roman political experience gives way not to derivation, but to novelty.

Arendt is clearest on this dynamic in her depiction of Augustine. Augustine holds a special position within Arendt's thought, particularly with regard to our present purposes. She obviously held Augustine in high esteem. She devoted decades of her life to analyzing—and reanalyzing[3]—Augustine on love in her doctoral thesis, and the references to him elsewhere in her subsequent works come across as glowing and fond. It is precisely Augustine's unique historical position in addition to his role in Arendt's theory that allows her employment of him to illuminate the nature of her conflicted relationship with Rome and its intellectual inheritance. Let us now briefly turn to a few key passages that are able to provide us with clues as to what she thinks of his Roman world and its philosophical content—apart from her grand claims on the Greeks' authority and Rome's philosophical deficiencies that we saw earlier. Our first hint comes to us when she refers to Augustine as "the only great philosopher the Romans ever had" (WA 126). This single line draws into question the previous characterization of philosophy—and philosoph*ers*—in Rome. Even if

[3] See Scott and Stark's Preface to *Love and Saint Augustine*. They discuss the decades long process of revising and translating that Arendt dedicated to this manuscript.

we interpret this one-liner conservatively and conclude that there was simply a single 'great' philosopher who emerged from the Roman world, that still leaves open the possibility of a wide spectrum of individuals who attempted philosophizing, but whom fell short of greatness. This is a far different picture than one where the Greeks were granted total philosophic authority, and Rome served merely to house and preserve their ideas for future generations. Within this expanded interpretive scope it is tempting to return to one of Arendt's previous statements about the "lack of philosophic talent" displayed by the Romans. Regardless of the veracity of that assessment, in light of the Augustine passage above, we can no longer conclude that Rome lacked philosophic attempts or departures from the Greek tradition in Arendt's view. The next objection to deploying Augustine as our foil to Arendt's characterization of Roman philosophy is that she elsewhere refers to him as a "great Christian thinker," and not a Roman one; thus excusing him from an association with Rome's intellectual products (WA 167). This criticism has legs, but is not as clear-cut as simply attributing his philosophic discoveries to his Christian identity. For one, Arendt is up front in recognizing Augustine as "a Roman as well as a Christian" (WA 167). If there is one thing that cannot be underestimated in Arendt's presentation of Rome it is her stress on the centrality of Roman political experience on the character of its people. In this context, a "Christian thinker" cannot stand apart insulated from his experiences as a citizen, "and that in this part of his work [that which was rooted in his Roman experience] he formulated the central political experience of Roman antiquity, which was that freedom *qua* beginning became manifest in the act of foundation" (WA 167). It is in this passage that we see the role that experience plays in thought formation. Arendt even spends time pointing out how bizarre it is to look for theories of political freedom in a philosopher "who

in fact introduced Paul's free will" (WA 167). However, what saves and illuminates Augustine's political philosophy is not his Christian identity and philosophical perspective, but "the background of his specifically Roman experiences" where "freedom is conceived…not as an inner human disposition but as a character of human existence in the world" (WA 167). Political experience becomes the transformative element of a political philosophy. It is in this light that we cannot take at face value Arendt's comments on philosophy in Rome—they are not only inconsistent in themselves, but they are incoherent in relation to this description of Augustine. The 'most political people we've ever known' cannot have been purely philosophically derivative because the influence of their experience in the world won't allow it.

There is one final passage that undermines her prior characterizations of Rome and draws our attention to new philosophical avenues within that world. While discussing Augustine's intellectual heritage in *Introduction into Politics* Arendt speaks of "an extraordinary tradition of Roman thought [that] still lived on in him" (IP 138). If she viewed Rome solely in the dismissive ways just presented, then what on earth is this extraordinary tradition of Roman thought? She does not leave room for ambiguity in this excerpt. She is not referring to a tradition of Greek thought that the Romans canonized and kept alive, she is admitting that there is a specific and definitive Roman tradition that exists separate from it.

On Cicero

A large portion of this Roman tradition is located in Cicero's works. Just as we had to disentangle Arendt's presentation of Rome and philosophy, the same treatment is called for with Arendt on Cicero. Arendt's thoughts on Cicero change and mature over time. Prior to

her work in *The Life of the Mind* (1978) she categorizes Cicero as anything but philosophical. However, by the time she turns her attention to thinking, willing, and judging—arguably the most dense and conceptual portions of her corpus—her estimation of Cicero's contributions undergoes a nearly complete reversal. This stage of our argument will trace the development of her characterizations of Cicero in order to prove that her early dismissive, and at time cynical, assessments are not definitive and that by the end of her life she had come to realize and accept a distinctly Roman (and Ciceronian) contribution to thought. We will start by locating two concurrent, but conflicting, narratives in her early work. One of these consists of mainly negative descriptions; but the other, more fruitful thread, presents a far more nuanced and peculiar image of Cicero. Here Arendt recognizes that he departs from the Greeks, but she does not quite seem to know what to do with that discovery. From here we will leap forward to her last work where she presents Cicero as providing a definitively unique philosophical perspective on the world—and one that integrates both the activities of thought and action in-the-world. This later image will prove integral to our later unpacking of Arendt's views on the roles of thinking and acting in public life.

As in most instances of idea tracing, the development of her views on Cicero is not strictly linear. Not only is there conceptual and chronological overlap between the works—especially between the late 1950s and early 1960s—but there also exist competing narratives within those works. In the essays and lectures that were written post-*Origins* (1951) and pre-*Human Condition* (1958),[4] Arendt casts Cicero as both definitively

[4] The chronology of the works under discussion are as follows: "The End of Tradition" and "The Tradition of Political Thought" are from 1953/54 (Kohn n*vii-viii*); "Introduction into

unphilosophic and critical of the tradition. She refers to Cicero as a "man of action," in direct opposition to the possibility of his being a philosopher. In this context, she relegates Cicero solely to the world of politics stating that,

> no man of action…nobody whose original experience was political…could ever hope to be taken seriously by philosophers, and no specifically political deeds or human greatness as expressed in action could ever hope to serve as examples in philosophy… (ET 83).

Not only is she following the Greek framework that draws a stark line between the practice of philosophy and the practice of politics, but she is also making the point that none of Cicero's experiences as a political man could have bearing on the direction and content of philosophy. "Because he [Cicero] was not a philosopher, [he] was unable to challenge philosophy" (ET 86). Despite Cicero being a prolific writer engaged with philosophical topics in countless of his works, she is altogether dismissive of any philosophic contributions. Arendt even refers to any potential exceptions within his body of work as being only "so-called philosophical" attempts (TPT 55). Though she remains consistently laudatory of Cicero's political contributions, these excerpts present us with little to no sense that we should expect any philosophical wisdom to emerge.

Luckily for us, alongside these passages there exists an entirely different narrative about Cicero's relationship to philosophy, as well as to politics. Within this context Cicero emerges not only as a 'man of action,' but as an engaged thinker. Arendt starts this thread by asserting that, though it was a "futile attempt," Cicero sought to "disavow Greek philosophy on this one point—its attitude to politics" (ET 82). This attitude is perhaps better stated as an attitude *against* politics. The conflict between philosophy and politics

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Politics" was started in 1955 and abandonded in 1960 (Kohn *viii*, *xvii*); "What is Authority?" was originally published in German in 1958 (Young-Bruehl 350).

stemmed from Platonic thought and canonized the practice of philosophy superior as to and anathematic toward the life of politics. When the Romans gave Greek philosophy its authoritative voice within the tradition, this conflict—along with its origin in "political experiences"—was "forgotten" (WA 124-25). The end result was that "Greek philosophy, though never quite accepted and sometimes, especially by Cicero, even vehemently opposed, nevertheless imposed its categories on political thought…" (TPT 53-54). What is important for our argument here—and what may salvage or at least lessen the blow of Arendt's dismissive assessment of Cicero—is not that he was unphilosophical or that his philosophical attempts were wholly without merit, but instead that he was disputing the content and nature of political philosophy from outside the traditional practice of philosophy. His thought had no bearing on the tradition because he was not a philosopher in the Greek sense—neither removed from politics nor skeptical of the role that politics ought to play in a philosophically inspired life. That said, he was one of the few who hadn't forgotten the importance of the specifically political experience that lay at the root of our condition in the world.

At this stage Cicero's distinct contributions to political thought come into view. In keeping with what was just said about the authority of the Greek tradition, Arendt states that, "neither the radical separation between politics and contemplation, between living together and living in solitude as two distinct modes of life, nor their hierarchical structure, was ever doubted after Plato had established both" (ET 85). However, rather unexpectedly, she follows up this assessment with the following:

> Here again the only exception is Cicero, who, out of his tremendous Roman political experience, doubted the validity of the superiority of the *bios theoretikos* over the *bios politikos*, the validity of solitude over the *communitas*. Rightly but futilely, Cicero objected that he who was devoted to "knowledge and science" would flee his

> "solitude and ask for a companion in his study, be it in order to teach or to learn, to listen or to speak" (ET 86).

All of a sudden Cicero goes from being decidedly unphilosophic to being, in Arendt's view, the sole individual to doubt or question the superiority of philosophy to politics within Western thought. Regardless of the lack of success that this objection achieved within the tradition, the importance of Cicero's departure from that tradition on this particular topic is far from inconsequential within Arendt's work. The relation of the *bios theoretikos* to the *bios politikos*, or of the *vita contemplativa* to the *vita activa*, is the animating theme of—arguably—her most renowned work.[5] Cicero's objection that philosophy and thought require solitude and the absence of men certainly resonates with Arendt's theories on thinking, judging, and acting—let alone her concept of plurality and what it is precisely that we're doing when we are with others. The implications that Cicero's thought has with Arendt's on these topics will be dealt with at length in Chapters Four and Five, but the important take away here is that Cicero departs from the tradition with a novel set of questions and answers to the very problems Arendt later picks up regarding the conflictual relationship between politics, philosophy, and the men who practice each. As Kohn points out, "Cicero tries…to restore political action against its degradation in the tradition" (xxviii). It is in this light that an analysis of Arendt's use of Cicero has the potential to illuminate a great deal within her thought.

When we saw earlier that Arendt depicted Cicero as a 'man of action' and not as a philosopher, it seemed appropriate to think of this as jibe against the potential depth (or lack thereof) of his thought. However, after unpacking her reading of Cicero it becomes

[5] Arendt's breif but glowing treatment of the Romans in *The Human Condition* (1958) fits nicely within this chronological narrative.

clearer that this type of action may be the type of bridge needed to fill in the gap between philosophy and politics. As mentioned in Chapter One, Arendt sees a connection between the cultural and political worlds insofar as they are both 'phenomena of the public world.' What remained unclear is how the two are specifically related beyond their shared space. She does state that "culture indicates that the public realm" "offers its space of display to those things whose essence it is to appear and to be beautiful," and that it "is rendered politically secure by *men of action*" (CC 218, emphasis mine).[6] What we now also know is that she describes Cicero using the same turn of phrase. Arendt also describes Cicero's *cultura animi*, or that "which makes man fit to take care of the things of the world," as part of a philosophy—and more specifically a philosophy that stands in direct "contradistinction to the Greeks" (CC 215). As a political actor, Cicero saw it as his role to protect spaces for political acts and cultural artifacts. As a thinker, he ascribed these duties to philosophy and in the process questioned the existence—not the mere ordering—of the hierarchy that placed philosophy over politics.

Once we arrive at Arendt's references to Cicero in *The Life of the Mind* any notions of her ambiguity about him as a thinker and philosopher become effectively quashed. In fact, the central question of *The Life of the Mind*—as well as the concluding thought to *The Human Condition*—is premised on a quote from Cicero that causes Arendt to pick apart the relationship between the *vita activa* and the *vita contempletiva* and question "what we are

[6] "The Crisis in Culture" was first published in 1961 as one of the six original essays in *Between Past and Future*. Her thoughts in this piece can be seen as a conceptual middle ground between her early works which present two competing narratives about Cicero, and her later more solidified conclusions in *The Life of the Mind*.

"doing" when we do nothing but think" (LM 8).[7] In this text all of the ambiguous strands of thought regarding the role and place of philosophy and Rome are brought together. When we previously discussed Arendt's treatment of philosophy in Rome more generally, we saw her attribute to it a derivative character and separate any influence that practice and experience could have on the development of thought. Then when we briefly turned to Augustine, it became clear that her presentation could not be that simple—that there was something about experience that transformed thought—and that Cicero might hold a privileged position within philosophy precisely because of that. Arendt finally comes to demonstrate how this is true. She states, "Cicero transformed Greek philosophy into something essentially Roman—which meant, among other things, something essentially practical" (LM 153-54).[8] We now have a starting point from which we can distance ourselves from the Greek tradition and view philosophy as practical engagement with the world. It is also where we can begin to piece together the compatibility between the duties attributable to 'men of action' in the world with those duties associated with the life of the mind.[9] Cicero's influence in Arendt's understanding of both will turn out to be significant.

So what exactly are Cicero's philosophical contributions according to Arendt? As discussed in the last chapter she recognized his contributions to culture and humanism, but there is another more significant discovery that she attributes to Cicero. According to Arendt, it was Cicero who "had discovered the thought-trains by which one could take one's way out of the world" (LM 157). He provides "perhaps the first record in intellectual

[7] See LM 7-8, HC 325. The quote is attributed to Cato, but the only record we have of him having said it comes to us from Cicero in *De rep*. 1.27 and *De off*. 3.1.
[8] She also mentions Lucretius in this passage.
[9] Arendt actually refers to Cicero as a "professional philosopher" in *The Life of the Mind* (160). However, this characterization is quite fraught and does not do justice to her presentation of Cicero. This reference will be explicated in Chapter Four.

history" "of how certain trains of thought actually aim at thinking oneself out of the world, and by means of *relativization*" (LM 160).[10] Why is this thought train important? Didn't we just see that for Arendt the key to Cicero's philosophical contribution was his integration of experience within the world? Why then does she applaud a contribution that removes us from that space? Because before we act we must think. Thinking in this context involves a discussion with ourselves, it requires the temporary departure from the world of action, and then our return again with a decided course of action. This exact path is outlined by Cicero in "Scipio's Dream" from *De re publica*, and in it he demonstrates how philosophy and political action are intangibly connected, as well as why philosophy beckons us back from pure thought to rejoin our fellows in the public world.[11] Cicero's theory provides the content or building blocks for Arendt's notion of thinking, and serves as a narrative guide for us to figure out what she means when she stresses the "activity of thinking, of settling down in the gap between past and future" (BPF 13). Because tradition can no longer guide us through this gap, we must rely on thinking to take its place. It is certainly ironic now that our relationship with tradition has broken that we return to Cicero and his rejection of the terms of that Greek tradition—as well as the tradition's neglect of him—in order to figure out what it means to think and act into the world.

Cicero and the Greeks

Before we can construct a full narrative between Arendt and Cicero, we must first resurrect Cicero's political philosophy from a century of interpretative sidelining and

[10] This topic will be dealt with in depth in Chapter Four, but for a good analysis on Arendt in relation to Cicero, relativization, and the text of "Scipio's Dream" see Hammer (2008) 41-42.
[11] This is the topic of Chapter Three.

glossing over. As Hammer pointedly states, "the Romans came to all but disappear in twentieth century discussions of political thought," and as a result Cicero was depicted only as a "person of interest" who "summed up the commonplaces of political theory at the time" (2008 13, 23). James Zetzel dismisses Cicero's thought as an "attempt to transpose Greek ideas about public life into a Roman context" (xi), while Mark Morford begins a supposedly definitive account of "the Roman philosophers" with the assertion that "the distinctive quality of the Roman philosophers…[was that they] accepted the authority of the Greeks and adapted Greek doctrines for their own needs" (13).[12] The damage done to Cicero's reputation by Mommsen alone set back any serious studies of his philosophical works by nearly a century. Not only did his characterization of Cicero turn him primarily into an historical footnote, but it also shaped the lens that scholars used to examine Cicero on the few occasions where he was the subject of analysis. As Meador aptly points out, "one result of this [Mommsen's] disparaging estimate has been to concentrate investigation on the Greek sources from which Cicero derives the material for his philosophic treaties"—with little to no emphasis on the transformative conclusions that Cicero uses those sources to make (Meador 1). The focus on his use of source materials hasn't even led to firm conclusions about the nature of Cicero's acquaintance with those sources within his work. The contributions that Cicero could have made to our understanding of philosophy have been consistently marginalized, ignored, or simply made to play second fiddle to the classical Greek canon. This anti-Roman intellectual bias is not limited to the fields of political science or political theory, but also invades philosophy and classical studies. Luckily, this interpretive stranglehold has begun to loosen over the past two decades and

[12] Morford does state that, at times, this resulted in the Roman's "own philosophy"—yet this conclusion seems rather weak considering the starting premise quoted here.

there are some scholars who now recognize Cicero's original contributions.[13] That said, it would be a multi-volume task in itself to resurrect Cicero and the totality of his philosophical works from this near century of interpretive bias—not to mention that such an exercise would take us too far afield from the concerns of this project. While this section aims to demonstrate Cicero's departures from the Greeks, it will be nowhere near comprehensive and nor does it aim to be. Instead, it will focus solely on how he rejects the Greeks on a few key terms of their political philosophies. Our first point of analysis will be a brief case study of Polybius' mixed regime theory. This example illustrates one manner Cicero incorporated Greek theory into his work—as a foundation to be altered and built upon. The following two sections will take up the accusations that Cicero's philosophy adhered to either the Platonic Academy or the Stoics. The aim of these analyses will be to shake off the assumptions that Cicero fits neatly into either of these schools; and that because of this, an honest examination of his political philosophy on its own merits is not only warranted but long overdue.

Polybius

In *De re publica*, Cicero discusses Polybius' *anacyclosis* and lauds the mixed regime as being the best form of government—yet Cicero is not simply adopting Polybius' theory to fill out his work. Cicero uses Polybius' blueprint of regime change to further his own arguments on the nature of and remedy to the political crisis in Rome. Cicero does not incorporate an outside theory unchanged and move on to his next point—he takes that

[13] See Douglas 1985 as an example of one of the earlier departures. Here he notes that, "…for Cicero suffice it that even in his most clearly (and admittedly) derivative writings, his writings on rhetoric and especially on philosophy, a Roman and individual note is constantly to be heard" (Douglas 1985 5). Cicero's task was "not merely to represent the Greek thinkers to Roman readers but to challenge them" (Douglas 1985 17).

theory, rejects portions of it, and augments what is left. By engaging with an idea in that manner he transforms it into something new and capable of illuminating what the original iteration does not. In order to demonstrate this adoption/alteration process at work, let us turn to Polybius' account of regime change.

Polybius starts his typology in the proverbial state of nature where human beings come together in a (I) natural despotism where individuals unite like herds and follow the leadership of the one who displays the greatest strength (462). However, once family and social ties become established in this form, the idea of (II) kingship emerges, and with it "the notions of goodness and justice" (Polybius 462). He views justice as innate to men, and theorizes that it arises from individuals' sympathy with the positions of others. When kingship deteriorates, it becomes a (III) tyranny; when tyranny is then overthrown, an (IV) aristocracy is set up by those few according to merit and justice; when aristocracy decays, (V) oligarchy takes hold; when oligarchy is overthrown, (VI) democracy is ushered in; and once democracy becomes corrupted, (VII) mob-rule takes over (Polybius 459-466). Mob-rule eventually leads to the demise of civilization, and starts the cycle back again to the beginning in natural despotism (Polybius 466). The decay of each good regime occurs when its own internal vice gets the better of it. This seems simple enough, but on closer inspection, Polybius' account does not match Cicero's retelling of it. First, "Polybius made it clear that he regarded moral corruption as an inevitable consequence of prosperity and supremacy, and part of the pattern of growth and decay that ran through all nature. Cicero makes it clear that he did not accept this point of view" (Mitchell 34).[14] Second, if the mixed regime is the best—and exemplary of the Roman republic—how exactly does it come

[14] See also Lintott 221; Frede 90, 93

about? This explanation is missing from Polybius. However, not only does Cicero reject the fixed order of the *anacyclosis*, but he also provides an account as to how the mixed regime comes into being—and thus both departs and transforms Polybius' theory.

It is somewhat safe to say that Cicero lauds preservation as much as, if not more than, the act of foundation. Using a Catonian genealogy, Cicero rejects the model of the original/single founder. He narrates a story of Rome's development contingent upon the continual flow of talents of many men, "over many generations," as "there never was a genius so great that he could miss nothing, nor could all the geniuses in the world brought together in one place at one time foresee all contingencies without the practical experience afforded by the passage of time" (*De rep*. 2.2). Here we see that preservation relies upon the continual improvement and adjustment of the city by its leaders—both institutionally and culturally. It is within this context that Cicero spends a great deal of time discussing the role that good citizens, and otherwise 'prudent men', play in the preservation and health of the republic. The role of the prudent man is to recognize the oncoming alterations and "to anticipate them when they are about to occur, holding a course and keeping it under his control while governing" (*De rep.* 1.45). It is perhaps telling that at exactly this mention of the figure of the prudent man Cicero brings up the theory of the mixed regime as the best form of government. On the surface it appears that the praise of the mixed constitution is one of practicality (*De rep.* 1.69). However, Cicero is making a far more radical point than this. In adapting Polybius' anacyclosis and emphasizing the ideal character of the mixed regime, Cicero actually demonstrates the requirement of astute and active citizens for both the foundation and preservation of such a commonwealth.

By rejecting both the fixed order of change and emphasizing the importance of prudent men in the preservation and salvation of the city we can begin to see that Cicero views the mixed regime as *un*natural. Instead, it represents a break with Polybius' natural cycle of governments, and demonstrates the necessity of a good founder and subsequent statesman for the mixed regime's origin and preservation. This leads to the conclusion that Cicero believes "not that the cycle is inflexible or inevitable, but that with sufficient…political wisdom its movements can be foreseen and prevented" (Powell 24). "He has shown also that the development of Rome itself exemplifies the cyclical process of constitutional development identified by Polybius, while at the same time allowing more of a role to the wisdom and foresight of individuals than to the operations of historical necessity or chance" (Powell 30). This demonstrates the scope and aim of the citizens' duty to preserve the commonwealth. The break in the typology of natural regimes illustrates mankind's break with the fixed order, and the departure from this fixed order goes hand-in-hand with human nature's perfectibility and the gradual attainment of virtue and wisdom.[15] This rereading of Cicero's Polybius also works well with the interpretation that *De re publica* is not simply an account of how, a now unsalvageable, Rome went astray, but instead serves as an illustration that a "truly great citizen" may—and in fact, *must*—salvage a government at any particular point regardless of the stage.[16] More importantly this reading demonstrates how Cicero used his experience in public life to transform a

[15] Much more on this in Chapter Three.

[16] This conclusion runs contra Zetzel who views *De re publica* in a somewhat defeatist light. Zetzel argues that the only thing Cicero "offers in *On the Commonwealth* is…a philosophical rationale for what had been lost, together with an explanation of why it had failed," and not "a practical program for political reform" (xix).

philosophy and rework it to provide a new interpretive lens on Roman political life and history.

Plato

A fair number of scholars who do take up Cicero's work have assumed that because of his otherwise respect for and treatment of Plato, Cicero's own 'contribution' was to mold much of Platonic thought to fit Roman institutions. Some scholars are definitive in their accounts and state that Cicero was unquestionably a "follower of Plato's Academy" (Habicht 21).[17] This categorization of Cicero as an Academic Skeptic has a number of merits. Perhaps most importantly, it gives us a view as to how or why Cicero constructed his dialogues: "to him philosophy consists essentially in the activity of seeking truth by discussing and arguing against the positions of others, rather than by thinking up your own position to hold or adopting someone else's" (Annas xi).[18] This helps to explain why Cicero employs the philosophies of others at the core of his works, as well as his hesitancy to admit his own stances. However, if we actually delve into the content of Cicero's claims it becomes clear that his philosophical project was different from Plato's school at its very core.

