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ARENDT'S REVISION OF *PRAXIS*: ON PLURALITY
AND NARRATIVE EXPERIENCE

Hannah Arendt's relationship to phenomenology is inseparable from a reinterpretation of philosophical sources that culminates in a compelling vision of political life. While Arendt's phenomenological orientation has been noted in various scholarly works, her actual achievement testifies to a creative approach to traditional concerns that often assumes the form of a dialogue with her more immediate intellectual predecessors. The purpose of this paper is to examine the central role of *praxis* in Arendt's conception of the human world and the structure of political life as a site of subjective interaction and narrative discourse. First, Arendt's use of Aristotle will be presented in terms of the meaning of action as a unique philosophical category. Second, Arendt's encounter with the work of Martin Heidegger will be shown to involve a critical response to his reading of Aristotle. Finally, the revised conception of *praxis* that derives from her philosophical reflections will be related to the experience of narrative as a necessary complement to human plurality.

I

One of Arendt's most important contributions to philosophical discussion concerns her insistence that the Western intellectual tradition has largely effaced the meaning of action as a unique human category. This effacement has its origins in the philosophies of both Plato and Aristotle, which in different ways have subordinated the active life to a predominantly contemplative mode of being. This tendency is perhaps more clearly announced in traditional Platonism as a basically anti-political attempt to subordinate action to thought than it is reflected in Aristotle's view of political life. However, Arendt's survey of Western philosophy from Plato to Heidegger is informed by a basic insight that this tradition is largely engaged in placing the faculty of the will under the authority of the intellect and in denying a creative role to spontaneity and inaugural acts in political experience. At the same time, her careful reading of Aristotle demonstrates that the fundamental difference between *praxis* and *poēisis* can be used to challenge both intellectualism and the more recent philosophical tendency to simply discard the will as an outmoded concept.

Arendt's rethinking of *praxis* is related to the more immediate task of delimiting the space of the political as the public realm in which human beings can act in concert in order to define themselves in historical terms. In *The Human Condition*, Arendt argues that the distinction between public and private realms can be described phenomenologically as sites in which qualitatively different activities are organized and carried out according to specific goals. The basis for this distinction can be traced back to the classical belief in immortality, which can be related to the fact that man alone is a mortal being.¹ The possibility that human beings can survive in words and deeds underlies the quest for immortality. The space peculiar to this quest is the sphere of freedom from necessity which in principle enables human beings to act in a common world. The private realm, in contrast, is primarily identified with the affairs of the household and involves mastering the needs of life through economic management. From this standpoint, Arendt can oppose the brightness of the public realm to the relative darkness of the household. And yet, this option is not rigid, since the public realm requires private mastery in order to function in a secure manner. For Arendt, the term 'public' refers to the world itself, which can be related to all of the enduring artifacts fabricated by human hands and the many affairs that compose human experience.²

This distinction between the two realms largely governs Arendt's reflections on the Greek example, but it acquires a deeper meaning when related to the phenomenon of *action* as clarified in the ethical and political writings of Aristotle. The failure of modern society to maintain the autonomy of the political was no doubt the occasion that motivated Arendt to return to classical precedent in clarifying the difference between *praxis* and *poēisis*, or action and making. In blurring this difference, modern society begins to replace the political realm of freedom with an instrumentalist culture that predicates utility as the highest value. For Arendt, this unfortunate development is no accident but becomes the late expression of basic tendencies that were implicit in Western metaphysics from the outset. Aristotle's concept of actuality (*energeia*) pertains to all activities that do not pursue an extrinsic end and that leave no work behind. Such activities do not operate in terms of the categories of means and ends, since "the means to achieve the end would already be the end," and the end cannot be viewed as instrumental to some higher goal.³ Arendt's conception of politics as basically performative is based on a qualitative distinction between purposive action and productive activity that is Aristotelian in origin.

Moreover, the Aristotelian background to Arendt's conception of *praxis* is political and ethical at once. On the political side, Aristotle defined the active life as one that is composed of various deeds demonstrating the ontological superiority of the free citizen to both the craftsman and the laborer.⁴ On the ethical side, Aristotle contrasts productive activity and moral choice in view of a difference in what determines the purpose of the matter at hand. Productive activity is structured in terms of an end that exceeds the means required to bring about a specific result. In contrast, moral activity demonstrates how "that which is or may be done is an end in itself, because acting well is an end in itself," rather than a means for producing an autonomous object.⁵ Aristotle grounds his political conception of citizenship in an ontological distinction between two modes of activity that are qualitatively differentiated. Hence, just as moral actions contain purposes that are immanent to their realization in time, the responsible citizen participates in public life as both a free agent and as a member of a particular community.

