

## 12. Facing War Arendt and Habermas

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Ukraine 2022: a democratic, forward-looking country where most citizens live in peace. Like us, they do everything possible for a good life: Education, future plans and hobbies, with friends and family, with social engagement and political elections, with material goods and dreams. In the midst of this peace, a huge army marches into the country and from one day to the next begins to destroy neighbourhoods, entire villages, human lives, all dreams. Their goal: dissolution of the nation, extinction of culture, annihilation of the population.

How do we outsiders talk about it, how do we analyse the events? Objectively, scientifically, objectively? *Sine ira et studio*, which Voegelin missed in Arendt's supposedly historical book about total domination? Without the supposedly ironic tone that later readers of *Eichmann in Jerusalem* found unbearable? "Let us suppose," Arendt replied,

that the historian is confronted with excessive poverty in a society of great wealth, such as the poverty of the British working classes during the early stages of the Industrial Revolution. The natural human reaction to such conditions is one of anger and indignation because these conditions are against the dignity of man. If I describe these conditions without permitting my indignation to interfere, I have lifted this particular phenomenon out of its context in human society and have thereby robbed it of part of its nature, deprived it of one of its important inherent qualities. For to arouse indignation is one of the qualities of excessive poverty insofar as poverty occurs among human beings.<sup>1</sup>

And in her private notes she noted: "Only when poverty has been made 'objective', i.e. dehumanised, i.e. taken out of the context of public life, i.e. out of the context of human solidarity, i.e. denatured (stripped of its, poverty's, intrinsic nature), does one arrive at the imbecilic demand of freedom from value (*Wertfreiheit*, WH)."<sup>2</sup>

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- 1 Hannah Arendt: A Reply to Eric Voegelin, in: *Essays in Understanding*, New York: Harcourt Brace & Company 1994, p. 403.
  - 2 Hannah Arendt *Denktagebuch 1950–1973*, Munich Piper 2002, p. 89. See also in this volume: Beyond the Academic and Intellectual Worlds.

To understand the phenomenon of poverty in its social context and thus as inhumane and as unjust justifiably leads to anger, indignation and violence, says Arendt in *On Violence*. But to “cure man” of these emotions “would mean nothing less than to dehumanize or emasculate him... In order to respond reasonably one must first of all be ‘moved’, and the opposite of emotional is not ‘rational’, whatever that may mean, but either the inability to be moved, usually a pathological phenomenon, or sentimentality, which is a perversion of feeling.”<sup>3</sup>

This responsiveness of the mind and the ability to be moved has only been addressed in the sciences since the Emotional Turn.<sup>4</sup> It is about the admission that reason and feeling, mind and body are not separated in the Cartesian way, but on the contrary work together monistically, are inseparable, as Spinoza explained. A scientist cannot switch off his feelings at all; every text, no matter how factual and endeavouring objective, therefore inevitably has its emotional imprint. If, instead of reflecting them in his research, he tries to suppress them with all his might, he only runs the risk of falling into the callousness mentioned by Arendt. However, coldness of feeling does not mean absence of feelings, but only the predominance of cold feelings. And even more: the scientist negates the social context, the injustice and the resulting appeal to abolish it.

The role that being moved plays in political judgement is shown by on the one hand by Arendt’s commitment during the Second World War to saving the Jewish people, on the other by Habermas’ disengagement with regard to saving the Ukrainian people. In the following, I will first discuss Arendt’s strongly emotional argumentation with regard to Hitler’s war against the Jews, then Habermas’s “reasonable” position towards the war against Ukraine, and finally the political-scientific difference between Arendt and Habermas, which I would like to exemplify with Arendt’s essay on power and Habermas’s criticism of it.