While keeping this in mind, there is no disputing that Cicero demonstrates a deep indebtedness to Plato in his political works. Yet this indebtedness in no way implies mere mimicry. As A.A. Long aptly summarizes, Cicero's praise of Plato is "persistent and extreme," and includes such platitudes as "'that god of ours' (*Att*. 4.16.3), and 'the first of philosophers in rank' (*De fin.* 5.7)" (43). Cicero explicitly modeled his *De re publica* and *De*

[17] See also Annas' "Introduction" to Cicero's *De finibus*.
[18] This assessment of Cicero's "Platonism" can more accurately be read as Cicero's common ground with Socrates. The parallel with Cicero and Socrates is discussed in Chapter Four.

legibus off of Plato's *Republic* and *Laws*, both thematically and stylistically[19]—and yet, Cicero's vision of the relationship between philosophy and politics is dramatically different from that of Plato's. For Cicero, not only is philosophy's role in the city a natural one, but his city is real and not an exercise in imagination. In stark contrast, Plato positions the philosopher in direct conflict with the city, and requires him to sacrifice the practice of philosophy for the good of the city; for those who have experienced the good and seen the idea of justice that exists outside of the cave must be forced or "compelled" to return to the city in order to employ their knowledge of the good "as a pattern for ordering" it (540b). Here politics is depicted as a practice of necessity and not of virtue, and this separation of the two endeavors leads not only to the unhappiness of the philosopher who "drudges in[to] politics and rules for the city's sake" (540b), but also to a city whose purpose becomes one of subsistence and not of good. In this relationship all of the virtues that philosophy has the ability to give light to are tarnished by Plato's portrayal of political life as a lesser vocation, and one seemingly unconcerned with similar or complementary questions.[20]

Cicero in contrast refuses to negate the practical and worldly constraints of cities and their politics and chooses instead to ground his work upon the premise of a city in practice, not in speech—rooting ideal theory in the historical and legal development of Rome and the behaviors of its most exalted citizens. More importantly, Cicero views the relationship of philosophy and the city as an innate bond, founded out of nature and duty—

[19] Powell 17

[20] This reading is in keeping with Arendt's evaluation of Platonic political philosophy insofar as it "shows the rebellion of the philosopher against the polis. The philosopher announces his claim to rule, but not so much for the sake of the polis and politics…as for the sake of philosophy and the safety of the philosopher" (WA 107).

not animosity, trickery or compulsion. His recasting of this relationship allows him not only to reject past interpretations of the role of philosophers, and the character of philosophy, but it allows him the freedom to redefine that role and its duties in relation to a theory of justice and politics that intertwines the development and fulfillment of philosophy *with* politics.[21] Cicero rejects the Platonic tension between the practices of philosophy and politics, and instead demonstrates how man's desire for wisdom and his duties to his fellows are inexorably linked.[22] If Cicero rejects the very foundation of Platonic political thought, then how are we to believe that the resultant philosophy could be in line with the Academy? The solution to this conundrum is that "…a large part of the importance of Plato for Cicero…was literary" (Douglas 1985 9). Cicero's stylistic and methodological nods to the Academy in no way imply that his philosophy was in keeping with theirs—he may have used their blueprints, but the materials and resulting structure were wholly different.

The Stoics

Though a number of scholars see Cicero primarily as an Academic Skeptic, the general consensus among a larger contingent is that he was an adherent of Stoic philosophy. Unlike Cicero's Platonic inheritance, his connection to Stoicism is not limited to stylistic or literary influence. Cicero's concepts of natural law, cosmopolitanism, and virtue are all fundamentally and indisputably grounded in Stoic philosophy. Yet within this position, there are a great variety of incongruities and problems that emerge when trying to portray Cicero as a Stoic. On a purely experiential note, Cicero was not a practitioner of its strict anti-emotional demands or moral codes. "Cicero was no Stoic" (Balsdon 196). In

[21] We already saw, albeit briefly, that Arendt views Cicero as a thinker who rejects the Platonic elevation of philosophy over practice. This analysis is in keeping with hers.
[22] This topic will be taken up in Chapter Three when we discuss 'Scipio's Dream'.

fact, he can be seen as having gone "back and forth on the arguments for and against the Stoic view all his life" (Annas xii). Though the Stoics were not anti-politics in the same manner as the Platonists, they still held a very different view on the role and nature of political involvement from Cicero. They viewed society and its political outgrowth as 'natural', but political action was also seen an "indifferent" duty that was to be conducted with *apatheia* (Douglas 1985 12). The idea that politics ought to be participated in sans emotion should strike even the casual reader of Cicero as odd.[23] Looking at Cicero's views on oratory alone we can see how far afield his views on the subject of passions in politics fall from this Stoic version. One of the stylistic lynchpins of Ciceronian oratory is the use of *dolor*: the "direct and explicit token of deep emotional involvement [of the orator]…the psychological and moral suffering which lends credibility to the passion in his words, to his outbursts of indignation and to his appeals to pity" (Narducci 55). For these reasons "Cicero…believed that the Stoics' reliance on the unadorned and arid nature of dialectical argumentation made them poor orators who were unable to engage their audiences" (Stem 37). Cicero's rejection of Stoic oratory is no minor sticking point. Oratory was the primary avenue through which a politician appeared in public. The words delivered and the methods employed in their delivery defined the public persona of the politician just as much as the policies and arguments being expounded upon. To say then that it is inconsequential for Cicero to reject Stoicism on this score is a bit incoherent—it would require him to align himself philosophically with a mode of political life that he actively

[23] On the broader relationship between Cicero on emotions, loss, and the role of philosophy Cicero comes down as decidedly anti-Stoic. See Hammer (2008) 40, 41, 47, 49, and 50 for an account equating personal loss/grief with political loss—and philosophy's inability to provide relief for either.

dismissed. Such incongruity gives rise to a host of concerns regarding the nature of Cicero's 'Stoicism.'

Another problem with categorizing Cicero as a Stoic is the political and moral expediency used in his decision-making. As an active politician he continually faced questions not of moral absolutes, but of moral in-betweens. Again, Stoic rigidity was no fit for Cicero's political behavior. Though Cicero allowed pragmatic political concerns to trump his philosophical tenets at times, this is not to say he was unprincipled in his actions as a politician. "He might bend under pressure and stretch his principles, but he would not flatly renounce them" (Habicht 62). This mode of political decision-making stands in stark opposition to a system that views the political world as of secondary or indifferent importance—and certainly not as a forum worthy of bending or sacrificing one's values for.[24]

On the methodological and theoretical side of the Stoic question there are disagreements about Cicero's sources and further complications as to what actually constituted his understanding of Stoicism as a school. Doxologists are very keen to trace the origins of Cicero's Stoic sources and align them chronologically with the changing versions of the school—to determine whether he was adopting bits of radical Stoicism (an unlikely hypothesis considering the above arguments) or more tempered versions of its creed as seen in the work of Antiochus. While this textual tracing may be informative regarding the transmission of ideas it does not necessarily follow that it is of any great use

[24] We need only contrast Cicero with a Roman politician with pristine Stoic laurels to demonstrate how far apart they were with regard to political action and philosophical engagement. "There was little to attract him in the rigid Stoicism of Cato…Cato was never worried, as Cicero was worried, by the problem as to when a man may legitimately put aside thoughts of right and wrong, and allow considerations of expediency to guide his conduct" (Balsdon 183-84).

for an attempt to understand Cicero's project. For one, his stances on the different versions of Stoicism change across texts. This habit is so prevalent that both the assertion of Cicero's anti-Antiocheanism as well as the claim that he "was sympathetic to Antiochus' project,[25] knew it thoroughly and was influenced by it" can be considered valid (Douglas 1985 11, Annas xiv). Evidence that Cicero was more interested in how he could make Stoic theory work *for* his project, as opposed to how faithfully he could transmit its theories, can be seen in the fact that what Cicero took as "essential of the Stoic creed" "may historically have originated at different phases in the development of the school" (Douglas 1985 19n19). The preservation of Cicero's Greek sources is a useful byproduct of his writings. However, if we only look to what parts were preserved, then we miss out on the novelty in how they were assembled.

An incredible amount of material exists to explain away Cicero's work by deconstructing its component parts—and nowhere is the trend as visible as in the treatments of Cicero on the Stoics. Yet many, if not most, of these attempts are unsatisfying in their conclusions. Why? Because they rest on an underlying assumption—either deliberate or unconscious—of Cicero's lack of originality. They blame inconsistencies between Cicero's writing and accepted philosophical doctrine on typos[26] or they become so caught up in fully aligning Cicero's arguments with those he was drawing from that these scholars gloss over incredibly significant, though perhaps 'unphilosophical', discrepancies between the aims of they projects that they are trying to unite. A noteworthy example of this latter practice can be seen in Elizabeth Asmis' 2008 article. Though the article is meticulously well-researched and precise in its attempt to unite Cicero's accounts of

[25] Annas is referring to "Antiochus' attempt to build positively from differing views" (xxvii).
[26] Asmis (2008) points out a very salient example of this practice (21).

natural law and the law of the state with their Stoic origins, she misses a very key part of Cicero's position. He wasn't starting from philosophy and looking down at the world—he was starting from the activity of political life and looking/searching for virtue. The assumptions that Stoic accounts of political life rest upon—that it is an "incomplete duty" and that philosophy prepares men for death by teaching immunity to or distance from worldly concerns—are incompatible with Cicero's project in the first place. Hammer's assessment of this philosophical disconnect puts it best: "If philosophy for the Stoics…teaches us impassivity toward things of this world, then for Cicero philosophy seems more like a preparation for life that heightens our delight of the world" (Hammer 2008 56). Cicero didn't see political action as morally neutral, so the attempt to unpack his presentation of Rome and the virtue of its laws in light of a philosophy that did so see it cannot be particularly illustrative. Asmis points out again and again that the Stoics rejected any notion that human law could either be virtuous or even be considered 'law'[27]—but this position is one that Cicero explicitly rejects. Yet, she then goes to great pains to connect Cicero's position of law and virtue with the Stoic notion of middle duties in an effort to prove the depth of Cicero's Stoicism. If one takes a step back from the philosophical minutia of this argument, does it not appear strange to align a thinker with a school despite said thinker's departure from its underlying principles? Why is it so unthinkable that Cicero employed the Stoics for foundational material and then arrived at differing conclusions?

Meador presents a good, but rare, departure from this formula of trying to cram political experience back into philosophy in order to make sense of it. While granting that Cicero had a variety of philosophical debts (Stoic and otherwise) he focuses on Cicero's

[27] See references on 19n57, 21, 21n62, and 22 (Asmis 2008).

own conclusions. In doing so, Meador draws explicit attention to the requirement of "activity in human affairs" to achieve virtue (Meador 6).[28] He approaches Cicero's works as containing philosophical insights in their own right. They "form a coherent system…because [they] center on man first and foremost and deal with other things only insofar as they relate to man's position in the world" (Meador 2). There is a great deal going for this pro-experience interpretive stance. First, the philosophical distance allows for a more nuanced view of Cicero's relationship to Stoicism. As Pangle emphasizes:

> Cicero refashions out of Stoicism a teaching that gives full weight or due to the dimensions of political existence neglected by Stoicism. He does so while placing on a firmer foundation the greatest contribution of the Stoics: their insight into and insistence upon the truth that the highest in humanity transcends political bounds (Pangle 261-62).

As methodologically unphilosophical as it sounds, there is very much something to the argument that Cicero cannot be a Stoic because it was a philosophy that neglected the area of his life he was most determined in and proud of: politics. He obviously values the school for what it has to say about human nature, but for Cicero that nature cannot flourish outside of activity. As he advises his son in *De officiis*: There is no virtue without action (*De off*. 1.19). If we want to understand virtue, then we must understand what compels us to act as well, and the reason that "Cicero continues to be perplexed by several aspects of Stoic teaching...[is that he is] unable to accept a wisdom based on the denial and misrepresentation of ordinary experience" (Narducci 69-70).

The aim of this project is not to refute Cicero's debts to the Stoics, for that would be misguided folly. What this project does hope to achieve is a reassessment of Cicero's

[28] Meador focuses primarily on the topics of humanism and rhetoric—areas almost everyone seems agreed, though few pursue with rigor, that Cicero departed ways from his predecessors on. See also Annas (2001) xxii; Stem (2005) 37; Douglas (1965) 154.

philosophical contributions from a stance outside of the confusion and hodgepodge of the myriad of dissenting and dismissive accounts of his work. In order to achieve this goal, I will side with the scholarly minority and take Cicero at his word: "I shall…follow the Stoics above all, *not as an expositor*, but as is my custom, drawing from their fountains when and as it seems best, using my own judgment and discretion" (*De off*. 1.6, emphasis mine). He uses selected parts of Stoic philosophy to further his own arguments.[29] This move hinges on a slightly unorthodox position. Whereas the vast majority of the scholarship on Cicero seeks to pick apart his works in the attempt to discover how much part *X* aligns with philosophical school *Y*, this project seeks to map his practical political experience onto his broader philosophical project. Most analyses not only fail to place implicit emphasis on the superiority of the philosophical project, but they do so as the expense of the practical material that Cicero infuses into his work. This analysis will examine the specifically Roman experience that caused Cicero to take up philosophy. This vantage point frees us from the doxological quagmire and allows us to see Cicero's project on its own terms. If there is 'no virtue without action,' then why must we start with virtue first? Instead, let us start with action and see what this does to Cicero's claims of virtue.

Is it still possible to read Cicero as derivative of Greek thought alone? Unfortunately, yes. However, what this brief exegesis on his usage of Greek philosophy should demonstrate is a hearty skepticism of this interpretation. To conclude that one of the foremost active politicians of the Roman Republic was able to produce a wholly unoriginal

[29] It is worth noting that this methodological position is also strikingly similar to Arendt's 'pearl diver' analogy from her essay on Walter Benjamin. They each use source material selectively and apart from its orginal contexts to further their own projects. Arendt's methodolgical platform is discussed in Chapter Four.

philosophical corpus by cherry-picking his favorite parts of Greek philosophy and divorcing his political experience from that theoretical project seems unlikely at best and a flagrant disservice to his body of work at worst. The Platonic influence is clear, but Cicero's stylistic and methodological borrowing do not entail that he shared more concrete views with Academic political thought. The Polybius example demonstrates a particular case of how Cicero took a lead from a Greek thinker, but transformed that theory into something his own. The Stoic case is obviously more complex. Yet between scholarly disagreement of what Stoicism as a school represents—or what version of it Cicero was borrowing from—and the disjunction between Stoic principles and Cicero's devotion to political life, there is a fair amount of room to argue that Cicero's project was not theirs. The following chapter will be an attempt to outline the major premises of Cicero's political philosophical project, and especially those portions that lay the foundations of Arendt's Ciceronian thought-trains.

CHAPTER THREE

Cicero's Political Philosophy: Thinking, Fellowship, and the Purpose of Political Life

There does not exist a significant amount of scholarship that takes seriously Cicero's contributions to political philosophy.[1] Therefore, we must first spend time detailing Cicero's own political philosophical platform before we can turn our attention to the ways in which Arendt employs it to further her own project. Cicero never penned a singular "systematic political or philosophical treatise" (Wood 62). This requires that we take into account passages from across his collected works if we are to analyze him on his own terms as an original thinker.[2] Between Cicero's private letters, public orations, and dialogues, there are an almost infinite number of ways to go about reconstructing Cicero's political theoretical project. Recognizing this context—as well as the overall aim of this project to

[1] There are a few (and growing in number) exceptions to this claim. See Wood 1991, Remer 1999, Garsten 2006, Nicgorski 2012, Baraz 2012, and Connolly 2014 as cases in point.

[2] Adopting this position as a starting point is not without methodological controversy. Wood argues that because Cicero failed to compose treatises "one should not give to his many ideas a greater logical consistency and coherence than they warrant" (Wood 62). This seems like a cop out, especially considering Cicero's unceasing emphasis on consistency between thought and action over the course of one's life. For a particularly compelling presentation of the role of *constantia* in Cicero's political thought (and practice) see Tracy 2012.

put Cicero in conversation with Arendt[3]—this chapter will extract three foundational positions that inform the whole of his political philosophical project: the necessity and character of thinking, the centrality of fellowship, and the forward looking aims of just political engagement. These three pillars are by no means meant to serve as an absolute or definitive account of Cicero's political philosophical contributions—the position of this chapter is merely that without these features the rest of Cicero's conceptual project looses its mooring. The three main texts that will be employed in this task are the *De re publica*, *De legibus*, and *De officiis*—though there will be occasions where Cicero's position in these works will be made clearer and richer by incorporating excerpts from outside of them. This scope leaves out an immense amount of Cicero's corpus—nearly 60 speeches, the majority of his work on rhetoric, much of his presentation of Greek philosophical schools, as well as his personal letters, which number close to a thousand. What these three texts *do* demonstrate are the ethical terms that grounded his engagement with public life, the balance between political duty and the search of wisdom that informs it, and Cicero's high—and universal—estimation of the character of human beings that populate a shared world. However, recognizing the limits to and purpose of our scope, it is my hope that those engaged with Cicero on different terms will be able to use this analysis to reevaluate and reposition those of his sentiments and words that fall outside of our purview. For the Cicero reader more engaged with his practice of politics as seen in the orations or letters, this attempt will hopefully provide the philosophical context and guiding principles behind those words. For those scholars focused more on Cicero's sources than in how he employs

[3] Because this chapter seeks to introduce the parameters by which Arendt employs Cicero in her own theory the primary textual direction and context of our analysis is somewhat predetermined.

them, hopefully this chapter will help to dispel the myth that Cicero has little original to offer.

"Scipio's Dream": Thought, Action, and Speech

As previously mentioned, Cicero rejects the Greek elevation of the life of philosophy over the life of politics. Yet Cicero's rejection doesn't merely equalize two separate pursuits—he incorporates them into a single life lived. Though each life has the capability to exist apart from the other, Cicero argues that one cannot do justice to either philosophy or politics without engaging with them both.[4] "The deepest core of philosophy" should serve as a guide and provide us with "the knowledge of how to live" (*De leg*. 1.17, 58).[5] The guiding principles of our actions should derive from the pursuit of wisdom and learning—but how? To respond, Cicero gives us "Scipio's Dream" in Book Six of *De re publica*. The Dream provides a template for how individuals[6] should engage with philosophy, and put it to use. It becomes clear that to take up philosophy is really to engage with one's self, and that the usage of this introspectively gained wisdom takes the form of discourse in the public sphere. Before jumping into the ramifications of this conclusion, let's first break down the component parts of The Dream.

The narrator of The Dream is Publius Scipio Africanus, the renowned statesman and grandfather by adoption of Publius Cornelius Scipio Aemilianus Africanus, who is the

[4] Cicero views the failure to put wisdom into practice as one of two forms of injustice (the first being to cause harm) (*De off*. 1.28-29).
[5] Cicero similarly says, "The theoretical study of all the skills which have to do with the right way of living is to be identified with the pursuit of wisdom, this is, philosophy" (*Tusc*. 1.1).
[6] The interpretive position of this analysis is that Cicero's theory is applicable to all human beings—not simply the 'best' or aristocratic ones. This topic will be taken up in depth during the discussion of fellowship.

'Scipio' featured previously in the dialogue. The elder Scipio's appearance and message—an advisory on the proper course and duties of a good citizen's life—is relayed to the rest of the dialogue's interlocutors through the younger Scipio as he recounts a dream. The background of the speaker is important for two reasons. First, the elder Scipio serves as an exemplary model of action for the dialogue's participants. Second, he is speaking as a political figure about the value of contemplation—and as will be argued later, philosophy—as it relates to duty. This formula is a significant departure from the traditional (i.e. Greek/Platonic) model where a philosopher speaks of politics from outside its practice. The Dream itself is a call for the younger Scipio to save Rome from ruin, and is set in the heavens, with both Scipios occupying a space between the stars and planets. The elder Scipio explains the workings of the cosmos and the harmony that exists in it. He spends ample time dismissing fleeting human endeavors, opinions, and rewards, reminding the younger that his aims should always be directed at the eternal elements of the universe: virtue, "true honor," and the maintenance of the soul (*De rep*. 6.25). The human world is portrayed as infinitesimally small compared to the universe, and men's accomplishments in it—even empires—are yet again smaller (*De rep*. 6.16, 20-24). The earth consists of "nothing that is not mortal and perishable except the souls given to the human race by the gift of the gods" (*De rep*. 6.17). From this vantage point the elder Scipio reminds the younger that there is no greater accomplishment than the preservation of a state—and that when this has been accomplished, he may ascend to the heavens again.

Without unpacking this exchange, the statements and aims made within it seem at odds not only internally to The Dream, but also with the very character and actions of the men featured in it. They are defined by their political accomplishments. How can one

undercut the scope and significance of these actions, all the while imploring that men continue to strive for them? The answer comes to us in three parts. First, in the midst of The Dream, Scipio sees his father approach and he asks why he cannot depart from his earthly life now and come to live amongst those he misses. If that which is eternal is so much superior to that which is mortal, why not shortcut the earthly part and simply ascend to the heavens? Paullus, his father, responds by saying that, when "men are created" "they are given a soul from those eternal fires which you call constellations and stars" (*De rep*. 6.15). Men are mortal in their bodies, but immortal in their souls. These terms demand that it is "human duty" "to look after that globe…called earth" by "cultivating justice and piety" within it (*De rep*. 6.15, 16). "The way that leads to the sky is not the way of philosophy but rather the way forged by political action" (Lévy 71). Men are bound to one another as well as to the cosmos. It thus becomes one's mortal duty to serve as the connection between the transient realm of men and the eternal realm of virtue. How does one do that? My making sure that virtues like justice and piety are represented among mankind within their shared world. The most effective way to ensure this connection between the knowledge and practice of virtue is through the foundation or preservation of a state, its institutions, and its peoples. The second portion of The Dream's response is demonstrated by the younger Scipio's behavior while he temporarily occupies his position in the cosmos. Even while the elder Scipio is telling the younger about the fleeting nature of worldly accomplishments, the latter finds that he is continually drawn back to them. As Scipio states, "Although I marveled at all this, I still kept bringing my eyes to look back to earth" (*De rep*. 6.20).[7] Because Scipio is still mortal, and has yet to depart from earth permanently, there is

[7] See also *De rep*. 6.17

something within him that compels him to look back toward it. This pull represents how the human condition is actually quite tension-filled. Part of Scipio is drawn toward the eternal, part toward human affairs. The resolution of this tension provides us with the third part of our answer, and demonstrates the truly novel way that Cicero presents the relationship between men, philosophy, and politics.

The tension between the pulls of the eternal world and our temporal condition on earth is mediated and alleviated through the process of thought. Though it is our duty to tend to human affairs, we should not allow ourselves to become distracted by the melee and confusion that is characteristic of political life. This does not mean that we ignore or sacrifice it in pursuit of 'higher' ideals or a better way of life—for there is none, according to Cicero—but we should constantly reassess our position in that world by looking out from it. Just as Scipio keeps looking back toward the earth when he is in the heavens, so too must an actor look toward the heavens when he occupies his position on earth. The elder Scipio urges the younger to "look on high…contemplate this dwelling and eternal home; and do not give yourself to the words of the mob, and do not place your hopes in human rewards: virtue itself by its own allurements should draw you towards true honor" (*De rep*. 6.25). Scipio's recognition that there exists a space separate from the political world gives him the ability to distance himself, however briefly, from its chaos. Our metaphorical engagement with the universe allows for our separation from temporal distractions, and helps us regain our mooring, or a principled place to act from, in our lives. This provides an avenue for virtue to be exercised within political life, not because it is superior to it, but

because it is required by it.[8] Our duty to our world depends on our care for acting as best as we are able to within it. In this sense, the role that knowledge of eternal principles plays in political life is significant.