Arendt also follows Aristotle in arguing that political life depends on deliberate speech, which presupposes human plurality and figures as the essential element in the formation of a common world. Aristotle emphasizes how practical wisdom (*phronesis*) is less concerned with the means for securing the good than with the capacity for determining what is good for both the individual and the community. Arendt conceives of the public realm as shared space in which debate enables us to move from opinion to deliberative action. However, the public realm is not the product of an ideal project that constitutes political life in advance. Whatever action is undertaken in the public realm "corresponds to the human condition of plurality, to the fact that men, not Man, live on the earth and inhabit the world."⁶ In developing the possibility of a stable world, the public realm that presupposes this plural structure ultimately requires a "worldly" background that constitutes a relatively secure basis for agreement among equals. Aristotle's concept of the *polis* as the public sphere in which words and deeds acquire historical meaning within the perspective of time underlies this conception of public order.

In response to an on-going reduction in stability of meaning, Arendt challenges modern 'world alienation' and the demotion of appearances that generally accompanies the decline of the public realm as the space where performance can acquire political meaning. On the one hand, Arendt identifies the permanence of the world with the worldliness of the work of art in contending that "works of art are the most intensely worldly of all tangible things" since they are not subject to specific uses

and therefore exist at a remove from the damaging power of nature.”⁷ On the other hand, the work of art in its worldliness can only be grasped apart from the natural attitude. Hence, from the phenomenological standpoint, the quasi-objective status of the work of art is only meaningful in relation to the worldhood of the world. Moreover, Arendt’s concept of world acquires historical significance within the framework of an incipient modernity. Loss of the world, rather than concern for the self, typifies the modern age, which has known unprecedented instability.⁸ In such a situation, Arendt emphasizes that the continuing existence of the world presupposes the possibility of verbal communication through which human deeds can be assigned historical meanings. Furthermore, the potential unity of words and deeds can only be realized in a public world that testifies to the power of appearances to suggest human plurality. In this context, Aristotle’s notion of *energeia* acquires the genuinely performative meaning of designating activities that cannot be understood in terms of ends that are extrinsic to them.⁹

At the same time, Arendt’s appropriation of Aristotle presupposes a radical critique of classical teleology as applied to the formation of the political sphere with respect to final causality. The Aristotelian distinction between *poēsis* and *praxis* allows us to separate the political sphere from the sphere of production. However, Aristotle’s concept of cause underlies his insistence on the capacity of happiness to order the political community in terms of an ultimate goal. While this goal may seem to be a reasonable one, it nonetheless defines the public realm teleologically in a way that tends to reduce the significance of human action to an instrumentalist horizon. In contrast, Arendt’s conception of the human community as originally plural is not only consistent with her interpretation of Greek political experience, but it also suggests a view of political life that departs from the dominant tradition of Western metaphysics, beginning with Platonic epistemology but continuing in the moral and political views of Aristotle.

Arendt’s strong resistance to a teleological conception of politics distances her position from traditional Aristotelianism and also demonstrates the modernity of her political orientation. In foregrounding freedom as a central political value, Arendt reaffirms the difference between the public realm and the relatively natural realm of the household. The deepening of this difference ultimately enables her to emphasize the performative aspect of political life, since the meaning of our ability to retain a commitment to the future is irreducible to naturalistic premises. Arendt’s identification of politics with performativity largely explains her defense of Kant

against both Aristotle and Hegel, since the distinction between reason and intellect prevents us from elevating theory over practice.¹⁰ However, from a more traditional point of view, Arendt's attempt to recover the significance of *praxis* has the disturbing implication of aligning her thought with a non-foundational conception of political life in which freedom has the highest value.¹¹

In truth, Arendt's appropriation of the Aristotelian distinction between *poēsis* and *praxis* and the post-Kantian emphasis on the performative nature of political life are aspects of her late modernity. At the same time, a careful examination of her thought demonstrates an original grappling with philosophical problems that cannot be solved within the conventional parameters of modern discourse. It is evident that Arendt's reading of Aristotle is appreciative of something that the philosophical tradition has generally concealed in its tendency to privilege the contemplative over the active life. Moreover, Arendt not only rejects Aristotle's teleology but develops an understanding of action that also escapes instrumentalist versions of politics that tend to be predominant in early modern times. Hence, since Arendt is neither entirely at one with Aristotelian formulations nor willing to endorse the continuation of means-ends rationality in modern political theory, we must now turn to the question of her indebtedness to phenomenology and the more precise nature of her contribution to contemporary thought.