## Arendt’s Jewish War

In a column in the German-Jewish newspaper *Aufbau* in New York in 1941, Arendt campaigned for the establishment and recognition of a Jewish army of its own against Hitler and Nazi Germany and commented on resolutions passed by Jewish

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- 3 Hannah Arendt: *On Violence*, in: *Crises of the Republic*, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich 1972, p. 161.
  - 4 Bradley Robinson / Mel Kutner: Spinoza and the Affective Turn: A Return to the Philosophical Origins of Affect, In: *Qualitative Inquiry*, 2019, Vol. 25(2), pp. 111–117. – Brian Massumi: *Politics of Affect*. Thomas Szanto / Jan Slaby, Political Emotions. In: Thomas Szanto / Hilge Landweer (eds.): *The Routledge Handbook of Phenomenology of Emotions*, New York 2020, pp. 478–494. – Jan Slaby / Christian von Scheve (eds.): *Affective Societies: Key Concepts*, London, New York: Routledge 2019, pp. 109–118.

organisations. Her tone is rhetorically excellent, polemical, mobilising, decisive and clear; for an army of one's own in order to save the Jewish people, to be able to appear as equals to other peoples, to gain self-confidence and to shed the status and feelings of inferiority of an oppressed people. As a result of Hitler's invasion of various countries, all European peoples had become pariahs and, according to Arendt, Jewish destiny would not be decided in Palestine but in Europe. "A Jewish army is not utopian if the Jews of all countries demand it and are prepared to volunteer for it." This is because "an old and very contemporary Zionist proverb says that freedom is no gift. *Freedom is also not a prize for suffering endured.* One truth that is unfamiliar to the Jewish people, though they are beginning to learn it, is that you *can only defend yourself as the person you are attacked as.*"<sup>5</sup> Such autonomy is inevitable, because "just as in life friendship is distorted and ruined by fixation on a person, so too in politics the unconditional identification of one's own cause with the cause of another distorts and ruins an alliance."<sup>6</sup>

This requires liberation from bureaucratic Zionists and apolitical plutocrats. "Only the people themselves, young and old, poor and rich, men and women, can reshape public opinion, which today is against us. *For only the people themselves are strong enough for a true alliance.*"<sup>7</sup> "Historically, the misfortune of the Jewish people ... has been that the parvenu has been more important than the pariah; that Rothschild was more representative than Heine."<sup>8</sup> Now that all European nations have become pariah peoples, "our fate has turned out to be no special fate, for the first time not a special fate, our struggle for the first time a special fate, for the first time our struggle is identical with Europe's struggle for freedom."<sup>9</sup>

A Jewish army should only be formed by working men "who reach for weapons only if they are forced to in extreme emergency. Militarists and people who find value in battle and war per se fighting and war have no place in such an army. Modern soldiers are 'civilians in uniform' and can justify their being given the right to kill ... only because they are forced to do so in order to defend the fruits of their labor and the meaning of their civilian life. out to defend these fruits of their labor and the meaning of their civilian life. ... The horrible readiness to kill ... (and) also the readiness to die" can only exist "when you know for certain why you are fighting, and only when you are a full-fledged citizen of the community that embodies that 'why'".<sup>10</sup> Arendt wants nothing to do with the Jewish revisionists, who since 1927 "as anti-

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5 Hannah Arendt: *The Jewish Writings*, New York: Schocken 2007, p. 137.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 138.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 139.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 141.

9 *Ibid.*

10 *Ibid.*, p. 145.

British nationalists, as anti-Arab terrorists and as strikebreakers” and altogether as “well-known fascists” who presume to claim a leadership role for ‘free Jews’<sup>11</sup>.