Clearly, we are not meant to take The Dream literally. Scipio is not flying up to space whenever he needs to ponder the workings of human life on earth. However, as a literary device, The Dream represents the mental distance required for thoughtful decision-making. By looking elsewhere the actor is required to step away from the immediacy of the problem at hand and take into account the principles that should be guiding his actions, as opposed to making those decisions haphazardly or thoughtlessly—in other words, the separation gives us the space required to think and judge. The 'elsewhere' in this process is not a physical departure, it is an introspective one. Cicero reminds us that, Scipio "from time to time [he] took himself into solitude, away from human crowds and gathering, *as if* into a haven" (*De off*. 3.2, emphasis mine). In that solitude, "each person is his mind" and that mind is he "who is alert, who feels, who remembers, who looks ahead, [and] who rules and guides and moves the body" (*De rep*. 6.26). The departure from the world serves as an evaluative discussion with one's self, and an activity required for an actor to think about his place within it. When this actor reenters the world he holds a new vantage point on the problem—and the ability to initiate a new course of action.[9]

[8] See *De rep*. 6.29 where Scipio exclaims that you should "use your soul for the best activities! And the best concerns are those that involve the safety of the fatherland."

[9] It is my interpretation that The Dream can be seen as a universal model insofar as all that is required by the actor are reason, care, and the innate desire to leave one's mark in the world—all facets that Cicero states are natural to human beings. Scipio simply represents a paradigmatic figure through which all men can view their relationship between worldly accomplishments and virtue.

While this space for thinking in politics is novel in itself, how exactly does wisdom or philosophy come into play in The Dream? More significantly, how does it represent a departure from previous positions that elevate the pursuit of philosophy over politics? After all, you could interpret The Dream as regenerating the same hierarchy as Plato's, only with a twist. There is still a world of absolutes—and one that exists quite literally above the world of human pursuits. In order to effectively assess Cicero's alteration, and appreciate the full intent of his project—that is, a leveling the life of action with the life of thought—it is worthwhile to turn our attention elsewhere in Cicero's corpus for some clarification. In The Dream Scipio does not speak of 'philosophy' proper; he merely talks of virtue and wisdom. Yet in *De legibus* Cicero describes the process through which we gain wisdom; and the parallels between the two are striking. First, the individual comes to recognize that he shares a part with the divine—the capacity for reason. From here he extrapolates and draws the conclusion that because he possesses reason, and all men are similar to one another, that all other men must possess this faculty as well (*De leg*. 1.59-60). The acknowledgement of men's mutual connection to the divine (or eternal) through reason leads him to the conclusion that all men must also share a bond with one another (*De leg*. 1.60). This portion of the process sounds a great deal like the realization in The Dream that Scipio is united to the divine, as well as to mortal men, because they all share in a soul—reason or the soul being the connective tissue between our origins and our capacity as humans to act. From here, Cicero tells us that once men recognize reason in themselves and others they begin to use it to acquire "knowledge and [the] perception of virtue…[both of which] sharpen[ed] the gaze of his mind" (*De leg*. 1.60). This sharpened reason allows him to study and gain an understanding of all that surrounds him—the cosmos, the earth, "the

nature of all things"—which in turn enable him to truly perceive and know himself (*De leg*. 1.61).[10] Out of the relationship between the pursuit of virtue and attainment of wisdom, man arrives at a position from which he can understand his own mind. What these selections from *De legibus* demonstrate is that the process with which an individual perceives virtue and incorporates knowledge and wisdom into his life is identical with what Plato referred to as the practice of philosophy: know thyself.[11] Cicero's presentation of rational exploration is one and the same as philosophy. In The Dream we saw that the eternal heavens represented the knowledge of virtue in its pure form. When Scipio was to act on earth he was to look up toward the heavens so that he could catch a glimpse of virtue—i.e. acquire a part of wisdom—in order to light his course. The processes between the texts are nearly identical and both describe the acquisition of wisdom; one outlines the rational process, the other demonstrates how that knowledge ought to be used. From this we can argue that Scipio's contemplation in The Dream is actually an example of philosophizing.

The radical twist to this argument comes next. In this parallel reading, philosophy cannot be limited to purely mental, or non-political, endeavors. It cannot have the acquisition of knowledge and understanding alone as its ends. Just as in The Dream, Scipio removes himself from the world to assess how he should act in it on his return, so too in *De legibus* does the practice of philosophy become inexorably intertwined with the practice of

[10] Sharpened reason is compounded by our natural "desire to know the truth;" "we are eager to discover even what goes on in the celestial sphere. From the early stages of this desire we are led on to love truth in general…Our own reason has an element within itself that is lofty and noble" (*De fin*. 2.46).
[11] Cicero explicitly mentions this reference to the Delphic Oracle in *De leg*. 1.58.

politics. Once an individual gains an understanding of the nature of the world around him, he comes to the realization that he cannot retreat from it. Instead, he concludes that,

> …he is born for civil society, he will realize that he must use not just that refined type of argument[12] but also a more expansive style of speaking, though which to guide peoples, to establish laws, to chastise the wicked and protect the good, to praise famous men and to issue instruction for safety and glory suited to persuading his fellow citizens, to exhort people to honor, [and] to call them back from crimes to be able to comfort the afflicted… (*De leg*. 1.62)

The attainment of wisdom not only requires that he return to the world of men out of a sense of duty, but because he *is born for* that world. The knowledge that he has acquired in his studies must be applied to the benefit of his fellows living well.[13] Philosophy and learning cannot exist in their fullest form apart from practice and application. In fact, "to be drawn by such a devotion away from practical achievements" can be seen as not only "contrary to duty," but also contrary to our nature (*De off*. 1.19). The above passage also gives us a fuller picture about the content and ends to the thought process from Scipio's Dream. Instead of thinking of 'virtue' in a broad and abstract sense, we can see that the individual takes up law, questions of justice, and the concerns of his fellow citizens. The actor's mental space is thus filled with a dialogue devoted to questions about the best ways of "preserving the bonding between men and their fellowship" (*De off*. 1.158).

Finally, the combination of both The Dream and the *De legibus* excerpt allow us to see how primary a role that speech—either as internal dialogue or as outward manifestation of those thoughts—plays in this vision of philosophical and political life. In The Dream, Scipio's departure from earth signifies the mental distance required by the "activity of the mind" (*De off*. 1.19). What it also demonstrates is the method by which that

[12] Cicero equates this type of speech (a "quieter sort of debating") as emblematic of the practice of philosophy in *De off*. 1.3.
[13] See also *De off*. 1.157-158

activity is exercised—via an internal dialogue with yourself as interlocutor. The fact that Cicero encapsulated this theory in the form of a dream is itself emblematic of his overall point. A dream is a cerebral, separate, and at times subconscious, but active and solitary, engagement with our own thoughts. As a literary tool, the retelling of a dream serves as a perfect example of the method of how we use speech within ourselves. The 'knowing oneself' required by philosophy requires a dialogue with oneself apart from others—even though The Dream is being retold to an audience in *De re publica*, none of the other interlocutors are active in its retelling. Scipio actually forces them out of his presentation (6.12). Once we have come to our own understanding or position from this mental exercise we then unleash these thoughts into the world, and the *only* appropriate manner to do so is via speech with others. We recognize that we are born for one another, and that "the duties of justice must be given precedence over the pursuit of knowledge and the duties imposed by it" (*De off*. 1.155). When Cicero describes the actions of the individual on his return to civil society, all of his subsequent actions are speech-derived. We do not pursue wisdom and attempt to solidify our understanding of ourselves only to return to civil society to engage in military conquests or take what we believe ought to be ours.[14] None of the actions described are rooted in violence, force, or the pursuit of life's necessities. When Cicero's actor realizes that the life of philosophy alone is not sufficient it is because of his recognition that his mind must work "for the *benefit* of mankind" (*De off*. 1.156, emphasis mine). He turns toward his fellows, and in a "more expansive style of speaking," guides, codifies, prosecutes and defends, praises, instructs, persuades, exhorts, and comforts. In

[14] Obviously, many of the examples of laudable action deployed by Cicero elsewhere—and even in *De re publica*—praise force and violence in a military context. The argument here isn't that speech and thought cannot justify these ends, but that they are not a required or even primary focus of the type of engagement he's pinpointing in The Dream.

this sense, speech is how we begin to understand ourselves, and it is also the primary means with which we engage with others. However, the two activities are not equal. The first is a prerequisite for the second, but the second is clearly superior. "Acting with foresight is in fact more worthwhile than merely thinking sensibly" (*De off*. 1.160).[15] In having this dual conceptualization of the role and power of speech Cicero presents us with a model that outlines the way that thought and action meet in and are required for the world.[16]

Fellowship: Human Nature and Justice

Cicero's stress on collecting and giving voice to one's thoughts is integral to understanding his political philosophy. On a purely pragmatic note, as an orator and politician, it was audible—not to mention compelling and eloquent—speech that counted in the public sphere. As much as one's thoughts and judgments may be correct in assessing the appropriate course of action to take, they are of little to no value if they are not shared with others and used to persuade them of their validity. While this aspect of Cicero's case can be readily seen in both The Dream and *De legibus* excerpts, there appears to be something else at play regarding the role of speech. Thoughts must be voiced in order to convince, but they must also be voiced in order that we can share our experience in the

[15] Further evidence that Cicero categorizes speech as action is found in the following: "It is better to speak…than to think, however penetratingly, without" voice (*De off*. 1.156). Here we see the same parallel between thought/action as we saw in the line from 1.160, only here it's clear that the mechanism that transforms thought into action is the putting of words to one's thoughts.

[16] There is an additional excerpt in *Tusc*. 1.62 that mimics the context of The Dream/*De legibus* passage, and relates our acknowledgement about our connection with the divine to the realization of our mutual creative capacities.

world with one another.[17] In another passage where Cicero employs his heavens imagery, we begin to see that relationships-as-ends in themselves play a primary role in Cicero's understanding of the world: "If anyone were to ascend into the heavens, and see the beauty of the stars and the universe as it really was, his amazement at it would cause him no pleasure, though it would be most enjoyable if he had someone to tell about it" (*de Ami*. XXIII.88). Despite all that contemplation can illuminate for us, those ends are worth nothing if they cannot be shared with and connected to the experiences of another. As private individuals, it is speech that creates and defines our relationships with one another. The notion that we are in the world for one another—both in practice as well as in thought—is *the* grounding feature of Cicero's political philosophy. Therefore this concept of fellowship, and all the duties and knowledge that grow from it, will be our next topic.

As was briefly stated at the beginning of The Dream analysis, this reading of Cicero rejects a prevalent interpretation of his work: that it is aristocratic (or oligarchic) and elitist at its very core.[18] There is little doubt that Cicero was a staunch political conservative. He was against popular reform, and was by no means a voice or champion of the people's issues. Cicero was most definitely not a democrat. The political positions that he defended represented landed and moneyed interests in the Republic—though as a

[17] For a nuanced account of Cicero on political rhetoric vs. personal conversation and deliberative abilities, see Remer 1999.

[18] Wood (1991) is a prime example of this interpretive leaning. He argues that, "Cicero's social and political thought can perhaps be most appropriately appreciated as a theoretical expression of this aristocratic crisis" (Wood 41). Atkins toes a similar interpretive line: "Cicero's strength as a political philosopher lay in the creating and enduring expression that he gave to a remarkably fertile set of aristocratic ideals" (Atkins 477). See also Atkins 481-83.

Senator of the Republic, this should hardly be shocking news.[19] On this basis, one would imagine that if we look to his theory on human nature we should be left with a rather hierarchical and dismal view of the majority of human beings as unequal, uneducable, and justifiably ignored or suppressed. Cicero's philosophy, in keeping with his political position, presumably leaves the thinking and acting to the elites. Unfortunately for this reading of Cicero, his philosophy stands in direct opposition to every part of it. He put forth a universally encompassing definition of human nature, argued that we are all duty bound to one another simply because of our membership in that fellowship of human beings, and actually went so far as to state that we are required by this affiliation to bring justice to and defend one another. This does not eliminate the fact that Cicero acted as a leader of an elite within an aristocratic context—but it does draw into question how we view the nature of those actions.[20]

Cicero grounds his theory of fellowship on three things: human nature, a shared community, and duty. As has already been hinted at by Cicero's theories of the soul and

[19] It is also worthwhile to note that the accusations of elitism wielded at Cicero tend to make it sound as though he was unique or extreme in this political position. However, "it was extremely rare for an individual magistrate consistently and coherently to propose popular reforms" (Atkins 479). Cicero's elitism was by no means unique as a political position in the Republic. There are a handful of instances—the agrarian reforms associated with the Gracchi being the most notable—where one could argue that there were members of the political elite who represented populist political values. However, even in the Gracchi case, their populist intentions are not wholly transparent. One could make the case that the Gracchi were aristocratic populists, but an equally convincing argument could be made that they resorted to flattering and appeasing the people in order to shore up their own power. See Katz (1942) for a discussion of possible motives and an analysis of the extent of their intended reforms.

[20] Paired with Cicero's aristocratic political leanings is a fairly consistent assertion of the key role that the people of Rome occupy in the foundation and maintenance of the Republic's political institutions. See *De fin*. 2.44 as an example of where Cicero speaks of the entire republic resting on the power of the people. See also Bell (1997) for a discussion of Cicero's recognition of the political power of the populous in relation to political oratory, persuasion, and voting.

reason gleaned from The Dream and *De legibus*, all human beings share certain attributes with the divine, and therefore hold a common bond with one another as well. But the relationship is far more complex than one of mere shared attributes. Cicero provides a theory of human nature rooted in equality. "There is no similarity, no likeness of one thing to another, so great as the likeness we all share" (*De leg*. 1.29). He is not only referring to physical appearance, but to our common possession of reason and shared mental capabilities. "There is no dissimilarity within the species," "reason is shared by all, and though it differs in the particulars of knowledge, it is the same in the capacity to learn" (*De leg*. 1.30). The term 'species' (*genus*) leaves little room for narrow interpretation—he is not referring to classes or nations, the entirety of the human race is incorporated in his scope. "Whatever definition of a human being one adopts is equally valid for all humans" (*De leg*. 1.29). Whoever wishes to categorize Cicero's philosophy as elitist has some significant maneuvering to do regarding these fairly rigid assertions of equality and universal applicability. Before we begin to unpack his definition of a human being, the point cannot be made any more emphatically that whatever terms the characterization may encompass, no human can be excluded from it.

Cicero starts his analysis with the assertion that all men have a share in reason.[21] Reason separates men from animals and binds men together. Part of this bond comes from men's mutual recognition of their shared capacities—but what transforms shared recognition into shared endeavors? For this, we must look at the relationship between reason, human nature, and wisdom. Cicero defines human beings as "provident, perceptive,

[21] Wood asserts that it is "not obvious from what Cicero says" that "we are all equally endowed with this rational potential" (Wood 88). This ambiguous and skeptical position seems untenable based on any engagement with Cicero's texts regarding his discussion of human nature, reason, or the fellowship between individuals.

versatile, sharp, capable of memory, and filled with reason and judgment," who "are capable of drawing inferences, making arguments, refuting others, [and] conducting discussions and demonstrations" (*De leg*. 1.22, 30). Human beings alone are equipped appropriately for and occupied with "the search for truth and its investigation" (*De off*. 1.13). Reason ensures that men understand cause and effect, are able to evaluate disparate circumstances and locate similar principles, and see "with ease the whole course of life to prepare whatever is necessary for living it" (*De off*. 1.11). These predictive and evaluative qualities require the presence of others in order to flourish. The "whatever is necessary for" living life does not mean simply supplying life's bare necessities, but more so the creation and preservation of the circumstances that make reason, judgment, discussion, and human achievements stable. "The power of reason makes people want each other's company" (*De fin*. 2.45). Reason makes us desire one another's company because speech cannot be exercised to its fullest in solitude. We require the presence of others to realize our humanity. Reason "unites one man to another for the fellowship both of common speech and of life," and by doing so creates a natural community among men (*De off*. 1.12). As a fellowship of speech, this community is inexorably linked with the processes of thought and judgment and the pursuit of wisdom. In this sense, reason is transformative both individually and communally. With the addition of fellows and speech, reason transforms perception into wisdom (*De leg*. 1.22). Unlike reason, wisdom itself is not a gift from the divine, it does not exist apart from men. Instead, wisdom only results from our own initiatives. "Human nature itself" "with no instruction, and taking as a starting point the knowledge of those things whose characteristics she knew from the first inchoate conceptions…has strengthened reason and perfected it" (*De leg*. 1.27). Human beings are

responsible for attaining our own understanding of the world. Yet because of the bonds of speech and the community that they foster, Cicero makes it quite clear that the acquisition of knowledge should not—or cannot—be accomplished alone.

Wrapped up in this newfound understanding of our worldly condition, are newfound duties to that world's community. As we saw in The Dream learning and contemplation are not sufficient ends in themselves, one must also act in light of their realization or discovery. In his discussion of fellowship, Cicero takes this call to action a step farther and expressly states that those who devote themselves to learning and neglect action are unjust. These individuals may avoid inflicting harm, and thus committing one type of injustice, but they fall prey to a more insidious kinds of injustice: they "abandon the fellowship of life" (*De off*. 1.29). Our love of and pursuit of wisdom should never trump our devotion to the ties of community. At the heart of this concept of justice and fellowship is the principle that we are all participants in a common world, and that our actions should be for the sake of one another. Our shared capacity for reason, speech, and learning gives way to a "natural goodwill and benevolence"—which together support our "bond of justice" (*De leg*. 1.35). Cicero actually argues that because we are bound together as human beings who share in reason it is our *duty* to share knowledge with one another. More specifically, we are duty-bound to share a very particular type of knowledge: "we have been made by nature to receive the knowledge of justice from one another and share it among all people" (*De leg*. 1.32-33). Just as contemplation was a precursor to action in The Dream, the same process between theory and action is in effect here. One cannot simply 'know' or understand what justice means in an abstract sense, one must share that knowledge and put it into practice. Cicero states twice in *De officiis* that we "ought to protect" those

members of our community who need our aid if we are to act justly (1.28). Our relationships are defined by the duties owed to our fellows—we cannot be just by simply living for ourselves and refraining from harming those around us. We must act positively toward one another to fulfill our role in life. We must "fulfill[ing] what function we are born and brought into the world" for, doing "what serves to unite people" (*De leg*. 1.16).[22] If we are born for justice, then presumably, we act on its behalf during our lives.

Though this theory has the potential to sound utopian and idealistic, Cicero readily acknowledges and accepts that men are imperfect. Yet, instead of this resulting in the conclusion that some men (classes, nations, etc.) can be abandoned because they are not wise or good, Cicero argues otherwise. He concludes that "no one should be wholly neglected if any indication of virtue appears in him," and that we are each "doing splendidly if [we] have in [us] mere images of virtue" (*De off*. 1.46). Because every person is capable of understanding,[23] this means that as a community no one can justly be cast out of it. In fact, quite the contrary seems to be the case. Our nature—and our fellowship—demands that, "we must exercise a respectfulness towards men, both towards the best of them and also towards the rest" (*De off*. 1.99). This exegesis on reason, human nature, and the condition of our fellowship with one another should provide a more adequate foundation for assessing Cicero's claims from the end of The Dream and the *De legibus* excerpt. We turn back toward earth because it is our nature and our duty to do so, not simply because it is the surest way to reach the heavens upon death. We are born to use our reason in the world, we are born for justice, and we are born for one another.

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[22] Cicero states that, "we are born for justice and that justice is established not by opinion but by nature" (*De leg*. 1.28).
[23] Everyone can reach an understanding of virtue with the help of an aid. See *De leg*. 1.30.

While this sentiment is all well and fine in the abstract, what parameters did Cicero set up regarding its practice? Non-controversially, our first and foremost duties and obligations are to the republic and our "familiars," or friends, fellow citizens, and family (*De off*. 1.57, 54-56). We are more closely bound to those within our own state and near us in proximity than to others across the globe. Within the parameters of the state, we bring justice to one another by engaging in political life and upholding the institutions and practices of the Republic. The primary way we do this is via speech. We take the knowledge that we have accrued and put it to use:

> even if the intellectual possession of knowledge can be maintained without use, virtue consists entirely in its employment…its most important employment is the governance of states and the accomplishment in deeds rather than words of the things that philosophers talk about in their corners (*De rep*. 1.2).

Lest we misinterpret this passage as Cicero coming out against speech as action—which would be strange indeed considering our previous analysis—let us examine what he means by speech vs. deed here. Here Cicero argues that the words of philosophers do not count as deed. Does this mean that speech does not qualify as action, or that there is something amiss in how philosophers employ those words that undermines them of their agentic capacity? Cicero tackles this question head on in *De oratore*. There he states that philosophers in their "secluded corners" use "plain and meager language" to discuss the gravest matters of men (1.57). Cicero's problem is that this delivery and treatment strips speech and its subjects of its ability to impact public life. He then argues that the discussion of the same topics taken up by the philosophers—"laws concerning the citizens, concerning human beings in general, and the law valid for all nations"—are exactly those that should be the content of speech as action in the public forum (*De ora*. 1.56). It is this form and style

of deliberation[24] that animates commonwealths and allows them to persevere. Our primary duty as citizens is to take part in this deliberation and make sure that speech, as it relates to justice, is the subject of our public engagement with one another.

Although the state may take center stage in Cicero's account of duty, he actually presents a far more universally encompassing concept that extends (at least in degrees) to all of humanity. Though borrowing from the Stoics, Cicero is one of the first to systematically map a cosmopolitan vision of the world.[25] He often refers to the bond experienced by the "whole of humankind," and uses this as a reference point when outlining the degree of our connection to one another (*De off*. 1.149).[26] As human beings, we not only belong abstractly to some amorphous 'fellowship of life', but we are formally connected to a very tangible community and required by its terms to act in certain circumstances. We must preserve the commons and share it as it was granted to us all by nature, and we must come to the aid of those who require it (*De off*. 1.51). Quoting Ennius, Cicero states:

> A man who kindly shows the path to someone who is
> lost lights another's light, so to speak, from his own.
> For his own shines no less because he has lit another's (*De off*. 1.51).

He then extrapolates that, "any assistance [that] can be provided without detriment to oneself, [it] should be given even to a stranger;" immediately including access to fresh water, the giving of fire, and the sharing of speech and advice as examples (*De off*. 1.51-2).

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[24] Cicero mentions this "deliberative function" in *De rep*. 1.41.
[25] See Nussbaum 2000
[26] See also "the fellowship of the entire human race" (*De off*. 1.50); "the most widespread fellowship existing among men is that of all with all others" (*De off*. 1.51); "the community of the human race" (*Tusc*. I.64); "the whole human race is bound together; and the final result is that the understanding of the right way of life makes all people better" (*De leg*. 1.32).

Though these duties are far from insignificant, they do not seem as far-reaching as one might have hoped. However, as a foundation or starting point they tell us a great deal. First, regardless of nation or language, individuals are socially and morally bound to one another. Second, by employing the light analogy from Ennius Cicero provides the reader another avenue to understanding the scope of his claims.