II

Arendt's conception of politics, while deeply linked to a renewal of traditional sources, presupposes a critical and productive encounter with the work of Martin Heidegger, whose interpretation of Aristotle constitutes a major advance in the scholarly reception of ancient Greek philosophy. This encounter should not be confused with mere discipleship. It can be examined descriptively in terms of Heidegger's words on the finitude of being, the disclosive nature of human existence, the dualistic character of everyday life, and the spatial ambience of there-being (*Dasein*). This same encounter can be approached on a deeper level as an attempt to raise existential concerns to the level of political discourse. Nonetheless, we must not assume that Arendt's appropriation of Heideggerian themes along political lines has ceased to be phenomenological. Arendt is profoundly interested in the meaning of the political, rather than the simple transposition of philosophical ideas into a political idiom.

Arendt was significantly influenced by Heidegger's detailed commentaries on Aristotle's philosophy, which were developed prior to the publication of *Sein und Zeit* in 1927. A lecture series on Aristotle, presented at Freiburg University in 1921/22 and later published under the title *Phänomenologische Interpretationen zu Aristoteles*, is largely concerned with the category of life as an existential and ontological concern. In this important early text, Heidegger explores the meaning of motility and care in terms of everyday life, and thus anticipates the entire problematic of his middle period. Moreover, the concepts of 'life' and 'world' are said to be related in a way that "is actualized, lived, and, as lived, preconceptually intended for the interpretation."¹² In this situation, phenomenological interpretation refers us back to the facticity of life as its motive and justification: "This facticity is something life is, and whereby it is, in its highest authenticity."¹³ Hence the theme of finitude already performs a crucial role in Heidegger's early work, which emphasizes the non-totalizing aspects of life experience that emerge in an examination of our practical insertion in the world. Heidegger looks forward to Arendt's view of Aristotle as offering a partial alternative to the neglect of *praxis* that dominates traditional metaphysics.

Arendt's reading of Aristotle was more directly influenced by Heidegger's lectures on Plato's *Sophist*, which she attended at Marburg University in 1924/25. In this context, Heidegger offers a detailed analysis of *Nichomachean Ethics*, Book VI, in which Aristotle identifies different forms of knowing with corresponding forms of being. It is clear that Arendt's emphasis on the distinction between *praxis* and *poēsis* could be traced back to her initial response to these lectures. Nonetheless, Heidegger's lectures lack an extended discussion of Aristotle's practical philosophy, which provides us with a clear understanding of how the realization of virtue constitutes the basis for the political community as a whole. Hans-Georg Gadamer, like Arendt, was evidently disturbed that additional lectures prepared during the same period construe *phronesis* in entirely ontological terms and that the notion of 'ethos' is never mentioned in them.¹⁴ Heidegger's omission of crucial political aspects of Aristotle's argument no doubt provided Arendt with an incentive for developing her own interpretation of Aristotle along different lines.

Heidegger's lectures on Plato's *Sophist* are therefore important to Arendt's recovery of Aristotle and also to her critical response to what was ultimately identified with a mistaken interpretation. On the one hand, Heidegger's discussion of speech in this context provides a basis for clarifying the meaning of human disclosiveness. The experience of seeing

is formalized in this account in terms of an ontology of human *Dasein*. Seeing is open to the world, but the world itself is characterized by “uncovering which consists in wresting the being from its closedness and covering-over.”¹⁵ However, just as Heidegger acknowledges the power of speech to unveil the things themselves, he also identifies classical philosophy with the struggle against recurrent opinions as a central concern of the quest for truth.¹⁶ While responding in a positive manner to Heidegger’s insights into the disclosive nature of human existence, Arendt does not interpret the *meaning* of disclosure according to her predecessor’s assumptions concerning the ultimately apolitical nature of truth.