In this situation, four Jewish institutes worked out peace plans in 1942, whose authors Arendt criticised as follows: “Scholars are remarkable people, and we have had some very sad experiences with them in recent years. At some point, when they fell prey to the dominance of positivism, they became ‘unpolitical’; for the sake of pure correctness they forgot what truth is, and frivolously separated themselves from the cause of freedom and justice. Ever since, they have been prepared to offer a helping hand to every political system.”<sup>12</sup> And to a similarly unreal degree as the demand of a group of intellectuals in Germany for a ceasefire in Ukraine as soon as possible<sup>13</sup>, these scholars criticised by Arendt proposed a participation of the Jewish people directly in a peace conference. “But so far, no people has come up with the idea of trying to replace participation in a war with *dreaming* in advance about participation in a peace conference. This is a scholarly idea, and we like to hope that our scholars will not succeed in turning a ‘people of the book’ into a people of papers.”<sup>14</sup>

Finally, the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and the Jewish partisans are greeted stormily by Arendt. “Honor and glory are new words in the political vocabulary of our people”<sup>15</sup>, who can rely on other underground movements and also the non-Jewish civilian population. “Fear and hope, these two archenemies of Jewish politics” lost their power because European Jews “have gone through so many hells that no one else can still instill fear in them and who have been fooled by so many vain hopes that they will not be duped by anyone else.”<sup>16</sup> The time is past when “feeble-minded” intellectuals declared life to be the highest of goods and thus created a slave mentality; “... no one is more easily murdered than a slave”.<sup>17</sup>

Arendt quotes a report according to which the whole ghetto had worked on the preparations for the uprising. Everyone knew that the coming war would only end in military defeat and would therefore lead to physical extermination. “Everyone knew,” the report said, “that the passive death of Jews had created no new values; it had been meaningless; but that death, with weapons in hand can bring new values into the life of the Jewish people.”<sup>18</sup> For the future and coming battles, Arendt wishes to keep the struggle of a young Jewish partisan in memory as a heroine, not a

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11 Ibid., p. 148.

12 Ibid., p. 153.

13 Ceasefire now! In: *Die Zeit*, 29 June 2022.

14 Hannah Arendt: *The Jewish Writings*, op. cit., p. 153.

15 Ibid., p. 199.

16 Ibid., p. 215.

17 Ibid., p. 163.

18 Ibid., p. 217.

martyr, “and as often as possible, as if in some old religious exercise, to recapitulate the stages of the battle for the Warsaw Ghetto”.<sup>19</sup>

Thus, for Arendt, looking at the past, the certainty remains that with a Jewish army many Jews would have been saved from death.

## Habermas looks at Ukraine

A contrast to Arendt’s pathos of resistance and self-confidence can hardly be more strongly presented in content and rhetoric than by Habermas in his guest article “War and Indignation” in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* of 29 April 2022. Certainly, Arendt had felt directly affected by Hitler’s war against the Jews, even though she lived in safe exile in the USA. But she underlined just as clearly that the fate of the Jews depended on that of the peoples of Europe: on their solidarity, on their recognition of the Jews as an equal people, on the common victory over Hitler’s Germany and on a common new post-war order. The Russian attack on Ukraine is undoubtedly aimed at European values, the defence of which begins in Ukraine, but it is equally aimed at the Ukrainian people. In this respect, we, like Habermas, are directly affected by the war. But Habermas does not address this European perspective; he confines himself to the national framework of Germany and has settled into the role of spectator.

Quite differently from Arendt, his main concern is to bring the emotions that worry him under control. To this end, he presents an example of how reasonable communication should lead to the formation of rational opinion and emotion control. “The rational background,” he writes, “against which these emotions are swelling up around the country [in the face of deaths, war crimes, and the urgent desire to do something about it, WH] is the obvious partisanship against Putin...” But while a more differentiated approach was emerging among the governments of the Western alliance of states “a strident, media-fuelled debate has erupted in Germany over the type and extent of military assistance the country should supply to hard-pressed Ukraine”. The demands of innocently harassed Ukraine, “which unhesitatingly turns the political misjudgements and mis-directed policies of previous German governments into moral blackmail, are as understandable as the emotions, empathy and need to help that they trigger in all of us are self-evident. And yet I am bothered by the self-assurance with which the morally indignant accusers in Germany are going after a reflective and restrained federal government”. Habermas sees a risk threshold which has once again been thrust into the spotlight by “Sergey Lavrov’s renewed threat of a potential nuclear escalation”. “The dilemma that compels the West to weigh the risks between two evils – a defeat of Ukraine or the escalation of a limited conflict into a third world war – is obvious.” Since “a

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19 Ibid., p. 219.

war against a nuclear power can no longer be ‘won’ in any reasonable sense, ... (the) threatened side... cannot end the in any case intolerable destruction of military applications of force by victory, but at best only with a compromise that allows both sides to save face.” Since Putin decides “when the West crosses the threshold defined by international law, ... the indeterminacy of this decision leaves no room for risky speculation.” Therefore, the war must be ended as soon as possible, even if not with sacrifice of a politically free existence on the altar of mere survival.