Cicero uses light imagery to demonstrate how individuals are naturally drawn to the good in one another. In the case of friendship, it is human goodness that appears to each individual, showing "forth its light," as a "sign of good character in a person…shining out…and inviting another similar person to join with him" (*De ami*. XXVII.100, XIV.48). Ennius' poem cannot be said to reference friendship—but the provision of a resource to someone in need can certainly be read as an instance or display of human goodness. The individual who shares his 'light' or fire with someone else, suffers no shortage or depletion of the resource in his possession, but then again the argument can be made that offering friendship to another does not deplete an individual's store of goodwill either. Fully acknowledging that these excerpts from *De amicitia* are in reference to friendship between two individuals (of high social status and belonging to the same state), Cicero does in fact extend the bounds of his argument's applicability. As far as good intentioned individuals are concerned—and considering his view that men by nature possess goodwill and benevolence to one another, this requirement for participation is a fairly inclusive one—he states that not only is "goodwill between one and another [is] more or less inevitable," but that "this same goodness *extends also to groups of people collectively*" (*De ami*. XIV.50,

emphasis mine). If the parallel light imageries hold,[27] and we are to take Cicero at his word that the goodness he speaks of extends beyond the narrow parameters of an aristocratic friendship to groups of people more generally, then the duties that we can be said to owe our fellows take on an expanded scope.[28]

While limiting our analysis to *De officiis* alone, our understanding of the type and scope of aid required is quite limited. Thankfully, as the above analysis begins to demonstrate, Cicero's arguments elsewhere are not that narrow in scope. As we already saw, the mere image of virtue is sufficient enough cause to devote our time and help to another. In *De amicitia* we learn that "virtue and good character" are compelling enough grounds for us "in a certain sense [to] love those we have never seen" (*De ami*. VIII.28).[29] This passage demonstrates that human beings are capable of fairly significant devotion to one another regardless of prior connections and geographic proximity. Cicero is presenting the case that even lacking a shared language "we are prompted to…associate ourselves…with every person on earth" (*De fin*. 2.45). If we are drawn naturally toward others in light of our shared condition—even in some strangers we recognize an unanticipated affinity and nascent friendship—then the terms and expectations of our

[27] There are additional textual references that support this reading. In *Tusc*. 1.5 Cicero characterizes himself as 'bringing philosophy into the light.' He follows this up in 1.64 of the same text by stating that philosophy educates us "to[do] justice among men." This demonstrates that Cicero saw his overall project as bringing 'light' to one of our utmost duties as human beings—to share justice and goodwill with one another.

[28] This interpretation stands in direct opposition to Wood. He suggests that Cicero's language of fellowship and solidarity are no more than examples of a "misleading rhetoric of spiritual brotherhood and fraternal intimacy" and that his words imply no notion of "loving sympathy or compassion for others," and instead refer only to "shared interests existing in a community of citizens" (Wood 79). This assumes are fairly hearty cynicism on Cicero's part, and also ignores those passages where Cicero speaks of our duties to men outside of our state.

[29] Cicero remarks that this inclination to love is natural to human beings and serves as "the foundation of justice" (*De leg*. 1.43)

duties to and treatment of one another can no longer be as limited as we initially took them to be. The reasonableness of Cicero's original claim that we are required to help only in those incidents when it does not harm us becomes equally diminished if we take into account the following: "It is not reasonable to refuse to undertake any honourable task or activity, or to lay it aside once undertaken, in order to avoid trouble" (*De ami*. XIII.47). Because we recognize goodwill in each other we cannot step away from someone in need of aid, even if it may cause us trouble. Though again Cicero's primary intent is that this applies within the context of friendship, but one cannot infer that the goodwill he speaks of and actions required for its preservation are limited to that scope considering the other passages under examination. After all, he goes as far as to state that, "if the bond of goodwill be removed from the world, no house or city will be able to stand, nor even will the tilling of the land continue" (*De ami*. VII.23). In this estimation, political life and the cultivation of the earth would cease if we were to ignore the terms of our bond with one another. Instead of viewing our duties to one another as limited or constrained, we should understand Cicero as arguing for a far more proactive and expanded view.[30]

For the Preservation of Human Affairs

Why does Cicero put thinking and our responsibilities to one another at the center of his political theory? Because he recognizes the lack of permanence and dependability in our world. "Human affairs are fragile and transitory,"[31] and if we want them to flourish

[30] And he states as much in *De officiis*: "We ought to revere, to guard, and to preserve the common affection and fellowship of the whole of humankind" (1.149)
[31] *De ami*. XXVII.102

then we need a guide for our actions. These guides are not rigid or dogmatic sets of rules.[32] Instead, they function as common sense reminders of the subjects that should rightly be the focus of political life: action for the benefit of posterity, decision-making that elevates the terms of our humanity over the pursuit of abstractions, and consistency in our thoughts and actions over the course of our lives. This set of guiding principles does not force the hand of an actor, but spurs that individual to take into account the place of others with whom he shares a common world. These three principles are all explicitly grounded in Cicero's concepts of thinking and fellowship, but they function on the more practical level of how we engage with one another. In the previous two sections we saw numerous practical applications for the transmission of thought into action—political speech, persuasion, defense, etc.—but these are merely examples of principles *in* action, not principles *for* action. The focus of the analysis at hand is to demonstrate what drives us to act, regardless of political, economic, or social position. While not everyone has the status of a senator or orator (or president or cabinet member, for that matter) and can act on a republic-sized scale, all individuals possess the capacity to examine the future, value their companions, and aim for consistency in their decision-making. This statement is not meant to imply that political speech is the purview of the elite—though in practice this was the case in republican Rome—as we saw earlier there is no philosophical basis for this in Cicero's estimation of reason and thinking. The point being made is merely a structural one. Most individuals, regardless of regime context, are not able to act on a grand scale—

[32] I am deliberately arguing that these principles are separate from the enumerated duties outlined to his son in *De officiis* Books Two and Three. Though the obligations that Cicero discusses there are not in conflict with the principles illustrated here, they are specific to a social and political position—and one that is far from universally accessible. One way of conceptualizing this distinction is to think about one set of obligations as they relate to an office, and the other as they relate to our shared condition as human beings.

whether that restriction is due to personal desire or motivation, structural position, or sheer fortune. The argument that this chapter rests on is that the differences in types of actions available to a given actor are matters of degree, and not matters of kind. Though not everyone can be in a position to write law or present a defense in court, the same type of thought process and care for one's fellows occupies the minds of all men. The scale and type of action may differ, but the capacity and intent behind all actions are the same.

Cicero is quite clear about the ends that we are to act toward. We look back to tradition and the past as examples, but should employ those examples as guides to our direction in the future. One can hardly call Cicero progressive, yet he does recognize an innate desire in men to look forward and value what the future has the potential to bring. He states, "there is fixed in men's minds a kind of prophetic vision of future generations" (*Tusc*. 1.33). This vision demonstrates the extent to which men are occupied with the state of things on a larger scale than themselves. We do not care about the direction of the future simply because of how our fortunes and livelihoods may be tied up with it, but because we possess a concern for the maintenance and flourishing of the whole community. Though the hope of fame and glory after death is one set of motivations that compel men to act toward goals larger than themselves, the principle for action is more complex than this. Quoting the *Synephebi* Cicero asks, why does a farmer plant trees except "'for the benefit of another generation'…what has he in mind except that future generations are his concern?" (*Tusc*. 1.31). Unlike Cicero's examples of statesmen, poets, and artists, one cannot make a very good case for a farmer planting trees in order to achieve fame or glory or immortality. The farmer cultivates the earth because he knows that his actions will serve future generations, regardless of whether they remember him or his role in planting the trees

they enjoy. Significantly, Cicero immediately draws the connection between this "conscientious farmer" and an individual who "'plant[s]' laws, ordinances, [and] the common wealth itself" (*Tusc*. 1. 31). Both individuals cultivate the materials in their care in order to create and ensure better conditions for those who come after them: they "do their utmost to serve posterity" (*Tusc*. 1.35). This parallel demonstrates that the motivations to act on the part of the statesman share something with the motivations of the farmer. Men found states and do their best to preserve and improve upon those states they inherit, but not *only* because these actions may secure reputation after death. They do so because of a far more humanistic and innate impulse that compels them to act not only for themselves, but for the good of those who will come into the world after their departure.

Cicero's humanism also finds its way into a second principle of action. The judgments and decisions that inform our actions ought to take into account the value of our fellows and their company to our lives. Just as we noted in Chapter One, in a passage that Arendt relies upon, Cicero asserts that he and his interlocutors, "would rather go wrong with Plato…than share correct views with those who disagree with him" (*Tusc*. 1.39). In fact, we learn from the full passage that his statement actually goes a bit farther insofar as he says he would not only go wrong with Plato, but "would cheerfully" do so. His insistence about the superiority of company, of fellowship—even at the cost of truth—in our decision-making calculus not only illustrates his commitment to the maintenance of the terms of that fellowship, but it also reveals how we are to treat human beings. We do not elevate companionship over absolutes because men are means to achieving some better end. In his discussion of friendship, Cicero explains that we do not "practice kindness and generosity…for the purpose of exacting a reward," and that "friendship is desirable for us

not because we are attracted by the thought of recompense, but because the affection contains its own fruits within itself" (*De ami*. IX.31). If we accept the same account of friendship—and its dynamism—that we outlined earlier, then this passage can demonstrate how we are to treat one another. Cicero is quite clear that we are to treat individuals and our relationships with them as ends in themselves. By doing so he effectively makes human beings the focus of and ends to our actions.

The manner in which we preserve these relationships is the third and final guide for our actions. The principle of constancy as it relates to trust and faith in one another should be our primary guide when evaluating how we are to act into the world that we share. The reason that these elements ought to dictate our actions is because they provide stability to human affairs.[33] This stability, in turn, lends itself to the type of human flourishing that Cicero sees as integral to our fulfilling the terms of our nature and fellowship with one another. Individuals should be consistent in what they promise and in what they do if they want to retain the good faith and trust of others. The maintenance of this trust is key if we want to preserve the common space and laws that give shape to our world. If we cannot trust that an individual will keep his word, then the terms with which we are supposed to engage with him have no meaning. Our world loses its dependability when individuals are no longer accountable to one another. Cicero views this dynamic on similar terms, insofar as "the keeping of faith is fundamental to justice" (*De off*. 1.23). As it is our duty to bring and preserve justice in our relationships with one another, the violation of this faith-

[33] Cicero's concept of faith and trust apply in contexts of calm as well as crisis. If we have faith in our own decisions—meaning that we trust in our ability to be constant to ourselves, which in turn reflect our constancy and dependability to our fellows—then when we encounter difficult circumstances we retain the ability to "remain unperturbed…and when agitated not to be thrown" (*De off*. 1.80).

keeping is essentially a violation of the terms of our fellowship with all others. And "any violation of a trust threatens to undermine the whole of social life" (Wood 136). Part of our ability to trust in each other has to do with the sincerity of our speech. For Cicero it is not enough that we merely appear trustworthy, but that "on the question of keeping faith, you must always think of what you meant, not of what you said" (*De off*. 1.40). Speech, whether political or conversational, is the primary way in which we interact with one another. If our interlocutors have reason to doubt our words, or question our ability to uphold a promise, then our primary means of engagement becomes undermined.[34]

A large part of keeping faith and maintaining trust in our interactions with one another has to do with cultivating consistency.[35] The cultivation of a constant character provides the foundation of our trustworthiness with one another and serves as an internal compass for ourselves as well.[36] "We have been dressed, as it were, by nature for two roles: one that is common…the other, is that assigned specifically to individuals" (*De off*. 1.107).[37] In order to attain a consistent character we must try to align our two roles. To this end, Cicero urges us take an active part in deciding what type of individual we are to be—our character and our actions should not be accidental products of our environment. Before we can rely on our being constant to each other we must enact a set of standards and guides for ourselves. "We must decide who and what we wish to be, and what kind of life we want.

[34] Tracy demonstrates how this principle of trust functions insofar as a politician would be granted trust if they had shown to be consistent and trustworthy in the past. This trust results in a perceived level of predictability, "since it would seem more possible to estimate that politician's future behavior" (Tracy 93).
[35] For an excellent account of Cicero's own philosophical and practical engagement with the principle of *constantia* see Tracy (2012).
[36] See *De off*. 1. 119
[37] See also *De off*. 1.111. See Schofield (47-48) regarding the novelty of Cicero's persona theory.

That deliberation is the most difficult thing of all" (*De off*. 1.117). This characterization reveals that *constantia* is a result of a process. We deliberate with ourselves; we think and judge first before we unleash our decisions into the world. The path that we take and the standards that we apply to ourselves come from within, and thus when making our way in the world we can look to them for direction. Cicero is rather unequivocal on this point, but he also insists that when we deliberate and cultivate certain features of our character that we be faithful to our individual natures and not aim for emulation of another: "You cannot preserve that [evenness of character] if you copy someone else's nature and ignore your own" (*De off*. 1.111). Here we see that constancy is not another word for uniformity or predictability on account of everyone aiming to create an identical character. Cicero presents the case for consistency on individualized terms. The decisions that we make must be fitting for ourselves, before they can result in the trust and faith of others.

If we accept Cicero's account of the principle of constancy in political and personal life, then it makes sense to think of all of his works as compatible with one another and concerned with the same set of questions and answers. The primary aim of this chapter, in constructing a political philosophy out of various parts and pieces of Cicero's works, was to emphasize how different aspects of his work are interconnected with and relatable to one another. The secondary aim was to demonstrate that the tenets of Cicero's philosophical project are universally applicable to all human beings. Regardless of whether we take a forgiving or caustic view of his political accomplishments, we can no longer dismiss him as purely aristocratic or elitist in his perspective—his practical and philosophical engagement is far more complex than those readings suggest. Cicero presented the world with a novel

and fruitful analysis of how we think—what is required by such a mental process and what ends it should be directed towards. Arguably, and as Arendt points out in *The Life of the Mind*, this reimagining of the thought process is one of his largest contributions to philosophy. This leveling of action with contemplation has enormous implications for how we conceptualize Arendt's *vita contemplativa* and *vita activa*. Yet Cicero's concept of thinking is not a freestanding theory—it is innately connected to the terms with which we treat one another. As we saw, the reconfiguration of the hierarchy of thought and action places the responsibilities and duties of men to each other front and center in Cicero's account of politics. Cicero's presentation of fellowship and the principles that animate our interactions with one another make central the role that individuals have in maintaining the viability of their own worlds. It is precisely these aspects of Cicero's philosophical project that we are now prepared to bring into conversation with Arendt's.

CHAPTER FOUR

Cicero, Kafka, and Relativization: Situating Ourselves in the World

The proverbial elephant in the room of this project is why it makes sense to turn to the Roman world and Cicero to illuminate features of our contemporary political condition. After all, though the Romans gave the world the Western philosophical tradition—and a foundational source of authority along with it—Arendt herself points out repeatedly that ours is a world that has suffered a break with this tradition and witnessed the decay of authority along with it. More troublesome still, she presents Cicero as a thinker who responded to that tradition from outside of its given parameters and had no impact on its trajectory or content. Presumably, this leaves us with a tradition that no longer speaks to our condition, and a thinker who never accepted the terms of that now broken tradition to begin with. How then could an analysis of Arendt's use of Cicero be fruitful for us? First, Arendt's account of tradition is more complex than it initially appears to be and the complexity of its breakdown provides us with some analytical leverage when it comes to deciphering our position in the world. Even though tradition can no longer serve as our guide in the world it does retain some illuminating abilities. The initial section of this chapter lays out Arendt's position on the role and character of tradition with regard to our contemporary condition and draws together the historical, philosophical and structural

influences that caused the break with it. Second, our turn to Cicero allows us to reevaluate not only his relation to that tradition, but also the importance of his rejection of its basic tenets to understanding Arendt's theory and methodology. Cicero's position as a thinker outside the tradition salvages his theory's capacity to speak to our condition. He stands apart from the terms of its modern breakdown because he refused to accept the tradition's foundational premise, that the *vita contemplativa* is superior to the *vita activa*. However, unlike the modern responses to the problematic elements of this relationship, Cicero neither denigrated thought on account of action, nor did he turn the hierarchy of activities on its head.[1] Cicero provides a unique window into Arendt's thought because he equalized the lives of thinking and acting all the while adamantly maintaining the value of sheer political action, as opposed to elevating work or labor in its stead.

Using this as our foundation, we will take up Arendt's discussion of "Scipio's Dream." Here the elements of 'thinking as activity' and the centrality of thought to the well being of the world will be presented via her discussion of relativization. Arendt's adoption of Cicero's theory illustrates the character of the thinking process, as well as the means by which we can pinpoint the 'where' of thinking.[2] This chapter will conclude with a parallel reading of "Scipio's Dream" and Kafka's parable from "He: Notes on the Year 1920."[3] Arendt cites both passages as exemplary of her theorized activity of thinking. This analysis will

[1] For clarity's sake, references to the 'hierarchy of the tradition' refer to philosophy's supremacy over action (the *vita contemplativa* vs. the *vita activa*); references to the 'hierarchy of activities' refer to the ranking of (political) action, work and labor. The subsequent section on the tradition in relation to the social will deal with the alterations both structures undergo in Arendt's account of the modern world.

[2] The content of what we think about in the context of evaluating our world (i.e. what we do and *why* we do what we do) will be the topic of Chapter Five.

[3] I would like to thank Chris Haid and Kye Barker for helping me locate the original source for this parable.

thoroughly demonstrate how Cicero's theory of relativization speaks to the condition of thinking agents in the post-tradition contemporary world. However, it will also serve as evidence of Arendt's own historical method and prove the way in which examples from antiquity—or anywhere from the past—can be employed to provide insight into our world. What matters is our ability to think *through* them, not their ability to function as guides for us.

The Break with Tradition

To say that Arendt's understanding of tradition is complicated would be an understatement at the very least. As we discussed in Chapter One, Arendt traces the start of the Western philosophical 'tradition' to Rome. This tradition became a unified testament and was granted authority, insofar as the Romans adopted and canonized Platonic and Aristotelian political philosophy as the cornerstone of philosophy writ large. In this sense we owe the chronological start of tradition and its lasting character to Rome, but its framework and much of its content to the Greeks. This formulation of tradition contains two problematic elements. First is the fact that in public life, the Romans themselves elevated the experience and practice of politics over the study of philosophy. Second, Arendt states that as the tradition starts with Plato and Aristotle, "at [its] beginning…stands Plato's contempt for politics" (ET 81). The disjuncture between the foundational principles of this philosophical tradition and the lived experience of the people who enshrined and preserved it represents the defining tension within the tradition as it was handed down.[4]

[4] This conflict has two repercussions: 1) the value of experience and political life (i.e. "the great and conflicting Roman experience") had no "lasting influence;" and 2) the tradition's "Christian heir followed Greek philosophy in its spiritual development and Roman practice

Starting with Plato's Cave, the tradition undermined the validity of experience and plural life and argued that the solitary life devoted to the pursuit of abstract wisdom, truth, and ideals was the far superior pursuit.[5] By Arendt's account, because this was the foundational tenet on which the philosophical tradition was constructed, the nature of said tradition thus relegated the experience of politics and the world below the life devoted to contemplation. The "tradition—which selects and names, which hands down and preserves, which indicates where the treasures are and what their worth is," thus presented a world where worth was found in thought and not in action (BPF 5).[6] It "has deprived political affairs, that is, those activities concerning the common public realm that comes into being whenever men live together, of all the dignity of their own" (ET 82). Even though the Romans placed the highest value on political action, the "insulation shown by our tradition from its beginning against all political experiences that did not fit into its framework…has remained one of its outstanding features" (TPT 47). This feature is problematic because it required that experience and political life be seen on functional terms alone (i.e. how can the public world make safe a life that engages with philosophy). Furthermore, it assumes that any lessons gleaned from experience are by nature of lesser importance and inferior in their ability to aid in our understanding of our condition in the world.

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only in its legal and institutional history"—thus demonstrating how Greek philosophy retained its authority (MWPT 298).

[5] See TMA 17

[6] It is worthwhile to note that the tradition is not simply a representation of the past. "It is a particular and selective relationship to the past, handing on and reinforcing particular ideas, experiences and structures and supressing others" (Canovan 68-69).

In Arendt's reading the core principle of this tradition remains unquestioned until the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the philosophies of Hegel and Marx.[7] The result was not the outright rejection of the tradition, but the alteration and weakening of its content and the degree to which it was seen as possessing explanatory power. The first significant blow to tradition—and one that philosophy and our conceptual imagining of the world never recovered from[8]—comes from Hegel. Hegel transformed our understanding of history into a philosophy that relied on an account of processes and forces to unite all human events. According to Arendt, this view of history assumes that "truth resides and reveals itself in the time-process itself;" that history as process and development can reveal truth, and that we need not depart from the realm of human affairs to obtain it (CH 68). The idea that truth is neither revealed through sheer contemplation nor accessible apart from the world is in direct opposition to the foundational premise of the tradition. Additionally, this formulation upended the very construction of that tradition. Prior to Hegel, tradition was not understood as the mere sum of thinkers, theories and events that preceded a given point in time. It was selective, narrowly conceived, and hierarchical. Hegel's project rejected these precepts and turned tradition into history: "The whole of world history" conceptualized "as one continuous development" (TMA 28). Though Hegel brought our focus back to human affairs and worldly events, his emphasis on processes and

[7] The categorization of these thinkers, along with Nietzsche and Kierkegaard, as one group comes directly from Arendt (See TMA 28, 35; FHM 71). By employing her grouping I do not intend to downplay the degree of the philosophical differences that separate these thinkers. I merely wish to emphasize her point—that their positions with respect to 'the tradition' as a whole place them in a similar position as rebels or critics against it.

[8] Arendt states that the Hegelian contribution to metaphics and history is "characteristic of all modern historical consciousness, however it expresses itself, in specifically Hegelian terms or not" (CH 68). That said, she is not positing that we *only* view history and our position within it through this lens (See CH 86).

development deprived those events and affairs of their agency. For Arendt Hegel provided "a thorough distortion of human affairs" insofar as "the single story Hegel found in history superseded the multitudinous stories of the real human individuals concerned" (Canovan 76). This portrayal transformed how we understood tradition as it relates to authority. The substitution of "historical continuity" for tradition caused the consolidation of "contradictory thoughts and conflicting authorities" (TMA 28). His challenge to the concept of tradition was not necessarily to undermine the place and position of the thinkers housed in it—even if Plato as a thinker was challenged or his theories undermined, he was still an authority that required the challenge in the first place. What Hegel's project did was question and reject the very methods and terms by which the tradition was created and preserved in the first place. Hegel's contribution of "a unilinear, dialectically consistent development [was] actually designed to repudiate not tradition as such, but the authority of all traditions" (TMA 28).

In Arendt's chronology, Marx picked up this project where Hegel left off. Arendt connects the two: "Hegel projected his world-historical view only onto the past and let its completion fade away in the present, whereas Marx "prophetically" projected it the other way around onto the future and understood the present only as a springboard" (FHM 70). Marx's inversion of history—as a force that could shape and direct the future—was compounded by two other challenges that he posed to the tradition. First, Marx characterized political affairs as a matter of administration, separate from action.[9] Second, Marx "explode[d]" the "traditional terms" in which the debate was framed (TMA 24). He emphasized labor, as opposed to reason, as the primary way in which men can realize their

[9] TMA 19

humanity, and he equated violence with action, rejecting the power of logos and speech as appropriate political means for change.[10] She points out the paradoxes in Marx's project[11] in order to draw our attention not to his outright rejection of that tradition, but to the tradition's growing inability to speak to the experiential concerns of men in the world.

