

## Foreword

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This volume brings together essays from the past two decades, some of which have been published in books and journals before. They have become even more topical in view of the problems in the world today. Only when they were brought together did it become clear to me how the thematic impulses, which sprang from a further thinking of Arendt's perspectives, form a dramaturgy of decline and salvation.

Cosmos and republic, nature and politics, are closely linked, either through the long-lasting exploitation of nature or the necessary change of perspective in favour of its preservation, so that humans and nature form an indissoluble unity. It is important to understand the principle of sustainability not only in the relationship of politics to nature, but also of politics to itself. Politics is sustainable when it strengthens its republican institutions and principles such as democracy, participation, rule of law, and shared sovereignty in the form of separation of powers and federalism.

Although principles and institutions are designed to guarantee freedom and security in the long term, and indeed have a positive influence on everyday political culture and morality, a republic naturally does not function by itself; it does not blossom automatically and does not perish as if moved by magic. It is the actors whose actions lead to the realisation of principles and institutions and decide the fate of the republic.

Hannah Arendt discussed both elements – the actors and the institutions. Her analysis of the catastrophe of totalitarianism with its world-destroying ideologies was accompanied at the same time by the question of why tradition failed and why a fundamentally new understanding of action and politics is necessary. Likewise, she accompanied her critical analyses of the contemporary crises of the republic and her critique of the rule of a democratic oligarchy in the USA with reflections on horizontal power formation in the form of civil disobedience and councils. The fact that Arendt's concept of power is not compatible with the prevailing instrumental power, as Habermas criticised, and that political councils get into serious trouble in a bureaucratic-administrative, apolitical society, as Arendt herself noted, does not make these phenomena superfluous. On the contrary, they belong to the anthropological realities, the human condition, insofar as they always appear anew as spontaneous

self-organisations and play an indispensable role in the unfolding and defence of plurality, critique, and participation.

This simultaneity of critique and design in Arendt is characterised by sharpness and openness, by essayistic, unfinished paths of thought, by non-academic language, by emotion, and finally by the rejection of a privilege of judgement by intellectuals.

This collection begins with a description of Arendt's standing out of line as an invitation to examine one's own methods of thinking.

Along this dramaturgy, the individual chapters present examples of

- the rather unintended demise of politics by the respective actors,
- the indispensable importance of personal responsibility as an impulse and orientation for action,
- the importance of imagination and emotion for judgement,
- the importance of the politico-philosophically undervalued role of federations, both within a nation state and between states, and finally
- the underlying importance of plurality in all essays as a starting point for cosmopolitan judgement and the necessary change of perspective towards the relationship between humans and nature.

Occasionally, topics are presented in more detail in another chapter, and here I have included cross-references.

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