To this end, it is necessary to bring emotions under control. The “morally indignant accusers” described by 93-year-old Habermas are, he notes, a generation younger, “those ... who have been brought up to be sensitive in normative questions, who do not hide their emotions and ... act with credible gestures and a confessional rhetoric”. They think in categories of victory and defeat, whereas Habermas’ generation had lived “post-heroically” for a long time in Cold War Western Europe under the nuclear shield of the USA and entrusted the tasks of defence to professional armies. For this younger generation, Zelensky’s video address to the German Bundestag only resulted in “emotional confusion; confusion between immediate approval, sheer understanding for the position of the other and necessary self-respect”. “Certainly”, Habermas concludes, “there can be no moral judgments without moral feelings, but the generalizing judgment is also a correction to the limited scope of emotions stimulated by proximity”.

Habermas sees Ukraine and the West on the defensive and the emotions attached to the resistance struggle as the greatest obstacle to a ceasefire. Fear and hope resonate in this rational discourse, not good emotional guides to political action, as Arendt reminds us and Aristotle already knew. And Habermas’ thesis that emotions are feelings stimulated from close quarters with a “limited scope” was practically refuted by Arendt.

Historian Timothy Snyder, a profound expert on Ukrainian history, accuses Habermas of ignorance of the Ukrainian experience, postcolonial discourse and post-World War II history.<sup>20</sup> Habermas fails to mention that the Ukrainian case is a struggle for existence, and “he makes no effort in his text to identify Ukrainian rationality”. Instead, Habermas repeats and endorses Russian propaganda about the risk of nuclear war and warns against cornering Putin – an unfounded assumption when Russian troops can retreat to Russia and Putin can create his own virtual realities thanks to his control of the media. In this way, Habermas helps “to move part of German public opinion towards the proposition that Ukraine cannot win the war. ... If it is believed, it tends to make an actual nuclear war more likely.” Moreover, if nuclear weapons make their owner invincible, this is “amounts to propaganda

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20 Timothy Snyder: Germans have been involved in the war, chiefly on the wrong side, in: *FAS* 27 June 2022. <https://www.faz.net/-gg5-asmiu>

for nuclear proliferation". And what Habermas did not mention, of course, was the victories over the nuclear powers USA in Vietnam and Soviet Union in Afghanistan.

Snyder's reference to the persistent colonialist attitude is also significant. Ukraine was always seen as a province of Russia, Hitler wanted to make it a German colony, and German troops murdered more Ukrainians than Russians and the largest proportion of Eastern European Jews there without the German population being aware of it. "But readers of Habermas were not asked ... to inquire whether as Germans they might bear responsibility towards Ukraine." And responsibility includes listening, especially as a former colonial power in Ukraine. Habermas, after all, speaks of peaceful conflict solutions after the Second World War, notwithstanding the wars of decolonisation. Their lesson is that an empire must lose a colonial war "if it is to cease to be an empire".

Thus what Habermas has done is "to direct German discourse away from the realities of (the) past and the possibilities of the present and towards national self-regard. In so doing, he has delayed German reckonings with the past, wasted time when important decisions need to be taken, and helped bring Germany to the threshold of another moral collapse."