The philosophical historical trends that Arendt points out get us part of the way to an understanding of tradition's 'end,' but they are perhaps more accurately portrayed as symptoms of a far larger conceptual shift. Outside of Arendt's account of philosophy's developmental trajectory are two other elements that explain the why and how of tradition's demise. Though neither the rise of modern science nor the rise of the social dealt explicitly with 'the tradition' both are important players in understanding the terms of its failure.[12] The culmination of the scientific revolution with its emphasis on action as a means of discovery changed the way in which we viewed our relationship to discovery,[13] and rejected "the concept of truth as revelation" (TMA 39). Arendt is very clear that science stands apart from philosophy in the modern world. Though we may colloquially

[10] This is by no means a definitive account of the ways in which Marx departs from the tradition. These two features are mentioned here because they are the primary examples that Arendt takes under consideration. See TMA 22-24.

[11] Arendt speaks on these paradoxes (i.e. 'What do we do when we are free from labor?') at TMA 24.

[12] Buckler discusses the trajectories of philosophy and modern science, but leaves out the social (see Buckler 15-24). He provides a comprehensive explanation of how the first two factors lead to new terms on which we can view activity and thinking, but by leaving out an analysis of the social, the extremity of the reversal and the radicality of Arendt's position is obscured.

[13] This statement warrants some chronological explanation. Arendt's discussion of philosophy in relation to tradition focuses on the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but the other elements of its breakdown start far earlier. Though it seems odd to discuss the scientific revolution or the rise of modern science in relation to the nineteenth cenutry, the effort is not to misleadingly represent an historical era, but instead to demonstrate how the development of multiple centuries of practice came to fruition alongside (and in some conjunction with) later developments in philosophy. For Arendt's expanded account of this process see HC 257-289 and CH 53-59.

understand both endeavors to be engaged in the task of gaining a better understanding of the world and ourselves, Arendt draws a precise distinction between the two. Science acquires knowledge and facts by experimenting and doing things to test the world.[14] Philosophy, as tradition has always represented it, is a purely introspective and contemplative engagement—it is thinking, focused and distilled. In Arendt's estimation the development of science led not to the change in the *type* of thinking that we do, but instead led to the rejection of pure thinking as a means of understanding. It reversed tradition's hierarchy: activity gained the upper hand on contemplation.[15] For the first time since the start of the tradition the *vita activa* now reigned, in practice if not in name, over the *vita contemplativa*. But the type of action—political action—that the tradition had always been weary of with regard to the practice of philosophy was not the type of action that science used to oust contemplation from its reigning position. The activity of science is the activity of work, of *homo faber*, of accomplishing a task with one's hands and constructing a theory via experimentation.[16] For Arendt this shift marks not only the sidelining of thinking as a way to be in the world, but it also alters the way in which political action is (or is not) esteemed in that world.

As much as the developments of modern science and philosophy did to undermine the terms of the tradition, the largest threat the tradition faced had to do with the reconfiguration of the very spaces in which we act and relate to one another. On a conceptual-structural level Arendt points out that the rise of the social sphere altered our position as actors in the world. The public and private spheres, or the categories that had

[14] See LM 54-55 for her discussion of thinking vs. cognition and science.
[15] See HC 289-294
[16] See HC 294-304 for additional background on *homo faber* in relation to the *vita activa*.

defined the spheres of human existence since the start of the tradition, became infiltrated by the social.[17] On a very basic level the social made private, household affairs—those pertaining to the maintenance of life and the satisfaction of biological necessity—the fodder of communal life.[18] This new form of living together eliminated our ability to be free from the constraints of labor (i.e. by leaving the private) and appear to one another as equal, but distinct, actors/doers (i.e. by entering the public). Alternatively, it undermined our ability to retreat from a plural existence into a private, solitary one. This led to two changes in the character of 'political' life. First, the social replaced action with behavior. This created a sphere where men are equal not because of their potential to act as unique individuals in the world, but because as human beings they are all essentially the same. The social view of equality eliminates the promises of distinction and freedom and replaces them with conformism and "the assumption that men behave and do not wish to act with one respect to each other" (HC 41-42). Action no longer has a home in the public sphere—and it never possessed one in the private—meaning that action's place in the world is now threatened in a way unknown in the past. Second, when the social took over the public, administration and economics took over from politics.[19] The social caters to the needs of

[17] This discussion of the social is highly abbreviated, and included merely to explain the structural conditions that led to our break with tradition and the crisis of totalitarianism. For an excellent, in depth account of the place and role of the social in Arendt's thought, see Pitkin 1-18, 69-97, 177-202.

[18] Arendt cites the example of compassion and pity in the French Revolution as an historical illustration of how the social can invade and undermine the public. It bolstered political motives (liberty and equality) with private emotive affectations (i.e. fraternity, as felt through compassion and pity), and as a result "attempt[ed] to improve the lot of the unfortunate rather than establish justice for all" (HDT 14).

[19] There is clearly categorical crossover between Hegel's and Marx's philosophies, the rise of modern science, and the structural shifts under discussion here—especially with regard to Marx and his accounts of society and administration/bureaucracy in politics (See Arendt TMA 17, 19). The point of separately articulating the threats to tradition is to give a

men, as they are biological and laboring subjects. The public fulfills the conditions for men to act as distinct members of a plural community. The social thus administers to a large household (a sphere defined by its lack of freedom), while the public guarantees individuals freedom and the ability to come together and act in concert. In this sense the social's equalization of all its members and its administration of their affairs undermines the possibility of political action in the world.

The rise of the social sphere is irrefutably connected to the growing inability of the tradition to speak to the modern condition. The foundational precept of the tradition is that the *vita contemplativa* is superior to the *vita activa*. Arendt argues that this principle becomes weakened and reversed with the development of modern science and leads to the *vita activa* surpassing the *vita contemplativa*. What the rise of the social guaranteed was not merely the validity of this newly inverted hierarchy, but an additional reversal of its own. The *vita activa* has three activities: action, work, and labor. Traditionally, action was the most esteemed of human activities—and perceived as the most threatening to the life of philosophy. However, as we saw earlier the development of science elevated work over action; meaning that it accomplished not only a reversal of the traditional hierarchy of action over contemplation but a reversal of action's internal hierarchy. The rise of the social took this one step further. The social brings mankind's biological necessities out of the private sphere and into the fore of their relations with one another. This means that labor takes over for work *and* action as the bond between men.[20] The social thus not only

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thourough account of the erosion of tradition from each perspective; *not* to imply that these threads exist independently from one another.

[20] Arendt recognizes that Marx theorizes this shift (See FHM 79).

maintains action's triumph over contemplation, but also requires labor triumph over the other activities.

These conceptual reversals are far from mere background conditions with regard to the viability of thinking in the public world. True, Arendt states that philosophically speaking the tradition starts with Plato and ends with Marx.[21] However, she adds to this timeline the assertion that it was the experience of totalitarianism that caused our definitive break with that tradition: "The break in our tradition is now an accomplished fact. It is neither the result of anyone's deliberate choice nor subject to further decision" (TMA 26). How are we to understand her difference between the 'end' and a 'break'? The questions that Hegel and Marx posed to philosophy, and to our experiences in the world, can be said to have rebelled against the assumptions of the tradition, but not to have rejected it outright.[22] For Arendt, these thinkers questioned and weakened the tradition, but they did so in accordance with the terms outlined by said tradition. As much as Marx believed himself to be rejecting tradition, he had in fact "been moulded by" it (Canovan 68). Many of those nineteenth century thinkers "tried desperately to think against the tradition while using its own conceptual tools" (TMA 25).[23] Marx, for example, though he obviously sought a disparate form of society than had philosophers past, remained bound not only to

[21] TMA 17; ET 86

[22] Rebellion against tradition assumes some participation in it (as in taking up its questions/categories, even if only to criticize them), but a break with tradition, as represented by totalitarianism, assumes that there is nothing left to rebel against. See Canovan 68, 70.

[23] Arendt is speaking directly about Marx, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche in this passage.

the categories of labor, action and contemplation, but he also upheld the value of leisure from labor and politics as the ideal.[24]

Yet, in the time between Marx and the twentieth century's crisis the tradition became even more precarious insofar as it grew less and less able to speak to our condition in the world. Men "had come to live in a world in which [their] mind[s] and [their] tradition of thought were not even capable of asking adequate, meaningful questions, let alone of giving answers to its own perplexities" (BPF 9). Philosophy may still have been using the same categories as it had previously, but the relationships between those categories had shifted more than the intervening century recognized. The tradition's hierarchies of thought and activity no longer reflected our experience with or cognition of the world. Coeval with the start of that tradition was the rejection of human experience in favor of philosophy; appropriately enough it came to its end "when nothing was left of this experience but the opposition of thinking and acting, which, depriving thought of reality and action of sense, makes both meaningless" (TMA 25). The rise of modern science inverted the status of pure thinking, and undermined the value of contemplation; philosophy conjectured that our history was not a tradition, but a process; and our experience in the world, ceased to be political, and became social in character. These centuries long developments culminated in a world that lacked foundation. As Arendt states,

> the old belief in the sacredness of foundation in a far-distant past gave way to the new belief in progress and in the future as an unending process whose unlimited possibilities could not only never be bound to any past foundation, but which also

[24] TMA 20, 23. Arendt even goes so far as to state that, "Plato's dream of subjecting political action to the strict tenets of philosophic thought had become a reality [that] Marx attained, albeit posthumously" (MWPT 274-5). See also MWPT 313.

> could only be arrested and frustrated in their limitless potentiality by any new foundation (TPT 51-52).

As discussed in Chapter One, the Roman trinity of religion, authority, and tradition rests on the notion that the foundational moment is the origin for all three. Tradition secured our world because it rooted our perception of that world to a definitive starting point. When the sacredness of foundation, and thus tradition, were dismissed, the whole trinity (authority-tradition-religion) fell with along with it. The structure that gave shape to the world first during the Roman Republic, then during the Empire, and then as taken up by the Catholic Church and maintained for another thousand years, had broken down with the end of tradition.

The fragile world of human affairs no longer possessed tradition as its guarantor of durability. Since the beginning of this foundation, "the gap between past and future…was bridged over by what, since the Romans, we have called tradition" (BPF 13-14). That gap refers to our position as actors. It is the in-between of time, and the place from which we evaluate those events that have has come before us and decide upon what we will do in the future.[25] Tradition, in the form of common sense,[26] used to supply us direction and serve as

[25] It is worthwhile to note that along with the collapse of tradition this space and its activity takes on "political relevance" (BPF 14). The benefits of our break with tradition will be dealt with shortly.

[26] The connection between tradition and common sense is discussed in Chapter One. The important take-away is that Arendt defines common sense as a "tradition-bound judgment." While this project fully recognizes that the majority of Arendt's work on common sense is grounded in Kant, it is also true that she attributes the origination of common sense to the Romans: "The Romans developed it until it became the highest criterion in the management of public-political affairs. With the Romans, remembering the past became a matter of tradition, and it is in this sense of tradition that the development of common sense found its politically most important expression. Since then common sense has been bound and nourished by tradition so that when traditional standards cease to make sense and no longer serve as general rules under which all or most particular instances can be subsumed, common sense unavoidably atrophies" (TPT 42).

a guide in this in-between. Without tradition, and alongside the concurrent undermining of thinking as a way of being, nothing is left to guarantee that the standards and terms under which we live retain any permanence. Though the tradition ended with Marx, it took almost another century before its resultant precarious position was brought to light. Our full break with tradition came with the horrors of totalitarianism and the full-scale rejection of all previous standards that secured our freedom and dignity in the world.

Arendt recognized that the philosophical moves made by Hegel and Marx initiated the break, but argued that it was the experience of totalitarianism that severed us from traditional concepts, expectations, and norms.[27] Building on the language of foundation yet again, Arendt states that, the "pillars of the best-known truths" have fallen and "we need only look around to see that we are standing in the midst of a veritable rubble heap of such pillars" (HDT 10).[28] Without a mooring in the world, without tradition to ground and supply common sense, men are left adrift with custom alone to secure their home. The result is that we risk becoming thoughtless, concerned neither with assessing our world with the tools provided by remembrance,[29] nor with creating cohesion or internal unity

[27] This is not to say that Arendt sees the philosophies of Hegel or Marx as blamable for or directly connected to totalitarianism. Again, using Marx as an example, Canovan succinctly presents the case: "Far from any unity of theory and practice, there was, [Arendt] believed, a gulf between Marx and Stalin bridged by contingent events…Marxism in Arendt's account is not itself totaliarian, then; what she does claim, however, is that it is possible with the wisdom of hindsight to see how easily it could breed totalitarian progeny in conditions of political crisis" (Canovan 85).

[28] Tying this metaphor back to the topic of permanence: "…the world…needs such pillars in order to guarantee continuity and permanence, without which it cannot offer mortal men the relatively secure, relatively imperishable home that they need" (HDT 10-11).

[29] Arendt refers to the "certainty of evaluation" provided by tradition (via the deployment of common sense) in her discussion of the loss that occurred during Hegel's substitution of tradition with the continuity of history (LM 212).

between our own thoughts and actions.[30] The demise of tradition and the coeval rise of the social and triumph of activity over contemplation deprived us of the appropriate means with which to conceptualize and evaluate action and events in the world.

Arendt fully admits that the extent of our predicament is neither wholly transparent, nor even if pointed out, readily believable. "If we speak of the end of tradition, we obviously do not mean to deny that many people, perhaps even a majority (although I doubt this), still live by traditional standards" (TPT 40).[31] It is a generally accepted truism that if you were to ask someone on the street if it is right to kill or steal from someone, they will say 'no'—actions like that are morally wrong.[32] For the most part, what we witness on a day-to-day basis seems to uphold our belief that this is a set standard in the world. There are laws in place that guarantee those who transgress them will be punished. Yet, she argues that even if we believe these standards to be true and permanent, there are circumstances that demonstrate the total vulnerability of these precepts. In her analysis of totalitarianism, Arendt argued that those rules and standards—which we assume we live by—could be inverted with little to no upset on the part of a people. Totalitarianism "simply exchanged one system of values [for] another" (PRD 44). Lacking a grounded common sense, and out of practice with thinking, we are left in a very vulnerable position with regard to action in the world. As citizens it is ingrained in our minds, and represented in our behavior, that it

[30] One of Arendt's favorite examples of this dangerous predicament is when Eichmann can repeat, almost verbatim, Kant's categorical imperative—yet he fails to recognize the disconnect between the words he's memorized and 'duties' he readily admits to fulfilling. She states, "it was not stupidity but thoughtlessness" that characterized Eichmann's mind (LM 4).

[31] "The end of tradition does not necessarily mean that traditional concepts have lost their power over the minds of men" (TMA 26).

[32] For examples of Arendt's usage of the 'Thou shalt not kill' commandment in relation to totalitarianism's inversion of it see EJ 150, CR 152-153.

is 'right' to follow the law. Totalitarianism relied on this premise and was successful because the vast majority of people failed to think beyond: '*Right* is defined by adherence to law, *wrong* by our transgression of it.'[33] The lesson that totalitarianism taught us is that the mere following of the law or the carrying out of duties is nowhere near sufficient for upholding and protecting freedom and human dignity. In fact, Arendt found the exact opposite to be true. What Arendt points out is that what is *not* in place in our world is a skillset that provides for our analysis and evaluation of its values systems. We are used to the stability and presence of a tradition to guide us—and without the support of that tradition, we have now seen how out of practice we are with the activity of thinking. We require a different way of evaluating our world if we want to solve this predicament.

So where does that leave us with regard to tradition and its loss on our (in)ability to think? She certainly does not want a "restoration" of tradition.[34] Her point is that once "tradition broke down" it is "precisely impossible" to resurrect it (GTNT 1). Not only is the foundational precept of western political thought antithetical to her lauding of political action, but the conditions in our world are too changed for that tradition as a whole to maintain any explanatory power or authority in the realm of human affairs even if we wanted it to do so.[35] However, while reinstating tradition is not an option, it does not follow that Arendt sees no value in returning to parts of the past as thought exercises.

[33] "By shielding people from the dangers of examination, it teaches them to hold fast to whatever the prescribed rules of conduct may be at a given time in a given society. What people then get used to is less the content of the rules, a close examination of which would always lead them into perplexity, than the *possession* of rules under which to subsume particulars" (LM 177).

[34] HDT 11

[35] Siding with Buckler (34) and against Gottsegen (126, 117) this analysis rejects the argument that Arendt sought to found a new tradition. We need active thinking, not another tradition and its supplied common sense, as our guide in the world.

Although our world has broken with tradition and subsequently lost its source of authority on political matters, this does not mean that antiquity has lost its capacity to provide us with meaning. Arendt is quick to point out that "the loss of this trinity does not destroy the past, and the dismantling process itself is not [necessarily] destructive" (LM 212). The tradition no longer possesses an authority that dictates its standards or perspective to our world. Instead, now that "…the thread of tradition is broken…we must discover the past for ourselves—that is, read its authors as though nobody had ever read them before" (CC 204). In this sense, the *recognition* of our break with tradition may actually be a gift. After all, "…our *ability* to think is not at stake; we are what men always have been—thinking beings" (LM 11). Our stance in relation to the past, present, and future depends on our thinking through examples, as well as through time. The recognition of the break with tradition and the experience of totalitarianism are concomitant with the realization that we must reawaken our ability to think—not thinking as cognition or knowledge acquisition, but thinking as active engagement with our world.

In this light, Arendt cites three particular advantages provided by our break with tradition. The first deals with our vantage point in relation to our world. The "demise" "permit[s] us to look on the past with new eyes, unburdened and unguided by any traditions, and thus to dispose of a tremendous wealth of raw experiences without being bound by any prescriptions as to how to deal with these treasures" (LM 12). What we are now able to do is look to the past without the constraints of tradition and examine our world from a new perspective. "With eyes undistracted…with a directness which has disappeared," we can rethink what it means to participate in this world (TMA 28). The second advantage involves how we understand ourselves as participants. Without tradition

to impose its categories on thought and action the "age-old distinction between the many and the "professional thinkers""—"specializing in what was supposedly the highest activity human beings could attain to"—also disappears (LM 13). The division entailed by this divide "has lost its plausibility," and we can now expect and "demand" that thinking be the "exercise" of "every sane person, no matter how erudite or ignorant, intelligent or stupid, he may happen to be" (LM 13). This is precisely what Arendt meant when she spoke of the "gap" now taking on political relevance. Thinking becomes politically relevant because it is now the purview of everyone, not simply a select few. As an activity it is available for and required by any actor who wants to understand his condition vis-à-vis the world and his fellows.[36] The third advantage relates to the means with which we can communicate with one another. Not only does employing snippets from the past allow us to conceptualize our contemporary existence, but it also provides "vocabulary…something like a fundamental chord" to our speech and attempts to interpret that condition (SP 12). The very words and concepts that we use to describe our thoughts and the way in which we see the world are inherited from past experiences in it. Simply because our circumstances have changed within the world does not mean that language and examples from the past have lost the capacity to help us interpret our experiences or connect us to one another. Conceptualizing and talking through and about our experiences—either with ourselves or with others—is how we begin to ground ourselves in the world again.

Arendt on "Scipio's Dream"

> Like a pearl diver who descends to the bottom of the sea, not to excavate the bottom and bring it to light but to pry loose the rich and the strange…to carry them to the surface, this thinking delves into the depths of the past—but not in order to

[36] See also LM 192

> resuscitate it the way it was and to contribute to the renewal of extinct ages. What guides this thinking is the conviction that…some things…survive in new crystallized forms and shapes that remain immune to the elements, as though they waited only for the pearl diver who one day will come down to them and bring them up into the world of the living (WB 205-206).[37]

This concluding paragraph from Arendt's essay on Benjamin is a wonderfully suitable example for her methodology as it relates to tradition and antiquity. She dives back into the past in order to search for those "rich and strange" fragments that maintain their illuminating abilities outside of their contexts and long after their time has passed. She does not limit her search for these examples to a single tradition, but draws from the whole of our inherited past. Freedom from the constraints of tradition means that we are free to pick and choose from that tradition and elsewhere in the past to construct our own vantage point from which to examine our experience.[38] As Kohn points out, the ancient world is privileged in Arendt's work because in "looking to antiquity it is possible to see ourselves from a distance, that is, with impartiality" (Kohn 2003 xxvi†). Acting on this principle, Arendt pries loose "Scipio's Dream" from the depths of that past.[39] There are two predominant reasons why a return to Cicero in our post-tradition world makes sense and why Arendt picks up his theory to demonstrate the relationship between the activities of

[37] Moses also employs the 'pearl diver' passage in his account of Arendt's methodological use of Roman experience as example (905).

[38] Nordmann and Heuer characterize Arendt's method in a similar manner. Arendt uses examples from the past in order "to tease them apart and reconfigure them in new ways;" "her principle of construction…artfully joints visible and hidden layers of meaning" (777-78).

[39] Hammer 2008 also spends time on Arendt's use of Cicero and the Dream. However, despite readily admitting that "*On the Republic* can be read, at least in part, as a reflection on the rewards of public life," he argues that there is an "ambivalence that accompanies Scipio's return to earth" (42, 45). He then grounds his analysis of Arendt in the *Tusculan Disputations*. While his chapter does a great deal to further the seriousness with which the Romans are treated in Arendt's thought, its primary focus remains on the intersection between politics and culture, and not on thinking in relation to action and political life.

thinking and action. Cicero rejected the tradition's elevation of the theoretical life over the political one—yet he did not argue for a mere reversal, he argued for the equalization of thinking and acting. Cicero's relativization also illustrates the type of distance or vantage point that the activity of thinking requires. Arendt takes up Cicero's theory of relativization because it is 'immune to the elements' and retains its ability to show how the activity of thinking—and the space required by it—works.

Unfortunately, before we can parse her analysis we must do a bit of work (re)situating it. In *The Life of the Mind*, Arendt presents three responses to the question 'What Makes Us Think?' After discussing 'The Platonic Answer' and 'The Roman Answer'—which is where the analysis of the Dream is located—she introduces 'The Socratic Answer' by telling her readers that the previous two responses are "dubious" because they are "offered by professional philosophers" (LM 168). If we take this at face value then the Platonic and Roman answers can be disregarded as central to Arendt's overarching thesis, and characterized as exercises that merely lead us to her real case-in-point, that of Socrates. Fortunately, this reading falls apart quite quickly. First, it is worth noting that her treatment of 'The Roman Answer' does not refer to Cicero alone. "Scipio's Dream" "is the mere beginning of a tradition[40] that culminated philosophically…about five hundred years later, at the end of the Roman Empire" (LM 160). She starts her analysis looking at Cicero and then jumps quickly to the ways in which Boethius *radicalized* his theory. "What was mere relativization in Scipio's dream is now turned into violent annihilation," where the space created through thinking "annihilate[s] reality as it exists for morals" (LM 161). This version of thinking-as-permanent-escape is required because the actor recognizes that he

[40] *A* tradition, not *the* tradition that was under discussion in the earlier section of this chapter.

cannot act "into a world whose hostility is overwhelming, where fear is predominant," and as a result "man tries his utmost to escape" (LM 162). Arendt's condemnation of 'The Roman Answer' is a condemnation of *this* characterization of human affairs and thinking—yet even by her own account, this is not Cicero's version. While readily admitting that Cicero faced a daunting political crisis during the end of the Republic, one cannot say that he was left without the ability or desire to act.[41] As we saw in Chapter Three, Cicero did not seek an escape from the world via thinking because the world was too horrible to live within; he sought a temporary escape in order to reassess the state of things as they stand and then to return to them.[42] The Dream comes to us from *De re publica* which, not insignificantly in our context, was written almost 10 years prior to Cicero's death.[43] It is not an exercise of escapism written in the face of inevitable defeat. Cicero did not write the text under a direct threat of death, or without hope of ever gaining access to political life again. He wrote *De re publica* as an attempt to demonstrate how the Republic might still be saved. Arendt's rejection of 'The Roman Answer' can very easily be read as her rejection of what later Romans did to Cicero's theory—and not a rejection of Cicero's relativization itself.[44]

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[41] While Cicero's life did not come to an end amidst political success, his fate was the direct result of his own decisions and actions. Consider his initial support for Pompey, then the transferrence of that support to Caesar, as well as his delivery of the Philippics against Antony that led to his being hunted down and killed. He was able to act into a public, as well as speak and write his views on its affairs.