## Violence and power

The fact that we also encounter this simultaneously emotional and politically restrained attitude in Habermas' critique of Arendt's essay on power and violence makes it clear how closely *ratio* and *emotio* are connected and therefore how each reveals itself in the other. Before we come to Arendt's differentiation of war, violence and power, we should note her impressive commitment to research. Her statement of a rupture of tradition is not a dispassionate affair, on the contrary. "We are only too familiar with the recurring outbursts of passionate exasperation with reason, thought, and rational discourse which are the natural relations of men who know from their own experiences that thought and reality have parted company."<sup>21</sup>

This passion is thus also at the origin of the definition of power and cannot be overlooked in her writings *On Revolution*, *The Promise of Politics*, and *On Violence*. Arendt defines power only by means of the distinction with violence and assigns it to the basic forms of activity: acting, producing and working. In the unfinished fragment of an "Introduction to Politics", which was abandoned in favour of *The Human Condition*, Arendt establishes a connection between production and destruction in a chapter on the question of war: "In the destruction of the world, nothing is destroyed except a structure made by human hands, and the brute force required for

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21 Hannah Arendt: The Gap between Past and Future, in: *Between Past and Future*, New York: Penguin 2006, p. 6.

it corresponds precisely to the violence necessarily inherent in all human productive processes. ... What men produce can in turn be destroyed by men; what they destroy can also be rebuilt. The ability to destroy and the ability to produce stand in balance, one with the other.<sup>22</sup> The background to this statement is the assumption that war is politics by other means and, as Kant stated, no actions may be committed that later make a peace agreement impossible.

While this is still the case with total war, it is different with the atomic bomb, which not only mobilises processes of the universe, but can lead to the total destruction of man and nature, that is, of the world that came into being through action. It is interesting to read how Arendt, after this initial description, seamlessly glances at the Trojan War, appreciates Homer's poetic and historical-remembering subsequent rescue of the destroyed and slain, then progresses to the *polis* and its transformation of violence into competition and its circumscribed space of freedom, and finally arrives at the Roman meaning of contract and alliance. Homer and Rome make it clear why there must be no war of annihilation in politics: because it annihilates plurality, that is, reality. "If a people or nation, or even just some specific human group, which offers a unique view of the world arising from its particular position in the world... is annihilated, it is not merely that a people or a nation or a given number of individuals perish, but rather that a portion of our common world is destroyed.... Annihilation is therefore not just tantamount to the end of a world; it also takes the annihilator with it."<sup>23</sup>

This fast-track through the annihilations of the present and the ancient world serves to unfold the meaning of a saving plurality, in the context of the 20th century as a balancing act between war and revolution. In *On Revolution* in the early 1960s, Arendt states that two extremes confront each other: the danger of total annihilation through war and "the hope for the emancipation of all mankind through revolution".<sup>24</sup> Both war and revolution are linked by violence, which is why wars so easily turn into revolutions and why the latter so easily unleash wars.<sup>25</sup> This also explains why revolutions like the French fail because, thanks to poverty, the violence of liberation takes the place of action and prevents the formation of power to found the new. Freedom presupposes freedom from poverty and fear.<sup>26</sup>

This close constellation of annihilation and liberation, which already challenged Arendt's commitment in the 1940s, also returns in *The Human Condition* and even

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22 Hannah Arendt: Introduction into Politics, in: *The Promise of Politics*, New York: Schocken 2005, p.154.

23 Ibid., p. 175.

24 Hannah Arendt: *On Revolution*, New York: Penguin 2006, p. 11.

25 Ibid., p. 18.

26 Hannah Arendt: The Freedom to be Free. The Conditions and Meaning of Revolution, in: *Thinking Without a Banister*, New York: Schocken 2018, p. 378.

*Eichmann in Jerusalem*, precisely also in *On Violence*. In this essay, she describes the experience of a violent century, which led to a prominent role of violence in liberation theories, general political theoretical confusion and violent radicalisation of parts of the student movement (“There is an element of running amok on the part of these bomb-throwing children.”<sup>27</sup>) Yet it is precisely “the function ... of all action, as distinguished from mere behavior, to interrupt what otherwise would have proceeded automatically and therefore predictably.”<sup>28</sup>

In view of this meaning of violence, Arendt underlines the importance of power as the human capacity “not just to act but to act in concert”.<sup>29</sup> To this formation of power, Arendt famously adds Montesquieu’s strengthening of power through its division and the Founding Fathers’ federal division of power.

This does not happen without emotions. On the contrary, the concept of power, like that of violence, is explained with emotions and the metaphors that transport them. For example, the French Revolution with the irresistibility of a movement that could no longer be controlled by human power, “as irresistible as the motions of stars ... a revolutionary torrent current, on whose rushing waves the actors were borne and carried away until its undertow sucked them from the surface and they perished together with their foes, the agents of the counter-revolution. Or Robespierre’s tempest and mighty current, which was nourished by the crimes of tyranny on one side and the progress of liberty on the other, constantly increased in rapidity and violence.”<sup>30</sup>

On the other hand, the observation that the idea of freedom and the actual experience of a new beginning were closely interwoven, which Vergil’s Fourth Eclogue praises as “birth as such, the arrival of a new generation, the great saving event or ‘miracle’ which will redeem mankind time and again ... the belief that the world’s potential salvation lies in the very fact that the human species regenerates itself constantly and forever.”<sup>31</sup> If this new beginning is successful, then the “meaning of revolution is the actualization of one of the greatest and most elementary human potentialities, the unequalled experience of *being* free to make a new beginning, from which comes the pride of having opened the world to a *Novus Ordo Saeclorum*.”<sup>32</sup> Or, as far as forms of rule are concerned, according to Arendt:

one should add the latest and perhaps most formidable form of such dominion: bureaucracy or the rule of an intricate system of bureaus in which no men, neither

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27 Hannah Arendt: Thoughts on Politics and Revolution. A Commentary, in: *Crises of the Republic*, op. cit., p. 207.

28 *Ibid.*, p. 132f.

29 *Ibid.*, p. 143.

30 Hannah Arendt: The Freedom to be Free, op. cit., p. 380.

31 *Ibid.*, p. 383.

32 *Ibid.*, p. 384.

one of the best, neither the few nor the many, can be held responsible, in which no human being, neither the one nor the few, neither the best nor the many, can be held responsible, and which could be properly called rule by Nobody. ... It is this state of affairs, making it impossible to localize responsibility and to identify the enemy, that is among the most potent accuses of the current worldwide rebellious unrest, its chaotic nature, and its dangerous tendency to get out of control and to run amuck.<sup>33</sup>

In contrast, the young generation of the student movement is “unusually courageous, they have a desire to act and also, at least in countries with a political tradition, some experience in doing so and have a stock of confidence, not yet exhausted, in the possibility of changing the world through action.”<sup>34</sup>

This sharp juxtaposition of politics as ossified bureaucracy and politics as the desire for action can particularly sensitively identify activities in which action is displaced by making. There are numerous remarks on this in Arendt’s *Denktagebuch*, e.g. “that I can only be an author in producing”, while intersubjective action and the resulting history know no author.<sup>35</sup> Or the remark: “Logic speaks to no one and talks about nothing. Thus it prepares violence”.<sup>36</sup> Or: “The tyranny of reason in us, the compulsion of compulsive reasoning, is in truth a ‘mastery of itself’. ... The real counter-principle against this compulsion is the beginning”.<sup>37</sup>

For Habermas, this is too bold and too emotional and thus not realistically thought through.<sup>38</sup> What is not realistic is what he calls the “unimpaired intersubjectivity” in Arendt’s theory with its elements of communication, appearance space, plurality and reference fabric of human affairs. In his view, the formation of power cannot be an end in itself, since “if it no longer thought of as a potential for realizing goals ... for what can it be used?”<sup>39</sup>. He systematises Arendt’s manifestations of power in orders that protect liberty, resistance against forces that threaten political liberty, and those revolutionary actions that found new institutions of liberty. “Is such a concept scientifically useful? Is it at all suited to descriptive purposes?” he asks, indirectly answering in the negative. For Arendt leaves out all strategic elements as manufacture and violence from politics, as well as the administrative political relations to economy and society, and finally cannot grasp phenomena of

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33 Ibid., p. 137f.