[42] Taking a cue from Baraz, it is also worth noting that categories of writing and thought and politics and action are not mutually exclusive for Cicero. "He [Cicero] turned to writing as an additional arena for political activity when his freedom of action [in the public sense] was curtailed…Writing, and the writing of philosophy in particular, became not a facet of his political life, but rather an alternate way of being in politics" (Baraz 9). The fluidity and cross-content of these activities further illustrates Cicero's position on the intertwined nature of politics, action, and thought.

[43] The text is believed to have been written between 54-51BC. Cicero was killed in 43BC.

[44] The merits of relativization for Arendt's own account of thinking will be discussed at length in the parallel readings of the Dream and Kafka's parable.

The second piece of evidence in favor of this reading is that Cicero cannot be characterized as a professional philosopher by Arendt's own definition. A professional philosopher does not ask questions that "arise out of his own experiences while engaged in thinking" (LM 166). For the "professional thinkers" "the bracketing of reality—getting rid of it by treating it as though it were nothing but a mere "impression"—has remained one of the great temptations" (LM 157). Yet, as we saw at length in Chapter Two, Cicero is a thinker who grounds himself directly in the experience of political life—not as a recorder or bystander, but as a 'man of action' in Arendt's estimation. It was precisely this characterization that led her to exclaim that the reason he could not challenge the philosophy of the tradition was because he stood outside of it as a thinker *and* politician.[45] As the founder of the humanist tradition—and from a passage that Arendt repeatedly cites—Cicero also states that he would gladly sacrifice the pursuit of 'truth' for the presence of good company.[46] This assertion would sound utterly nonsensical from a 'professional philosopher' in the ancient world.

Oddly enough in *The Life of the Mind*, Arendt's characterization of Cicero is in many ways closer to Socrates than to anyone else; and Socrates is the antithesis of Arendt's professional philosopher class. Socrates "represents an approach to thinking that *precedes* the tradition" (Buckler 31). Cicero represents an approach that stood parallel to, but in direct conflict with, that tradition. Despite the glaring differences between the two and their seemingly incommensurate stations in public life, both men "unified two apparently contradictory passions, for thinking and acting" and each theorized the two-in-one of

[45] See ET 86
[46] It is precisely because of this passage that Young-Bruehl characterizes Cicero as a "non-specialist" in Arendt's estimation (300).

thought (LM 167, 185). One way to thematize the distinction between the two is that for Arendt Socrates functions as the model of the thinker, whereas Cicero's theory of relativization functions as the model of thinking. In this sense we can view the Dream as demonstrating how the plurality of the two-in-one of thinking is connected to the plural conditions located in the world. Mental activities are innately connected to action amongst others. Distance is required between the two activities in order that the space devoted to thinking can exist as a position from which I can evaluate what has happened and what I would like to happen—or think should happen—in the world.[47]

It is from this interpretive stance that Arendt's reading of "Scipio's Dream" should be approached. According to Arendt, "Scipio's Dream" is "perhaps the first recorded [example] in intellectual history of how certain trains of thought actually aim at thinking oneself out of the world" (LM 160).[48] It does this by relativizing our position in that world with regard to time, space, and mortality. The Dream, as a thought exercise, demonstrates the requirement of distance between our mental space and the world of action. This space—which is the space for thinking—is where we try to find meaning in the world, and understand our position within it. Unfortunately, Arendt's discussion *surrounding* the analysis of "Scipio's Dream" leads her readers astray with regard to the nature of Cicero's

[47] This reading implies that the the image of the thinker can be Socratic, insofar as that individual exemplifies a particular kind of thought and participates in both worldly action (in this case, speech) and mental activities. However, the space that thinking takes place within, and the connection between thinking and acting—and the deeds that result—are most certainly not Socratic.

[48] Based on the content discussed in the Dream—and the civically directed conclusions reached—it is most helpful to think about this departure from the world as a departure from the *world of appearances*. Cicero is not arguing for an abandonment of the world, merely a perspective on it.

argument.[49] Arendt introduces her analysis by highlighting the apparent disconnect between Cicero's emphasis on the world of political affairs in the first five books of *De re publica* and the conclusion found in "Scipio's Dream". Arendt reads the Dream as demonstrative of the following message: "And this is essential—the rewards of this world, Scipio's ancestor informs him, are in no way sufficient to compensate you for your labors…always look up to the sky so that you may be able to *despise* human affairs" (LM 159, emphasis mine). As we saw in Chapter Three, Scipio's grandfather does say this in The Dream—but merely as half the story. Ironically, Arendt does (at least in part) realize that there's something amiss in her reading. She recognizes that "these proposed thought-trains stand in open contradiction to what Cicero…had always believed in and had expressed even in the same book" (LM 160). However, instead of investigating the root cause of this contradiction she moves on rather quickly to her discussion of Boethius and 'The Socratic Answer.'

Arendt's portrayal of "Scipio's Dream" does not entail that it function as a dead concept in her thought. Though the above statements seem to be condemnations of a sort of world-escapism attributable to Cicero, the reality is a bit more muddled. Arendt starts her 'Roman Answer' section by explaining that Cicero laid groundwork for a "philosophical system"—but it was in fact his successors who developed it (LM 154). These

[49] My point here is to demonstrate how allegations surrounding the use of Cicero's theory by his successors do not effect the content of his idea. The problem with Arendt's presentation is that she conflates the two. Yet this conflation does not mean that Arendt dismisses Cicero—on the contrary—it simply sounds as though she does. Her condemnation of the type of escapism seen here is not actually found in Cicero, but in Epictetus and Boethius. Arendt's dismissal of this type of escapism from the world is a dismissal of their development of Cicero's thought-train, not the thought-train itself. We will see in the following section on Kafka how despite her language in this section, Cicero's theory lays the groundwork with regard to Arendt's theories of thinking and action.

predecessors—Epictetus and Boethius in particular—radicalized his theory insofar as they used the premise of the Dream as a template to theorize their complete withdrawal or escape from the world.[50] Yet, "Scipio's Dream" does not call for or require such an extreme withdrawal. In fact, as we saw during our analysis in Chapter Three, the space to think that Cicero outlines in the Dream demonstrates how we are inexorably connected to both a life among men and a life inside of ourselves. To borrow the cosmos language from the Dream: When we are on earth we cannot help but look up to the heavens; but when we are in the heavens our gaze is consistently drawn back to the earth. Arendt's analysis picks up on the part where we desire to leave the earth—i.e. the part that Cicero's successors expanded upon—but in this analysis she misses the part where we also desire a return to it.[51] A radical escape from the world is neither possible nor the point of Cicero's presentation. Arendt does recognize that Cicero's thought-trains were "by no means as extreme" as those of the philosophers who came after him (LM 157). However, the fact that she bookends her analysis of Cicero's original discovery with a discussion of Epictetus and Seneca (both of whom "lived under the rule of Nero, that is, under rather desperate conditions") and Boethius (who was "jailed without a hearing, absolutely alone after…a mock trial at which he was not even present…[and] waiting for execution by slow and abominable tortures") tells us quite a bit about the pervasiveness of their contributions to her interpretation (LM 156, 160-61). She appears stuck on the Dream as a template for escape because of these

[50] Having already mentioned how Arendt sees Boethius as radicalizing the escape from the world, it should be noted that she characterizes Epictetus' theory in the same way. Arendt sees Epictetus as demanding "a radical withdrawal from reality" (LM 155).
[51] She supplies this 'return' in her analysis of Kafka's parable.

later thinkers.[52] So when Arendt interprets the Dream, she does so by reading Epictetus' and Boethius' versions of it *back* into the original. This move not only leads to the confusion, and inaccurate categorization, regarding Cicero as a professional philosopher, but it also means that Arendt misses half the point of the Dream. Her presentation reveals a one-sided interpretation of Cicero. Arendt's treatment encapsulates how the affairs of men can never be satisfaction enough; however, this is not because human affairs should be despised, but instead because action in itself is not enough to satisfy us as human beings. We need action, but we also require meaning and understanding of that world. Meaning and understanding are provided via our temporary removal from that world insofar as the distance created by that withdrawal provides the conditions and space for thinking to happen.

This is precisely the one element that Arendt unquestionably sees as value in Cicero's thought-train. Cicero "had discovered the thought-trains by which one could take one's way out of the world. He found that such thoughts…were likely to offer comfort and help in the world as it then was (and, of course, always is, more or less)" (LM 157). Our ability to think ourselves outside of our world provides comfort because it can provide us with understanding of meaning of our condition *in that world*. It seems an uncontroversial claim to make that both Cicero and Arendt were at times frustrated with the states of politics and contemplation. Conditions can pop up that frustrate the possibilities of action in the public world; but the contemplative life by itself cuts us off from our desire to act in the world, to fulfill our innate ability to begin something. Arendt is explicit that Cicero's

[52] The circumstances afflicting these thinkers are not comparable to Cicero's position at the end of the Republic. As stated before, Cicero may not have made astute political decisions near the end of his life, but they were decisions nonetheless; the public world had not been closed off to him in any absolute sense.

thought-trains supply us with an outlet to escape our frustrations on both counts. In this context, "thinking means following a sequence of reasoning that will lift you outside the world of appearance as well as outside your own life. Philosophy is called upon to compensate for the frustrations of politics and, more generally, life itself" (LM 160). However, the content of thought in "Scipio's Dream" is not abstract or a claim of universal truth. Scipio thinks of the affairs of men and what he owes to his fellows. In this sense, philosophy does "compensate for the frustrations of politics," but not because it ignores public life. Philosophy and contemplation become another means to think through our plural condition. Those thought-trains bring us back to our world after having contemplated what is entailed by both our departure and our return. "Scipio's Dream" demonstrates how we gain and articulate a new perspective. We engage within ourselves in order to act upon our return. It is in this sense that we turn to her presentation of Kafka's parable, as it provides the template for that return.

The Missing Half: Cicero and Kafka

The parallels between the two metaphors cannot be mere coincidence. There is obvious historical discontinuity between the two, but both are explicitly accounts of Arendt's "activity of thought" (BPF 12). They each conceptualize thought as 'event' and by doing so transform thought from passive inaction[53] to active engagement—our thinking is the start of something new. Both accounts focus on the distance required between mental activity and action if each are to retain their places in the world; and to be clear, for Arendt, thinking takes place *within* the world. Thinking may require a departure from the world of appearances, but it is not a departure into the private realm or an abandoment of the

[53] This is how she describes the tradition's stance on 'mental activities,' see LM 6.

world.[54] The departure entailed by thinking is of a very different character. In this respect both passages also demonstarate the "strangeness" of this thinking.[55] The act of the stop-and-think is not a routine or a habit. Thinking requires the somewhat strange experience of resituating ourselves in time in order to reevaluate our present. In this sense thinking cannot function as an escape, it is simply engagement on a different level, and the reason that Kafka's parable is integral for our purposes is that he shows how an actor articulates and moves back and forth from this strange realm. "Scipio's Dream" and Kafka's parable reveal how thought-trains keep us attached to the world, but offer a new position from which we can evaluate and judge it. The similarity of the two metaphors also demonstrates the effectiveness of Arendt's historical method. Though our circumstances are quite different, their language, experience, and faculty of engaging with the world aids us in finding meaning and resituating ourselves within ours.

Arendt discusses the Kafka parable at length on two separate occasions, first in *Between Past and Future* and then again in *The Life of the Mind*.[56] In her account the parable accomplishes two tasks. First, it reveals the way in which an actor relates to and connects with his world. Second, it demonstrates how we can conceptualize the activity of thinking. Kafka's "He" accounts for our ability as thinking beings to step out of time and think about the past, future, and our position in the world as an actor. The language of

[54] Thinking appears to occupy the space in between the world of appearances and the two-in-one of the self. See LM 22, 32.

[55] "How extraordinary this concluding chapter of Cicero's Republic actually is and how *strange* its thoughts must have sounded to Roman ears" (LM 158); "this parable in which two of time's tenses, the past and the future, are understood as antagonistic forces that crash into the present Now, sounds very *strange* to our ears" (LM 203).

[56] See BPF 9-12 and LM 202-210. The interpretation remained the same between the two works (Young-Bruehl 277), but her language differs somewhat between the accounts—some passages being clearer than others. For this reason, the following analysis will cite from each.

Arendt's 'between past and future' comes to us directly from this parable. According to Kafka He is faced with "two antagonists: The first pushed him from behind, from his origin. The second blocks his road ahead. He struggles with both" (Kafka 160). He is engaged with a fight against where he has come from and where he is set to go. During the course of the actor's life there are occasional opportunities for the actor to "spring out of the fighting line and be promoted, on account of his experience of such warfare, as judge over his struggling antagonists" (Kafka 161). He leaps out of time and uses his past experiences to assess his current conditions. It is this movement that Arendt tells us represents the activity of thinking.

Arendt does not wholly endorse Kafka's account. She makes some clarifying points, and one significant alteration. She clarifies that the space occupied by the actor is not the present, insofar as the present is part of the time continuum or the midpoint in the "flow of uninterrupted succession" between past and future (BPF 11). Instead, actors encounter the 'present' as a gap, as time as "broken in the middle" (BPF 11). This gap represents the active stance that the actor takes with regard to the push and pull of forces around him. He breaks up time by fighting with those forces and acting into the world. As Arendt sees it, for Kafka, "the battleground [is]…man's home on earth…an in-between, an extended Now on which he spends his life" (LM 205). In this space men lend continuity to time and the world by acting into it—perhaps counter intuitively, we create continuity for men by breaking up the continuum of the force of time. We shape our world because "*we continue* what we started yesterday and hope to finish tomorrow" (LM 205). Arendt asserts that Kafka's parable can only be interpreted as theoretically so, or as a mental phenomenon, but for this portion of the parable, that assessment would seem to be false. As actors we *are* engaged

with time and with men in the world of appearances, and we do act—and forgive and make promises—in order to give our world continuity and hope in the future.[57] The portion of Kafka's parable that makes sense only theoretically is where he discusses our leap from this worldly condition. This is also the aspect of the parable that Arendt significantly alters.

Arendt rejects Kafka's assertion that "He" needs to jump out of time in order to evaluate the events that occurred within it. "What is missing in Kafka's description of a thought-event is a spatial dimension where thinking could exert itself without being forced to jump out of human time altogether (BPF 11). This jump out of the fighting line is problematic because it removes both our thinking and judging from the conditions of the world.[58] Arendt proposes that instead of this leap away from experience we resituate ourselves in the present, and reconceptualize the dynamics of this particular thought train. She hypothesizes that we can think through our world and "remain[s] bound to and [is] rooted in the present—an entirely human present though it is fully actualized only in the thinking process and lasts no longer than this process lasts" (LM 209). This rendition of the world and thinking is completely actor-oriented. The past has an infinite origin and the future an infinite advance, but both end and begin with the actor's position in the world. The thought-train originates with the actor, and like a geometric line continues into infinity. Arendt uses the language of geometry to show how we are situated in the world as well as how the activity of thought can present a new, or alternate, present space to think about our condition within it. Unlike tradition, which served as a guide and directed us during the in between of past and future, this formulation requires not only that thinking

[57] Kafka asserts that, "He fights against having his limits defined by his fellow men" (158). Seeing that the two-in-one of thinking is myself-and-I, this passage would make no sense if applied to thinking alone.
[58] LM 207

maintains a place in the world, but that men are consistently reminded of their natality. "This small non-time-space in the very heart of time…cannot by inherited and handed down from the past…every new human being as he inserts himself between an infinite past and an infinite future, must discover and ploddingly pave it anew" (BPF 13). His ability to begin and engage with thought-trains illustrate not only the creation of a new space in which to act and experience freedom, but on a larger level it reveals the capacity of men to begin anew and by doing so change the conditions of their world.

This connection between thinking and natality leads directly into a connection between action and natality. Though Arendt explicitly states that Kafka's parable is solely meant to illuminate the activity of thought, it also demonstrates how our thinking cannot be disconnected from our acting into the world.[59] When Arendt speaks of action, she clearly does not intend that action be engaged in thoughtlessly or without care with regard to its consequences. This was her biggest indictment against Eichmann, and the very topic with which she begins *The Life of the Mind*. "Whenever I transcend the limits of my own life span and begin to reflect on this past, judging it, and this future, forming projects of the will, thinking ceases to be a politically marginal activity" (LM 192). The space provided via thought-trains is precisely what gives us room for this transcendence. Thinking can never be politically marginal because when we think we remain connected to the world, and the events and actions that are the topic of our thoughts are directly connected with how we live with one another. The conditions of the present and the trajectories of the future become altered when we think about what has been done and what we wish to accomplish. Thinking disrupts the present metaphorically, as we saw from the parable, but also literally

[59] Just as our discussion of 'Scipio's Dream' in Chapter Three.

insofar as what we wish disrupts the present when we act on it. The stop-and-think[60] literally stops us from acting in the world and starts us reflecting about those actions; likewise, when we desire to act again those thoughts are translated back into the world. The interplay between thinking and acting is what grants meaning to each. We think about how we are "surrounded by our fellow-men," we begin to understand that world when we occupy it. Likewise, we act on the basis of the understanding reached when we "are together with no one but ourselves" (LM 8). We learn to live in our minds and actively think about what we are doing in that world.[61] On our return, we possess a new perspective or have a fuller understanding about the role and nature of our place among and duty to others.

Arendt focuses on the last paragraph from Kafka's parable; however, the rest of the parable demonstrates the link between action and thinking more clearly. The first point of clarification should be that Arendt categorized Kafka's characters and narratives as political in their basis and intent. For Arendt, Kafka's project was one that, "wanted to build up a world in accordance with human needs and human dignities, a world where man's actions are determined by himself and which is ruled by his laws and not by mysterious forces emanating form above or below" (FK 80). To read this in relation to Kafka's "He"—in a text penned by Arendt about the importance of thinking if we want to bring human dignity and attempt to eliminate evil within politics—requires that we see the act of thinking as directly connected to 'action' as we think of it in political life.[62] Moreover, at the

[60] LM 4
[61] This, not insignificantly, is her call to her reader in *The Human Condition*.
[62] There is also a clear connection between thinking and work (as in world-construction) in this formulation. This connection is beyond the scope of this chapter, but it is sufficient to

beginning of "He" the topic is not thinking, but about how thinking can prepare us for contingency.[63] Though Kafka is certain that thinking can never make us absolute in our decision-making and our confidence, or our readiness for unknowns, it is the preparation that is important, not necessarily the end result. But perhaps the clearest evidence that we have for the connection between thought-event and action comes to us when Kafka describes his "wish to attain a view of life" (155). The acquisition of this view is provided to us when we distance ourselves from life, and from a position separate from action in the world, we are provided with perspective and the ability to judge. Yet, for Kafka, this viewpoint is not sufficient in itself—what is "necessarily bound up with it [is] to convince others of it" (155). He directly connects the desire to have a view on life (attained via thinking) with his wish to persuade others of his position (the very near definition of action as speech in Arendt's thought). For Arendt, men "*present* themselves in deed and word and thus indicate how they *wish* to appear" (LM 34). This decision to (re)appear in the world hinges on the position and wishes that an actor has come to during the course of his mental activities.

In *The Life of the Mind* we discover that the Arendt wants to reconceptualize the categories though which we have traditionally understood human action in the world. Instead of relying on the categories of the *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa* Arendt finally states outright that she is attempting to "look at this matter from an altogether different

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say that thought also impacts the way in which we build the space that we share with one another. See also FK 80.

[63] Kafka 153

viewpoint" (LM 7).[64] After concluding that the tradition and its categories could no longer speak to our condition, Arendt knew that the entire structure of thought versus action needed to be reconceived. Bernstein argues that, "she always held out the *possibility* for a reintegration of thinking and action, for a new kind of political thinking" (291 n3, emphasis mine). Yet, it does not seem that Arendt thought it merely *possible* to reintegrate the two—but that this is exactly what she accomplished in her discussion of thought-events. So what type of conceptual structure emerges? How do we understand thinking in relation to acting on a categorical basis? As we saw from her analyses of "Scipio's Dream" and Kafka's "He," Arendt is up to something with how we conceptualize the very nature of thinking. She states explicitly that thinking is an activity, but it's also very clearly a different type of activity than action in the world, engaged in with other independent participants. However, that said, both are plural activities (with others, with myself), both are political in the sense that they are speech acts (with others, with myself), and both crave/seek meaning (meaning among our fellows, meaning in the world). Arendt is presenting the case where contemplation and action no longer exist in opposition to one another. Thinking isn't a subset of action—action is a category that has two sides: the mental and the worldly.

Arendt hints at this restructuring in *The Human Condition*, where she rejects the traditional hierarchy of the *vita contemplativa* over the *vita activa* and redefines the latter in "manifest contradiction to the tradition" (HC 16-17). The *vita contemplativa* was defined as "the absolute quiet of contemplation," but Arendt distances herself from this understanding throughout the entirety of the text (HC 15). The *vita contemplativa* aimed at truth and revelation, and as a way of life intentionally separated itself from the 'disquiet' of

[64] This statement is immediately followed by a reference to Cicero about the active life and the role of thinking in it.

the world. Within this framework "thinking aims at and ends in contemplation, and contemplation is not an activity but a passivity; it is the point where mental activity comes to rest" (LM 6). Though Arendt clearly places the utmost emphasis on thought and thinking and its role in human life, it is equally obvious that she is not talking about this version of contemplation when she discusses the need to "think what we are doing." Arendt does not conceive of contemplation in the same way as the tradition did—it is not separable from activity.[65] She states that what she is actually doing is outlining a new type of thinking.[66] In fact, there is a case to be made that she rejects contemplation and conceives of thinking as categorically separate. A more fruitful way of conceiving of her categorization is that all human endeavors and capacities can been reconciled as some type of action. Action can occur internally as a mental activity, and it can also be manifested outwardly as activity in the world. Arendt rejects the notion of thinking as a part of a *vita contemplativa*—as a practice of pure philosophy, and thus separated from men—and at the same time she redefines the *vita activa* as inclusive of thinking. Essentially, her call "to think what we are doing" is a call to action on both sides: thinking/willing/judging and action/work/labor (See Figure 1).

Vita Activa	
Thinking	Action
Judging	Work
Willing	Labor

Figure 4.1

Arendt's main indictment against the tradition is that by the end it 'deprived thought of reality and action of sense.' What we see in "Scipio's Dream" and Kafka's "He" is that there exists a path out of this difficulty. Cicero and Kafka theorized the way in which we can remove ourselves from the world of appearances by thinking—but this manner of

[65] HC 15-16

[66] "…a new kind of thinking that needs no pillars and props, no standards and traditions to move freely without crutches over unfamiliar terrain" (HDT 10).

thinking never removes itself from reality, and thus never deprives action of its meaning. Both examples demonstrate how mental activities need not—nor cannot—be separated from our condition in the world. What thinking can provide us with is a perspective and a means of assessing that world and our past/potential actions in it. Arendt's treatment of these examples not only illuminates how central the activity of thinking is to our being-in-the-world, but it also demonstrates the radicality of her project. Arendt did not want a return to any part of the tradition's framework, instead she was arguing for a recategorization of the entirety of the *vita activa*.