34 Ibid., p. 19.

35 Hannah Arendt: *Denktagebuch*, op. cit., p. 470; also *The Human Condition*, Chicago: Meridian 1958, p. 164.

36 Ibid., p. 345.

37 Ibid., p. 157.

38 Jürgen Habermas: *Hannah Arendt’s Communications Concept of Power*, *Social Research*, Vol. 44, No. 1.

39 Ibid., p. 6.

structural violence.<sup>40</sup> Her orientation towards the Aristotelian concept of *praxis* and *poiesis* and the strict dichotomies such as that between politics and society make her “the victim of a concept of politics that is inapplicable to modern conditions ...” She adopts a curious perspective “a state which is relieved of the administrative processing of social problems; a politics which is cleansed of socio-economic issues; an institutionalisation of public liberty which is independent of the organisation of public wealth; a radical democracy which inhibits its liberating efficacy just at the boundaries where political oppression ceases, and social repression begins – this path is unimaginable for any modern society.”<sup>41</sup>

Habermas and Arendt offer two quite different perspectives on politics and society. Habermas presents the clearly “injured” intersubjectivity of a kind of power formation that is structurally restricted by communication barriers, and Arendt the ever-renewed power formation that breaks through the automatic processes of political and administrative action. For Habermas, Arendt’s reference to councils is insignificant and not an occasion to reflect on the possibilities of a participatory civil society. Arendt and Jaspers appear to him as “intrepid radical democrats” with an elitist mentality<sup>42</sup>, who with their closeness to an imaginary republicanism do not fit in with his liberal, social democratic world, which is not interested in change but in the conditions of its stability.

A look at Habermas’ figurative-emotional language shows acceptance of the limitations of free communication, which is wounded and weak. “(T)he realm of praxis is highly unstable and in need of protection”, “political institutions ... must ... protect the vulnerable structures of intersubjectivity against deformation”, in the context in which it stands a thesis of Arendt’s “reads a bit too smoothly; it is not a result of well-balanced investigations”<sup>43</sup>, which is apparently supposed to characterise Habermas’ essay. Well-balanced, then, is the use of bureaucratic terms such as the “output of state apparatus” or the “stronger input of rather un-specific support”<sup>44</sup>.

In this critique, Arendt appears as an author who struggles with ideas and concepts. She “insists” on something, “has not checked her thesis”, “stylises” the image of the Greek *polis*, “forms” rigid conceptual dichotomies, insists “rightly”, “tracks down”, “reveals”, “takes” politics out of the references, cannot “grasp” phenomena of structural violence, “resists” and tries to “capture”. Then at one time she represents a “peculiar connection”, at another time a “peculiar perspective”, sees the French Revolution in a “dim light”, but also becomes a “victim”, and a circumstance “prompts

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40 Ibid., p. 16.

41 Ibid., p. 14f.

42 Ibid., p. 11.

43 Ibid., p. 13.

44 Ibid., p. 19.

her”, or an outdated term “deters her”. A good thing Arendt spared us reviews of this kind.

There are a number of convincing objections to Habermas’ theory of emotionless deliberation<sup>45</sup>, a theory that has no place for emotions. The role of emotions in the writings of Habermas himself have not yet been addressed, in my opinion.

As far as fear and adaptation are concerned in Habermas’ two texts, there is an astonishing closeness to Leo Strauss, who, despite many similarities in biography and interests with Arendt, argued quite differently from her for the distraction of the politically unreliable people with ‘bread and games’ and recommended that the philosopher should only tell the truth to the ruler. Arendt was quite different: she advocated the widest possible opening of the political space for the unfolding of human plurality, in which philosophers and politicians appear like other people and, together with them, fill this space with life and defend it. Strauss appears fearful, Arendt courageous. And Habermas? He does not trust Arendt and Ukraine and has allowed himself to be impressed by Putin’s threatening gestures and, with regard to power, has come to terms with its limitedness through structural violence.

## Life

Finally, I would like to take a brief look at a state of action that Arendt mentions several times. It is the increase in the intensity of life during the war. It characterises the experience of the French writer and resistance fighter René Char, who with others at the end of the war regretted being thrown back into the “weightless irrelevance of their personal affairs”<sup>46</sup>. Arendt interprets this as the experience of being “visited for the first time in their lives by an apparition of freedom” during the war in a state of nakedness where all masks had fallen. The reason for this is that they, the resistance fighters, had become actors, challengers who had taken the initiative and created a public space between themselves.

Arendt finds something similar in the war experiences of her friend, the philosopher Glenn Gray, who describes them through diary entries as an American soldier in Italy during the Second World War in the book *The Warriors*, which was published only 20 years later. “On the surface of it, this is a book about ‘*homo furens*’ and ‘*homo sapiens*’,” Arendt writes in her preface, “but in fact it is about life and death, love, friendship, and comradeship, about courage and recklessness, about sensitivity and

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45 Florian Weber Unterkühlter Diskurs, Zum Verhältnis von Emotion und Deliberation bei Jürgen Habermas, in Felix Heidenreich / Gary S. Schaal *Politische Theorie und Emotionen*, Baden-Baden 2012, pp. 199–217.

46 Hannah Arendt: *Between Past and Future*, New York: Penguin 2006, p. 3.

the ‘surge of vitality’, about ‘inhuman cruelty’ and ‘superhuman kindness’<sup>47</sup>. It is a book that strengthens resistance to war “while not denying the realities and by not just warning us but making us understand why ‘there is in many today as great a fear of a sterile and unexciting peace as of a great war’”<sup>48</sup> Gray quotes the remark of a French woman: “Anything is better than to have nothing at all happen day after day.” Arendt comments on this by saying, “Could boredom be more terrifying than all the war’s terrors?”<sup>49</sup>

This reveals a hitherto largely overlooked aspect of emotionality in Arendt’s thought, which is inseparable from action. The strict conceptual distinction Arendt makes in *The Human Condition* between working, producing and acting, necessities of life and freedom, as well as between nature and the interpersonal world, can lead to the erroneous assumption that nature, work and necessities of life are for Arendt only the negative flip side of culture, action and freedom. In fact, however, she sketches the panorama of a biologically given *conditio humana*, which is characterised by birth and death as well as plurality. People are therefore always conditioned by nature. Work serves to satisfy the necessities of life, politics has, among other things, the task of “securing the process of life”<sup>50</sup>, and freedom is only possible when people are free from fear and material need. Only those who are free from both need and fear are able to feel a passion for public liberty, “to develop within themselves that *goût* or taste for *liberté* and the peculiar taste for *égalité* or equality that *liberté* carries within it.”<sup>51</sup>

Fear, passion, taste and the feelings of friendship and comradeship, courage and recklessness, sensitivity and the ‘surges of liveliness’ described in Glenn Gray not only indicate that feelings play an indispensable role in all judgements and actions, but that they also take on very different forms depending on circumstances and attitudes, for example when it comes to a passion for public freedom or for private happiness. The fact that Arendt reflected only fragmentarily on her views about feelings in politics, but conceded them their place without any problems, and that Habermas wants to limit them suspiciously, makes clear the deficits that characterise the topic of politics and feelings in relation to the actions and thoughts of *citizens* who are also *philosophers*.

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47 Hannah Arendt: Introduction to J. Glenn Gray, *The Warriors*, in: *Thinking without a Banister*, op. cit., p. 319.

48 Ibid.

49 Ibid., p. 320.

50 Hannah Arendt *Denktagebuch*, op. cit., p. 549.

51 Hannah Arendt: *The Freedom to Be Free*, op. cit., p. 378.