CHAPTER FIVE

Arendt's Roman Models: Authority, Action, and Solidarity

In a project on Arendt's relationship to Rome it will strike many, if not most, readers as strange that aside from a smattering of footnotes *On Revolution* has received almost no attention thus far. After all, *On Revolution* focuses on the foundation of republics, and as such is littered with references to the American founders' reliance on the ancient—and Roman—experience of politics. It is the only complete text in her corpus that expands on the Romans' "political genius" in concrete terms. In fact, it is arguably the most definitely 'Roman' of her texts altogether.[1] Why wait to discuss it until the end? First, by highlighting the areas in the rest of Arendt's work where Rome appears this project sought to draw attention to the pervasiveness of its influence throughout her work. Her reliance on Rome and its citizens to provide an account of action, political experience, and thought are not limited to—nor can they be appreciated in their fullness in—*On Revolution*. The thematic tracing of these non-*On Revolution* references brings out the degree to which Roman influence is a primary feature in the whole of her theoretical project. Second, the radicality of her argument in *On Revolution* cannot be understood apart from this background. Arendt

[1] While "Introduction *Into* Politics" expends a great deal of effort on Rome as a system as a whole, it was not a finished or published work in Arendt's lifetime. Likewise, the essays from *Between Past and Future* that were discussed earlier are just that, essays—and as such are not representative of a full, concerted effort to explain or outline a Roman version of political action, experience and event that extend to the entirety of that text.

is not merely offering a discussion of freedom and beginning, a glorified account of the ward, soviet, or council system,[2] or an explication on the distinction between revolutionary event and revolutionary spirit. Obviously, her project hinges on analyses of each of these elements—yet, treating them outside of the theoretical project argued for here allows the reader to miss the implications her argument has on thought, action and durability in the world. Arendt is not nostalgic for times past, nor is she naïve with regard to her present. Revolutions are eruptive and disruptive, yes—but what follows need not be.[3] What her examples of historical revolutions and in-the-moment political upheaval demonstrate are not of how institutions begin and how they are subsequently lost, but of how action and stability have the capacity to occupy and preserve the same institution concurrently. The idea that authority is a *practicable activity* is nonsensical without an appreciation of her reliance on Roman concepts. In an effort to bridge Arendt's conclusions about thinking in the world with her emphasis on action in our tradition-severed world, this chapter will argue that her analyses of authority and the councils in *On Revolution* accomplish precisely this task—and result in a new theory of politics.

As evidence of this aim we need look no further than the final pages of *On Revolution*. Arendt flat out rejects what we consciously, or unconsciously, take to be political fact and seeks to redefine the very structure of our public world. She asserts that what the "whole tradition of political thought has concluded—that the essence of politics is

[2] Arendt references a number of different historical occurrences as seemingly interchangeable examples of the council form of government. In keeping with her practice, this chapter treats the examples as interchangeable as well, but refers to them under the single category of 'the council system'.

[3] I agree with Kalyvas insofar as he interprets Arendt's theory on councils to be one that attempted to blend extraordinary political experience with the practice of normal politics. See Kalyvas (2008) 245-291.

rulership and that the dominant political passion is the passion to rule or to govern…[but this] is profoundly untrue" (OR 276). Six years later in *On Violence* she fills out the substance of this claim. The question of 'Who rules Whom?' is particularly ill-suited to answering our concerns about the content and terms of public life, and only when we have "cease[d] to reduce public affairs to the business of domination [can] the original data in the realm of human affairs…reappear, in their authentic diversity" (OV 43-44). The data she is referring to are power, strength, force, violence, and authority—but it is authority alone that exists as the "the most elusive of these phenomena." Authority may be the most elusive, but it also undergirds our ability to understand the other four phenomena. The concept of authority is the lynchpin because in Arendt's estimation it is authority—in its conceptual and institutional instantiations—that provides the world with stability and the terms of our engagement with one another.[4] As we saw in Chapters Two and Four, "authority" as conceived and enacted by Rome is no longer an accessible or desirable model for us. But that doesn't mean that elements of it cannot speak to part of our experience. Arendt wants to reformulate how we conceive of and interact with authority. From here it seems that a primary goal of her theoretical project is to demonstrate that authority can be recreated—albeit in an altered form—in our world in a manner that concomitantly creates stability and incorporates action.[5]

The first argument of this concluding chapter is that taken together, the system of authority that emerges by the end of *On Revolution* sets up two forms of authority that

[4] Kessel (2013) describes authority as providing a source of judgment to actors. Though she focuses on only the Roman concept of authority in Arendt's thought, I agree with her claim that authority can provide the basis of our ability to think and judge in public life.
[5] As Honig (1991) claims, "one might say that Arendt's project is to save authority—to find a way to sustain it—because she realizes that without it there can be no politics" (191).

work in tandem with one another. One source of authority connects us to our fellows in the present; the other provides us a sense of continuity with a shared past via the transmission of political experience and wisdom. What results is not only a novel understanding of the terms and conditions that structure public affairs for Arendt, but also an institutional model that mimics the system of thinking and acting in the world that was outlined in the previous chapter. The structures for thinking, acting and preserving the world for Arendt are thoroughly infused with Roman influence, and when we overlook this feature we miss out on a full understanding what it means to exist as an actor within the world. The second argument of this chapter focuses on the content of what we do when we act in these conditions. Arendt's model of thinking and acting is built upon Cicero's practice of relativization—and though Arendt may be vague as to the principles for action in her own theory, as we saw in Chapter Three, Cicero is not. I posit that Arendt does more than borrow Cicero's model of thinking; she takes inspiration from its content as well. In this regard I will argue that Cicero's emphasis on fellowship—and the principles for action that accompany it—is strikingly similar to Arendt's understanding of solidarity. A pairing of the two will provide new insights on the 'why' and 'what' of thinking and acting in Arendt's theory of the public.

Council Authority

Arendt claims that *the* problem that plagues our political world, "the most elementary predicament of all modern political bodies, [is] their profound instability, the result of some elementary lack of authority" (OR 159). That said, the tone of *On Revolution* is not a nihilistic one, resigned to the fact of experiencing public life and action in terms of sheer instability. Instead, Arendt offers up the example of the council system as a potential

bastion of hope[6] insofar as within this form of government is located a novel version of authority.[7] Council authority was unknown to the ancient world, but is remarkably frequent in the modern one. Arendt argues that the council system, which organically and almost universally emerged in the wake of revolutionary events is "the only entirely new and entirely spontaneous institution in revolutionary history" (OR 261).[8] In order to appreciate the implications of this claim in Arendt's thought we must explore how and when this institution appears, the ways in which it is structurally distinct from the Roman concept, and the somewhat surprising similarities that it shares with the Roman mode of authority.

Arendt targets the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 as her primary case study of the council system, but she is clear that this was not an event without precedent. In the century leading up to the Hungarian Revolution the council system demonstrated a remarkable resilience in its ability to "stubborn[ly] re-emerge[nce]" (EHR 499). She lists Thomas Jefferson's (albeit theoretical) Wards, the French Communes of 1870 and 1871, the Russian soviets of 1905 and 1917, and the Rätesystem of 1918 and 1919 Germany as the precursors to the events of 1956. Even though the geographical proximity and fairly close succession of dates in this list might lead one to think that there is continuity across these cases—that the actors in each were responding to some distant authority for guidance or to one another for inspiration—Arendt rejects this interpretation outright. She insists that, "it is precisely the absence of continuity, tradition, and organized influence that makes the

[6] Kalyvas (263) and Totschnig (145) also interpret Arendt's position on the council system as one of hope or enthusiasm in its political potential.
[7] She also mentions that there is a new concept of power associated with this new form of authority (OR 166).
[8] It is also one that has "been neglected to the point of oblivion" (OR 261).

sameness of the phenomenon so very striking" (OR 262). So if not an external catalyst, what accounts for the reemergence and similarity across these occurrences? The answer to this question, remarkably enough, is as close to a positive formulation of a 'human nature' that Arendt ever gives.

Admittedly, Arendt never provides her readers with anything resembling a comprehensive account of human nature. The reasons for this are plentiful: perhaps because she rejects what the tradition has to say on this score, perhaps because she witnessed the inhumanity and terror that men inflicted upon their fellows under totalitarianism, or perhaps because of she realized that any assurance of legal or political rights on the basis of something as intangible, abstract, and universal as a 'human nature' brought us to dangerous political ground. Whatever the reason, one does not typically look to Arendt's theory hopefully for an exegesis about any set of givens for mankind. And yet, something very close to this emerges in her discussion of revolutions and the council system. Arendt argues that councils kept reappearing because of an innate desire for order and an "unchangeable" desire for freedom on behalf of its participants. "The councils…have always emerged during the revolution itself, they sprang from the people as spontaneous organs of action and of order" (OR 271). The revolutions created disorder, but the councils immediately rose to fill the gap. This order can be attributed to a human nature (or propensity) because Arendt herself actually pits this account against the tradition on this subject. Unlike the tradition's insistence that outside of political institutions men behave selfishly and have no regard for regulations and rules regarding their fellows, Arendt says that the councils prove otherwise. "Nothing indeed contradicts more sharply the old adage of the anarchistic and lawless 'natural' inclinations of a people left without the constraint of

its government than the emergence of the councils that, wherever they appeared…were concerned with the reorganization of the political and economic life of the country and the establishment of a new order" (OR 271). She even draws attention to the lack of looting, destruction of property, and violence against individuals witnessed in the Hungarian case. "No chaos resulted from the action of people without leadership and without previously formulated program," even "among a multitude whose standard of life had been miserable" (EHR 497). Even after years of totalitarian domination there remains some unquashable element in human beings that draws them toward public life and the type of community that entails. She is clearest on this front when she describes the events of 1956:

> The voice from Eastern Europe…sounded like an ultimate affirmation *that human nature is unchangeable*, that nihilism will be futile, that even in the absence of all teaching the presence of overwhelming indoctrination a yearning for freedom and truth will rise out of man's heart and mind forever (EHR 494, emphasis mine).

Our desires to communicate, to act, and to create stability in our world are innate in Arendt's estimation. She does qualify the above statement insofar as she wants to draw our attention to the extreme capabilities of totalitarianism to silence and (almost) destroy these innate human qualities. However, her qualification is just that, that totalitarianism *almost* succeeds in this task—but the spark of action and the public recognition of others has the ability to reignite those elements that lay dormant within us.[9] These elements may be fragile, but they are resilient. Arendt posits that the best guard against this destructive principle of totalitarianism lies within us and our participation in speech and

[9] In this sense, I think it is helpful to draw upon Markell's (2006) interpretation of beginning in Arendt. What defines a 'beginning' is not merely an occurrence of an event or act in the world, but the response (or lack thereof) of others to that act. The existence of action and new beginnings in the world are sufficient conditions for us to be reminded of our potentialities, and be drawn into a web of action responding to them.

communication with one another (EHR 495). When human beings act into that world—and collectively begin something anew—they are reaffirming these shared capacities.

Arendt states that a new concept of authority emerges from the affirmation of these conditions. When parsing the structure of authority witnessed in the councils, she again focuses on the pyramid structure as a model. However, this pyramid is not constructed like either its Roman or Christian predecessors. The councils generate authority "neither at the top nor at the bottom, but on each of the pyramid's layers" (OR 278). The most fundamental level of this structure generates authority because it incorporates a founding or constitutive element in the very act of its constituents coming together. As such, the entire structure and substance of this pyramid emerges "out of the elementary conditions of action itself" (OR 267). Yet, the foundational moment is almost negligible in this understanding of authority. Instead, council authority requires an acceptance and deference from its participants of those traits that Arendt states are shared by all human beings. In this way, the councils are born out of an event, and do indeed have an initial "foundational" moment, but not in the Roman sense. There is no one, singular founding that they all reference or acknowledge as a prior event that lends their council legitimacy. Instead, every occasion that their institution reconvenes references and generates the authority located in their very act of coming together. The authority of the councils is local, specific to each, and self-generating.

The council system, and the authority it creates, has the benefit of near complete institutional flexibility at its base level. The initial creation "seems to need no special conditions for its establishment except the coming together and acting together of a certain

number of people on a non-temporary basis" (EHR 500).[10] Their coming together is not dependent on a party structure or formal and designated physical space. In fact, for the Hungarian case Arendt notes that there were "no leaders" at the outset, "it was not organized; it was not centrally directed. The will for freedom was the moving force in every action" (EHR 482). The space and conditions for the foundational level of this structure depend solely on the physical proximity of its members and their mere desire to participate in it. The council system converts "more or less accidental proximity into a political institution" (OR 267). Councils organize "a new public space freedom," and in doing so provide "the solution to one of the most serious problems of all modern politics, which is not how to reconcile freedom and equality but how to reconcile equality and authority" (OR 249, 278). The council possesses authoritative sway over its members precisely because it is generated from them. Arendt argues that the councils reconcile authority and equality insofar as its version of authority is systematically generated by interaction among equals—not from a singular foundational moment, but continually, every time they convene. Their initial coming together and subsequent acts of reconvening reinforce each member in his/her belief that they all share a propensity for freedom, to form community, and to provide order and durability to our world. The acceptance of this belief provides the councils with a legitimate claim to authority because they create an experientially-derived, and authentically felt principle from which to act. These principles are not accepted blindly on account of faith, or natural law, or historical moment, but on account of their being derived from our experience with our fellows. In this formulation of authority, we accept it because we accept the validity of our experiences—experiences that demonstrate our

[10] Admittedly, the historical examples that we have of council systems tend to be short-lived. However, what this passage from Arendt demonstrates is that need not be by design.

innate capacity to act together. Authority as a principle is generated from the terms and conditions of action among men, and in its institutional iteration—the council itself, that protects and preserves the space of action—is accepted and its judgments deferred to on account of participation within that structure. Authority and equality are reconciled in this system not because everyone is equal with everyone else, at all times, throughout each tier of the pyramid, but because the principle of equality is present within each level of its structure. Just like the Roman iteration of authority, council authority too requires inequality and the opportunity for distinction in order for it to function. However, unlike the Roman version, access to that political equality is granted to anyone who desires it, and ascension within the structure is based on individual distinction.[11]

Admittance to the council system, at the base of the pyramid, is general and open, but advancement—through what Jefferson described as the "gradation of authorities"—is selective.[12] The entire system is based on the principle of *political* equality, "it was nothing they had been born with; it was the equality of those who had committed themselves to,

[11] Arendt fully admits that her system is elitist (OR 278-80). There exist a plethora of scholars that take her to task on this score. See Canovan (1992), Pitkin (1981), and Sitton (1987). However, the point that I want to emphasize in Arendt's defense is her belief that the council system provided the best opportunity to the largest number of individuals to consistently experience political action. Kalyvas summarizes this position well: "…her proposed "council state" remains more open and inclusive than the actual liberal, representative governments. It enables more citizens to share in public affairs and public happiness—though not everyone will share in the same degree, given the hierarchical structure of popular councils…the members of the councils do not abdicate their political freedoms once they have selected the persons to represent them in the higher states of the pyramid…they still continue to deliberate, debate, discuss, act and generate power…Her republic of councils does not divide between active and passive citizens…nor does it limit political involvement for the many to the day of national elections. It is a more inclusive and participatory theory of the ordinary that seeks to reconcile the freedom of the many with that of the few…" (282).

[12] This "gradation" can best be thought of as the tiers that make up each level of the pyramid.

and now were engaged in, a joint enterprise" (OR 278).[13] Entrance into this public world was guaranteed to anyone that chose to do so—all being treated as equal participants in that world. In this space "the average citizen" has "the capacity to act and to form his own opinion" and the entire population has direct participatory access to the foundational tier of this institution of government (OR 264). Those who sat on the councils were still an elite, but one "of the people and sprung from the people…they were not nominated from above and not supported from below" (OR 278).[14] At each level, individuals who distinguish themselves amongst their fellows are selected by these fellows to ascend to the next level of government. Under this system those elected out of the participants were chosen on account of "political criteria, for their trustworthiness, their personal integrity, their capacity of judgment, often for their physical courage" (OR 274).[15] These are not abstract or intangible elements of political candidates as we know them, but information gleaned, qualities-assessed, and decisions made based off of our direct inter*action* with these actors.

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[13] To clarify in relation to what this chapter just claimed regarding Arendt on human nature. The council system operates on the principle of political equality—however, the recognition that the participants have of a shared human nature comes prior to the council as institution, and actually undergirds and legitimizes their coming together in the first place. In this sense council authority is dependent on its participants coming together, as well as on their prior assertion (even if it is merely an implicit one) of their shared claim and propensity to do so. The guarantee of political equality within the council institution stems from the implicit faith and trust that each member has in his fellows' desire for order and stability in the world.

[14] See OR 277-279 for a full account of this selection process. Also, "the members of the councils were not content to discuss and 'enlighten themselves' about measures that were taken by parties or assemblies; they consciously and explicitly desired the direct participation of every citizen in the public affairs of the country, and as long as they lasted, there is no doubt that 'every individual found his own sphere of action and could behold, as it were, with his own eyes his own contribution to the events of the day'" (OR 263).

[15] They "received their authority from below, and when they held fast to the Roman principle that the seat of power lay in the people, they did not think in terms of a fiction and an absolute…but in terms of a working reality, the organized multitude whose power was exerted in accordance with laws and limited by them" (OR 166).

On each level of the structure (neighborhood, town, regional, federal)[16] the participants stand equal to one another, but the farther up the pyramid structure you go, the less equal do those participants in an upper-level tier stand in relation to those that inhabit the institutional levels below. The entire council system derives its authority from "a number of subordinate, duly authorized bodies—districts, counties, townships;" and to preserve these bodies unimpaired in their power was to preserve the source of their own authority intact" (OR 165). Arendt argues that given enough time a federal principle develops across councils, and up through different tiers in the structure. The swiftness of the "coordination and integration" of the authorities in this structure—as seen in the Hungarian case—is surprising even to Arendt.[17] But despite the coordination and association between the councils, each council, in each tier, "would be anonymous; each would possess its own power and authority" (Sitton 87). The council system presents us with a self-generating and self-perpetuating version of authority. It emerges from the people, based on a principle that its participants acknowledge as legitimate on account of

[16] The formal institutional structure of the council system remains undeveloped in Arendt's theory. This is partly because we have only ever seen councils "in the process of emerging…we do not possess any historical experience for answering" "questions about their institutional mechanisms" (Totschnig 150). I agree with Totschnig that this lack of specificity need not reflect poorly on Arendt or her ability to theorize this system. "For it is not on the theorist to lay down a blueprint of the ideal form of government to work out a plan or program for political renewal…To set up a blueprint or program would be either futile, insofar as the contingencies of politics…are likely to foil any such definite place, or baneful, insofar as the proponents of the blueprint or program may be tempted to enforce it, in the face of these contingencies, by means of violence. How the idea of council democracy can best be implemented must be determined in practice, in and through the political process" (Totschnig 150).

[17] She also attributes this coordination to the Roman notion of "cosociations" on the "principle of league and alliance among separate units" (OR 267). As Sitton points out, "it would appear that the councils would be related through mutual respect, coupled with the practical recognition that coordinated action is necessary" (88).

experience, and is reinforced both in principle and in institution because of their subsequent actions together. Though none of the councils lasted for an extended period of time, Arendt is convinced that what they illustrated in the brief time that they did exist has the capacity to be replicated and ground and guide our actions in a shared world.

Roman Authority

Lurking throughout Arendt's presentation of authority as enacted in the council system in *On Revolution* is the suspicion that what she has to say on this topic simply doesn't square with her earlier essay 'What is Authority?'. One version is grounded in a mythical foundational moment while the other is present and tangible; one is looked to for guidance while the other appears to be experienced and of-the-moment. Each form also appears to be structurally incongruous with the other. It is tempting to argue that for Arendt there was simply an ancient form of authority and a modern one, each being theoretically distinct from the other. Yet, this answer leaves too much of her historical treatment—particularly her flattering presentation of the Founding Fathers and their reliance on the authority of the Romans—unaccounted for conceptually. In the background of an explicitly defined authority that emerges from the council system is an opaque treatment of authority that seems far closer to Arendt's understanding of the Roman concept than the contemporary one. What needs to be done is to see if, at all, these versions of authority are compatible with one another.

As presented at length in Chapter Two, Arendt's formulation of Roman authority is firmly grounded in an institutionalization of recognition of and obedience to standards or guides in life. Authority can relate to an office (like the senate) or a person (like a teacher or

parent), but regardless requires an acceptance of the legitimacy of advice handed down from either. Specific to Arendt's interpretation of Rome as a whole, her understanding of authority is rooted directly in the Roman trinity alongside tradition and religion. The remarkably long-lasting trinity served as a source of stability and strength for the Republic, Empire, and even (institutionally) Christendom.[18] In practice, the maintenance of this authority meant the continual augmentation of institutions by innumerable actors over the course of generations. The augmentation of each pillar—i.e. the enactment of authority, tradition, and religion—not only strengthens each individually, but also the world that they in turn create. When one element of this trinity breaks down the stability and power of each falls.

Structurally, Arendt describes both Roman and Christian authority as pyramid-shaped—or "authoritarian" in form[19]—but, they are in fact quite different from one another.[20] The Christian version of authority is a pyramid in the conventional sense. Its apex reaches upward away from the world—its source of authority being located with God, and therefore apart from men and their worldly condition. Roman authority maintains the

[18] Arendt is careful to point out that though Christianity borrowed the authority-tradition-religion structure from the Roman world, the Church altered it significantly.

[19] The term 'authoritarian' here is perhaps misleading based on contemporary usage. Arendt describes "authoritarian forms of government…[as] having its origin in the spirit of the Roman Republic" (ATC 405). She is categorically *not* making a case for authoritarian government as we currently recognize it. What she is referring to is a "governmental structure whose source of authority lies outside itself, but whose seat of power is located at the top" (WA 98). Power in this formulation requires that it emanate from a people, or be legitimately acted on by a representative of those people (OV 43). She also makes a clear distinction between obedience to authority due to respect/reverence and obedience to authority due to violence (or the threat thereof). An authoritarian government by Arendt's definition flat out rejects the association of authority with violence. Taking both her claims about power and violence into account, it seems a fair statement that Arendt would argue for what we term 'authoritarianism' to be an example of either tyranny or totalitarianism, depending on the regime in question (See ATC 416, WA 99-100).

[20] See WA 98, 99, 124.

same shape, but shifts the orientation of the pyramid's apex. Instead of pointing upward and away from the world, authority in the Roman sense points backward in time, to the foundational event and the Republic's creators. This shift in orientation is significant to understanding the essence of Roman authority—the foundational event is a human event, and the institutions that are born from it are man-made ones. Authority in the Christian version does not and cannot originate with men—the authority that they abide by is dislocated from human experience. What follows is perhaps the trickiest part regarding Arendt's definition of authority in the Roman and Christian worlds. In both formulations authority must exist apart from those who depend on it, in order for it to exist as authoritative. Authority in both the Roman and Christian sense exists separate from and prior to equality and the sanctity of persuasion as a means for interacting with our fellows: the Christian version because God is above all men, the Roman version because the act (i.e. foundation of the Republic) that resulted in the institutionalization of these terms must be deferred to in order for the institutions that embody them to be preserved. The Roman version requires authority to be coeval with foundation, and to stand apart from the political world because it secures and legitimizes the conditions within it. The Christian version requires authority to be coeval with the existence of God, and to stand apart from the political world because it is not the temporal world or life that matters in the end.

Arendt's presentation of Roman authority—particularly in contrast to the Christian form—allows us to see what it is that lays at the foundation in her understanding of politics.[21] Authority is created by men, but is not a good or political product they use for themselves alone. It sets in place the institutions and terms by which we engage with one

[21] I would argue that her presentation of Roman authority is more effective in this task than her presentation of Council authority.

another, and it is within this institutional space that authority serves as a source of guidance for our actions. Arendt argues that authority is "politically necessary" insofar as it preserves the conditions of our world while at the same time conditioning human beings who are born into it anew (ATC 403). Authority as a structure protects the stability of the world by incorporating human beings' most fundamental, and potentially destructive, abilities within it: natality and spontaneity. It is because of authority that "permanence and change were tied together" (OR 201). But more significantly, it is deference to that authority that secures those conditions for the future.

Arendt's Founders: How to Employ Rome on Authority and as Authorit*ies*

So why is this version of authority relevant to our modern condition? As we saw in Chapter Four, we occupy a world severed from tradition, and as such also one cut off from any tie to a Roman, foundational version of authority.[22] This presents us with a perplexing problem when it comes to (re)locating authority in the modern world. It is clear based off of Arendt's favorable regard to the council system that even if it were possible to (re)found authority in its Roman form—which, again, is not possible based off of our break with tradition—that she would not be lobbying for such a move. Yet, it is also clear that Arendt does value and crave (to some extent) the stability that the Roman version of authority was capable of providing for the world. There is *something* about it that Arendt is trying to resuscitate. Although the authority generated by the council system solves an element of this problem, its proposed solution seems like only part of her story. Authority in its Roman

[22] This position seems quite clear and consistent throughout Arendt's writings, and it is an interpretation shared by Honig (1991). However, for contesting accounts—though ones that conflate Arendt's distinct versions of authority—see Mayer (1992) and Gottsegen (1994).

iteration, and its potential to create, preserve, and guide the terms of action is simply too compelling to ignore in the rest of Arendt's project to be simply irrelevant and inapplicable to the modern world. But if Arendt is not arguing for (re)founding Rome and (re)instituting its formula of authority, tradition and religion, then how is she deploying these concurrent theories of authority? Just as we saw at the end of Chapter Four, regarding her analogy of pearl diving, I argue that Arendt wants us to extract experiences from the past in order to illuminate elements of our present. In the case of authority, the pearl she is diving for is an authentic political experience that can guide us in the public world. This search for authority—which she finds in Rome—stands separately from, but compatibly with, the authority that we experience in the councils. It isn't authority as a whole that needs resuscitating, or individuals that need to be set up as unquestioned authorities in their own right. For Arendt, authority can be reconstituted for us, at least in part, via the actions and experiences of the individuals who preceded us. In her account, if we want an authority *on* political experience or the role of authority *in* politics, then we must look outside of the tradition and to Rome in particular. The authenticity of their experiences allows us to turn to them as sources of guidance and advice in the public world. Perhaps counterintuitively, the literal founding of a new body politic is not the key to understanding Arendt's implementation of the Roman concept of authority. We must not, and cannot, cast every foundational moment as a *re*foundational moment if we are to successfully incorporate authority back into political life. Instead, we must defer to the ability of past acts and events to orient and guide us in current endeavors. What Arendt is 'doing' with the Roman concept of authority is extracting its composite elements of human experience and event and *elevating those concepts as authoritative guides* for public life. In doing so she reveals how

we can connect a past with our present and provide some source of continuity—that being the shared experience of political freedom in this instance—between the two.

Her treatment of America's Founding Fathers in *On Revolution* demonstrates this point in its fullness. The Founding Fathers didn't look to the tradition in an attempt to relive past events or refound a Rome.[23] They looked to Rome for inspiration, courage, and guidance in conducting their own public affairs. Because of the Founders' incisive focus on political experience Arendt finds the reason behind their reliance on Rome to be obvious.[24] "It is no accident of tradition that the revival of ancient thought and the great effort to retrieve the elements of ancient political life neglected (or misunderstood) the Greeks and took its bearings almost exclusively from Roman examples" (OR 206-7). The Founders were bound "to the beginnings of Western history" because of "their own experiences, for which they needed models and precedents;" and it was not Greece, but "the Roman republic and the grandeur of its history" that provided these resources (OR 197).[25] Much like Cicero's claim that he would rather go "astray with Plato…than hold true views with his opponents," the Founders were not drawn to the ancient world because they sought truth

[23] As discussed in Chapter Two, one of the principal features of authority as practiced in Rome is that every new foundation, is actually a reenactment of the original founding of Rome. The Founders stood in opposition to this refoundation practice. As Arendt point out, "…when the Americans decided to vary Virgil's line from *magnus ordo saeclorum* to *novus ordo saeclorum*, they had admitted that it was no longer a matter of founding 'Rome anew' but of founding a 'new Rome', that the thread of continuity…was broken and could not be renewed" (OR 212).

[24] This obviousness can almost not be overstated in Arendt's interpretation. Take for example: "the great Roman model…asserted itself almost *automatically* and almost *blindly* in the minds of" the Founders" (OR 199, emphasis mine).

[25] Just as we saw in Chapter Four, political experience was largely left out of the tradition. Therefore, there was no other place but Rome to turn to for guidance in this matter. As Arendt put it: "When they turned to the ancients, it was because they discovered in them a dimension which had not been handed down by tradition—neither by the traditions of customs and institutions nor by the great tradition of Western thought and concept" (OR 197).

at all costs, but because they sought models through which they could best live in accordance with one another in the world. It was this quest for understanding the terms of political freedom that caused them to turn to the ancient world. In this sense, they were looking for ideas and institutions formed directly from action and inter-*est* in the public sphere that would serve as their guides in constituting a public world. In this sense we can see that for the Founders Rome served as *an* authority on the purpose *of* authority in politics.

The Founders turned to Rome to garner experiences that could illuminate elements of practice, but they took their conceptual cues from the Roman model as well. This results in a very peculiar, and novel, interaction with authority. First, and on a very basic level, the Founders did simply accept that the experience and insights of Rome on political matters were authentic and valid. This acknowledgement of an authority outside one's own world and set of experiences provided their inspiration and, as Arendt states, courage "for what then turned out to be unprecedented action" (OR 196).[26] But as is clear from her assessment, the turn to Rome as an authority resulted in something altogether new. Second, the Founders sought guidance in modeling their new state. They turned to Rome as their authority on the content of political authority because of its success and reliance on experience as the means of preserving their state. However, in setting up Rome as their authority on authority they altered the relationship that authority as a concept had been dependent upon. Authority requires obedience from those who acknowledge its

[26] Arendt characterizes the position of the American Revolution and French Revolution similarly in this passage: "…without the classical example shining through the centuries, none of the men of the revolutions on either side of the Atlantic would have" been capable of acting in the manners they did (OR 196).

legitimacy—but the Founders *chose* this model as their authority, they weren't simply handed it as an inheritance and required to accept its terms. This element of choice in picking appropriate or fitting authorities based on circumstance and need is a unique development. Picking who and what to seek guidance in requires that an individual occupy an active position both in thought and in concrete engagement with the world. Finally, though acknowledging Rome's authority in the realm of political experience, the Founders did not simply accept the Roman model as an unalterable form. Instead, they extracted the concepts from Rome's institutional models and refashioned them to suit their own purposes. Arendt focuses on one example in particular with regard to this practice. The Founders shifted the functional place and role of authority in their political institutions. Where the Romans located authority in the Senate and saw "the function of authority [as] political...consist[ing] in giving advice," the Americans located authority in the judiciary, and saw "the function of authority [as] legal…consist[ing] in interpretation" (OR 200). What this relocation demonstrates is the degree to which the Founders understood the importance of authority in political institutions—and deferred to the Romans' authority (on the subject) that authority (as a principle) and power cannot be located in the same institution if either is to be preserved—all the while manipulating the institutional space of authority to meet their own political needs.[27]

Arendt's emphasis isn't that the Founders looked to the men or the ideas of the past to copy those experiences—but that they looked to the past to discover the best ways to secure the experience of action. Authority becomes located in those sources that are best able to illuminate this element of public life. Arendt's incorporation of the Roman concept

[27] OR 199-200

of authority results not in the resuscitation of an authority that we are compelled or required to obey, but in the establishment of one that we voluntarily seek out, judge its appropriateness and applicability, and chose to defer to. In keeping with the Roman's original understanding of the concept, this altered version of authority is still a source that exists apart from our own experiences and on unequal footing from us. We turn to past actors because of their expertise, and in Arendt's estimation their track record for excellence in political life. The authority that the Founders granted to Rome is both one that acknowledges their conceptual requirement of an authority outside of oneself, and one that acknowledges their superiority in creating a lasting institutional space. It is this dual expertise in politics insofar as they successfully secured a space for action that warrants obedience in some manner. Another distinctly Roman quality about this incorporation of authority is that it involves augmentation on the part of its practitioners. The Romans conceptualized all of public life as an attempt to augment the founding. Augmentation in this inflexible form is not what is meant in this instance. Instead, we are actively augmenting a collective human narrative on what it means to act in concert. We take up past examples and supplement that history of action with acts of our own. We are no longer augmenting a founding, we augment our shared experience in the world via the recognition that others have acted in the past, we act in the present, and there will be still others that will draw upon our experiences and act in the future. This practice emerges from the Founders' retooling of the terms of Roman authority (both conceptually and in practice). They integrated in-the-moment experience with wisdom gleaned from past actions and events. The model of authority that emerges from this balancing act is one that gives

deference to the past, while concurrently creating something anew; a blend of experiences gleaned from the past with action as experienced in the present.

Arendt focuses on precisely this element of the Founders' relationship with authority when evaluating the failure of the French Revolution. In her interpretation, the Founding Fathers "dared and *knew how to apply* the accumulated wisdom of the past" (OR 121, emphasis mine).[28] Yet, the *hommes de lettres* of the French Revolution:

> had no experience to fall back upon, only ideas and principles untested by reality to guide and inspire them…they depended even more on memories from antiquity, and they filled the ancient Roman words with suggestions that arose from language and literature rather than from experience and concrete observation (OR 120).

We can construct a positive account about what it means to apply and engage with experience based on how Arendt describes the French Revolutionaries' missteps in this passage. By her account, they relied on memory and suggestion to extract their motivating political principles. This type of engagement can surely provide the courage to act, but it is missing an element of concreteness demanded by authentic political life—a concreteness supplied by an engagement with the concept of authority. This is the key to a remodeled relationship with the Roman version of authority: engagement (or more specifically, a particular blend of thought and action). The element that was missing from the *hommes de lettres*' relationship with the ancients, and Rome in particular, was the formal act of thinking.[29] Memory and suggestion here are not critical or reflective—they are visceral and impressionistic. Even if we were to grant that these forms of mental activity have the

[28] Arendt's presentation of the American and French Revolutions—as with many of her historical examples—are notoriously idiosyncratic. The key focus in her contrast between the French and American cases is that the former exalted ideals above all else, while the latter actively sought to incorporate experience alongside theory in order to understand and give shape to principle in the world.

[29] By this I mean 'thinking' in the relativization sense, as was outlined in the previous chapter.

capacity to be more rigorous, Arendt is clear that the true failing of the *hommes de lettres* was their inability to connect these thoughts with action and observation in the world, to balance one against the other and reevaluate the validity of each. What set apart the American Founders from their French counterparts was the stance that they took with regard to the act of thinking and its relationship to experience—and the essence of the difference is found in yet another way in which the Founders incorporated a Roman mode of life. Arendt describes the Founders' time away from public life as one in line with leisure as *otium*—an "enforced inactivity"—and not as *skole*—time spent desirably away from the public world in order to engage in philosophy.[30] They employed "this leisure in the interest of the *res publica*…they turned to the study of Greek and Roman authors…almost exclusively in order to learn about the political institutions to which they bore witness" (OR 123). This type of engagement lends itself to a different type of thinking-in-the-world, and a different position for the actor in it with regard to the authority of the past and creation within the present.

The Structure of Authority and the Model for Action

How do we reconcile this tempered version of Roman authority with Council authority? We combine them as part of the same process. If Arendt's project is to 'save authority' because of its ability to save politics, then it seems more than reasonable to claim that she might be engaging multiple sources of authority to secure a singular public space

[30] This distinction mirrors the relationship between the tradition's elevation of the life of philosophy over and the life of politics spoken about at length previously. The Greek model, grounded in Plato rejected the superiority of political life and constructed the hierarchy that regarded thought, unhindered by action and experience, as the best life. The Romans rejected this formulation in practice, but immortalized this hierarchy in the tradition because of their regard for the Greeks on the subject of philosophy and learning more broadly.

within her project. The Founding Fathers turned to Roman experience to employ it for guidance and courage in starting anew. They chose Rome as their authority on politics and, further, saw in the Romans' actions and institutions, not only the principle from which to act but also the motivation to actually begin that course of action in the world. On both counts they engaged with Rome via thinking—arguably the same kind we saw in Cicero's act of relativization. They retreated from their world in order to engage with conceptual concerns regarding their fellows and the creation of a public space. When they finished theorizing they 'returned' to the world to act upon their discoveries. If we pair this authority-grounding act with the authority-creating acts that we see in the council system, then we are left with a public that is (at least partially) authorized by the past as well as authorized in the present. It is also a public stabilized and preserved by two distinct sources and modes of authority.

This combinatory theory of authority also demonstrates a way out of the revolutionary event vs. revolutionary spirit conundrum so often cited by Arendt. Though she may have applauded the Founders for their ability to think through and enact political concepts, she is sharp to criticize their failure in keeping the spirit of the revolutionary event alive. The first task of a revolution is foundation, but the second task is "to assure the survival of the spirit out of which the act of foundation sprang, to realize the principle which inspired it" (OR 126). In all of the effort to institutionalize and legitimize a new space for politics, it seems that making room for action alongside that design proved especially difficult. One side of the event "involves the grave concern with the stability and durability of the new structure," while the other side focuses on "the exhilarating awareness of the human capacity of beginning, the high spirits which have always attended the birth of

something new on earth" (OR 223). Arendt states that though these "two elements…seem irreconcilable and even contradictory" they need not be (OR 223). Institutional durability is provided through the Roman emphasis on foundation and institutions—gleaned by the founders from their use of Rome as an authority on authority. This side embodies the revolutionary event, the act of beginning of something new. The capacity of individuals to act as beginners is then preserved through the authority of the councils, insofar as they provide a protected space for 'normal' or 'ordinary' politics. This source of authority embodies the revolutionary spirit. Taken together, Roman and Council authorities demonstrate how action can both "liberate *and* build a new house where freedom can dwell" (OR 35). The resultant structure houses our capacity for newness alongside our condition of plurality—acknowledging the unpredictability of action, all the while protecting and bolstering a space for it to occur.

However, in order for this system of thinking and acting to function the individuals that populate it must be engaged in both activities. Citizens of this government must be constantly observing, participating, evaluating and judging the terms of their world. Arendt claims that "wherever knowing and doing have parted company, the space of freedom is lost" (OR 264). To unify knowing and doing, actors must be engaged in both forms of acting (See Fig. 1 in Chapter Four). This dually authorized public realm mimics in process and in structure the mode of thinking and acting that we saw in the discussion of Cicero and Kafka—meaning that in this system, the institutions and actors mirror each other. The continual and systematic back-and-forth between event, stop-and-think, and action produces the terms by which we can see how authority and action are incorporated into the same institution.

A revolutionary event is sparked by a stop-and-think moment wherein an actor engages with authoritative figures on political experience. This act of relativization then prompts that individual's return to the world of public affairs—where he then acts amongst his fellows in light of those judgments garnered from his act of thinking. This return squares with the second enactment of authority and the preservation of revolutionary spirit. Each actor emerges in the public world, as institutionalized by the council structure, and preserves that space by acting within it. The action that animates this space is not disruptive in the spontaneous, eruptive sense as it occurs in a setting whereby the individuals participating *depend* on one another's acts to make the institution that they occupy durable. A stop-and-think moment sparks a revolutionary event,[31] a revolutionary event sparks another thought-train,[32] which in turn sparks action,[33] and action within the council structure sparks *and* preserves the revolutionary spirit. Every subsequent thought/action pairing serves to make action more and more at home in the world, and less and less chaotic and disruptive to its inhabitants. It is action begun with reference to the authorities of experience and action from the past, and carried out between and with regard to the authority of one's fellow citizens in the present.

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[31] Arendt's language is on this account is almost identical to the language she uses in the Kafka analysis: "The [American] Revolution…was precisely the legendary hiatus between end and beginning, between a no-longer and a not-yet. And these times of transition from bondage to freedom…[are] gaps of historical time" (OR 205). See also: "The a moment, the moment of beginning, it is as though the beginner had abolished the sequence of temporality itself, or as thought the actors were thrown out of the temporal order and its continuity" (OR 206). Additionally, it is clear that only committing to half of the thinking-acting process is insufficient: "It is indisputable that book-learning and thinking in concepts…erected the framework of the American republic, it is no less true that this interest in political thought and theory dried up almost immediately after the task had been achieved" (OR 219).

[32] This stop-and-think can be theorized to be an engagement with the question of institutionalizing the practice of thinking.

[33] i.e. *How* to create or preserve the institution arrived at in the last step.

Arendt the Ciceronian

Arendt states that the Hungarian Revolution "lasted just long enough to show in bare outlines what a government would look like and how a republic was likely to function if they were founded upon the principles of the council system" (OR 266). But what are the "principles" of the council system? What compels us to think and act in the system outlined above? I previously argued that Arendt presents a limited account of human nature; the recognition of which serves as a spring for council authority. However, these innate propensities—the desires for freedom, community, and order in the world—are nowhere near substantial enough to stand alone as principles of action in her account. For Arendt, principles cause action, they don't appear in and of themselves.[34] These propensities are not only visible in the world, insofar as they are experienced, but individually they do not provide a compulsion to act or to enter the public realm. That said, when viewed together as a whole, they begin to emerge as the nascent elements of a principle that orients our commitment to act. These elements of human nature can be seen to form the basis for a principle that Arendt does explicitly extoll the values of: solidarity. At the most basic level, "…solidarity is a principle that can inspire and guide action" (OR 89). Solidarity is the motivating principle within the council system.[35] As a principle it concerns the affirmation of a political community, and the legitimacy of the claim for inclusion in that community by its participants.[36] Though narrow in its purview, solidarity is general in its applicability. It

[34] OR 97

[35] Both Andronache and Reshaur are in agreement with this claim. This is implicit in Andronache's argument, insofar as she references 'republicanism' broadly across the three authors under discussion (the other two are Petit and Viroli), but not the council system in particular. The claim is explicit in Reshaur (727).

[36] See Reshaur (1992) for a thorough account of solidarity in Arendt's thought. His conclusions are that solidarity is inclusive, universal and natural.

applies to and is capable of "comprehend[ing]…all of mankind," and though it "may appear cold and abstract, for it remains committed to 'ideas'—to greatness, or honour, or dignity—rather than to any 'love' of men," it is not an abstraction that exists outside of tangible human experience (OR 89). The essence of this Arendtian principle is that "…it is out of solidarity that they [men] establish deliberately and, as it were, dispassionately a community of interest with the oppressed and exploited" (OR 88). It rejects the irrational pull of emotion and passion and asserts, via reasoned thinking, the existence of community. Andronache describes solidarity as Arendt's "basic moral code underlying collective action;" it appears in the world "when people act in concert for political purposes, and it is most specifically expressed in the acts of promise-keeping and forgiveness" (122, 120).

This formulation of solidarity should strike the reader as oddly familiar at this point in the argument. As a principle, solidarity is universal in its application. It elevates ideas, but connects them to experience in the world—and in doing so avoids elevating abstraction over individual men—and solidarity unites human beings in communal enterprises. Arendt's solidarity appears to share a great deal in common with Cicero's principle of fellowship. When we take into account the centrality of Cicero's relativization thought-train in Arendt's theory, and his emphasis on fellowship in both thinking and politics that we saw in Chapter Three, the connection begins to crystalize even more. Even though Arendt does not reference Cicero directly in this regard, his influence is clear. In Chapter Three we saw that Cicero's theory of fellowship is not only foundational to his entire political and philosophical project, but it is natural, universally applicable, and grounded in reason (i.e. speech). Cicero's fellowship is dependent on:

i) a forward looking perspective that desires to create in and preserve the world for future generations;

ii) his concept of humanism, which states that the judgments and decisions that inform our actions first and foremost take into account the value of our fellows; and
iii) constancy in our actions with one another.

Arendt's principle of solidarity shares the same conceptual framing. In fact, there are near identical twin pairs grounded in Arendt's understanding of solidarity and the council system.

i) "…the constituting, founding, and world-building capacities of man concern always not so much ourselves and our own time on earth as our 'successor', and 'posterities'" (OR 175);
ii) "…men who sat in the councils…were those who cared and those who took the initiative…[and were] those who as voluntary members of an 'elementary republic' have demonstrated that they care for more than their private happiness and are concerned about the state of the world" (OR 278-279); and
iii) "…the making and the keeping of promises, which in the realm of politics, may well be the highest human faculty" (OR 175).

On the first point, both Arendt and Cicero are consistently and clearly drawn toward the desire to imbue the world with spaces of stability for future generations. For both thinkers, the way you preserve the world is by preserving its institutions—both political and cultural. For Cicero, this means preserving the foundations and practices of the Republic. For Arendt, this means securing the public space more generally—and in the case of the councils specifically, those foundations and institutions that allow action a place to assert itself in a non-eruptive manner. Though this project did not take up the topic of culture in relation to world preservation directly, there clearly a great deal of common ground to be found between Cicero's *cultura animi* and Arendt's characterization of care and the cultural world. Cicero's cultured individual takes it upon himself as a duty to care for the objects of the world and *cultivates* them in order that they are preserved for future generations.

Arendt's reverence for shared cultural artifacts and the artifice created by men that gives the world its shape draws on near identical preservatory impulses.

On the second parallel, Arendt rejects abstraction because it undermines the worldliness of our condition and its elevation threatens the safety of those individuals that inhabit that world. Cicero rejects abstraction because it values philosophy over that of companionship and friendship. Both thinkers ground their principles for acting into that world directly amidst and for the benefit of that world's common occupants. Solidarity and fellowship may exist as ideals, but ideals that place the care of one another before any course of action is decided upon. Finally, in regard to the third parallel, Cicero cherishes constancy or *clementia*, i.e. our tempering our actions by "indulgent, forbearing conduct towards the errors and faults of others." This description of a constant temperament is as close to a characterization of Arendt's concepts of promise making and forgiveness that could be made. More significantly in regard to the entirety of her theoretical project, promise making and forgiveness are not only central to her principle of solidarity, but they secure our entire world against the unpredictability of action. Promise making and forgiveness provide constancy to our world.

Arendt is explicit in her reliance on Cicero for providing the first thought-train out of our world—one that provides us with evaluative distance on the subjects of that world. Arendt never mentions the substantive similarities that she shares with Cicero when it comes to 'thinking about what we are doing' or to what ends we are acting toward in that regard, but the parallels are uncanny. If we take into account Arendt's high estimation of Cicero's thought-trains and that example's ability to illuminate how her theory of thinking

and acting operates in the world, then 'uncanny' morphs into a connection much stronger than mere coincidence. The connections between the two thinkers are too strong to be accidental and too central to the core of Arendt's project to be considered insignificant. We know what grounded Cicero's theory of action, and as a result we can begin to fill out what that entails for Arendt's project as well. Hopefully, what the project at hand has demonstrated is that Arendt's theoretical debts are owed in large part to the Romans. As a source outside of the tradition, they provide her with rich resources for exploring how action and stability are compatible within the world, how human beings and their experiences in that world are of central and foundational value to it, and a scaffolding for a model that demonstrates both the 'why' and the 'for what' of thinking and acting in the world.

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