The difference between Heidegger and Arendt on the issue of disclosive existence is crucial to an understanding of a basic disagreement that cannot be philosophically evaded. It is true that Heidegger, particularly in *Sein und Zeit*, rejects the classically Platonic identification of appearance with deception as such. Appearance is conceived phenomenologically as a positive term. Both Arendt and Heidegger interpret Being itself in terms of appearing. However, while Heidegger locates the being of *Dasein* in appearance, Arendt connects the appearance of the individual to public manifestation.¹⁷ For Heidegger, the appearance of *Dasein* is the exclusive concern of a being whose ownmost possibility ranges beyond all other possibilities of being. In contrast, Arendt’s view of appearances presumes a conscious attempt to surpass the limitations of a strictly private existence. Both interpretations derive from readings of classical texts, particularly Aristotle’s *Nichomachean Ethics*, but the difference between them ultimately derives from a fundamental disagreement concerning the order of theory and practice.

This disagreement underlies the different conceptions of *world* that enable us to assess Heidegger and Arendt as phenomenologists. The concept of world that lies at the heart of *Sein und Zeit* is proposed as an alternative to Cartesian epistemology. However, the world is only revealed within the context of an instrumental complex that has ceased to function according to an established agenda.¹⁸ During his middle period, Heidegger provides the concept of world with greater solidity in identifying it with the more enduring properties of the work of art. Our access to the work is said to occur on the basis of an ontology that enables us to identify the truth of art with poetic interpretation.¹⁹ In both cases, however, what is missing is a clear indication of how the world concept can be linked to public modes of experience that invoke intersubjectivity and preserve human plurality in changing contexts. Hence, in arguing that the use of language cannot be dissociated from political life, Arendt

implicitly criticizes Heidegger's more narrowly philosophical argument that speech is originally the site of truth rather than the occasion for human plurality.²⁰

Arendt's concept of world is therefore intimately linked to the domain of *praxis* and the realm of interpersonal experience that cannot be located in an isolated self. While the object-world has relative durability, we only experience the world as real to the degree that it *appears* through the presence of others. The world is constituted as a public space that guarantees shared meanings: "To be deprived of this space means to be deprived of reality, which, humanly and politically speaking, is the same as appearance."²¹ Arendt cites Aristotle's identification of appearance with Being in maintaining that the absence of this appearing world reduces human experience to the ontological status of a dream. It could be argued, therefore, that Arendt confronts solipsism as a political problem in arguing that the shrinking of public space, which coincides with a reduction in what passes for meaning in the realm of appearances, is a precondition for the dissolution of personal meaning that brings about a radical loss of contact between self and world.

Arendt's conception of everyday life also refers back to Heidegger, just as it involves a radical inversion of existential priorities as previously set forth in *Sein und Zeit*. In a special study, Jacques Taminiaux has expressed the view that the distinction between authenticity and inauthenticity is an appropriation of the classical distinction between *praxis* and *poēsis*.²² What this means is that the true possibilities of *Dasein* cannot be realized unless our more limited engagements with the world are transformed into guiding insights. However, the context of transformation is conceived in *Sein und Zeit* in private, rather than public, terms. The public world of the 'they-self' is basically inauthentic since it resists the insights that constitute *Dasein* on the highest level.²³ Arendt, in contrast, argues that the relatively objective world of work is *not yet* a public world because it obscures the difference between meaning and utility.²⁴ The way out of this apparent impasse is a recovery of *praxis*, which must be understood in political terms as the conscious attempt to perceive the world under an unfamiliar aspect. Arendt therefore understands world disclosure as the realization of meaning through speech and action, rather than as a unique achievement of solitary insight.²⁵ The possibility of initiating new actions under conditions of plurality provides the 'space' in which disclosure can occur.

Finally, Arendt's entire conception of 'there-being' both recalls that of Heidegger and presupposes a radical re-thinking of what was initially

presented in apolitical terms. In *Sein und Zeit*, Heidegger discusses the site of *Dasein* as a simple 'thereness' that constitutes the condition for the possibility of truth. However, truth in this case is not identified with public space but with the space of an occasion enabling being to emerge as unconcealedness. During his middle period, Heidegger will more strongly identify truth with the *polis* as the space of the world where a struggle occurs between withdrawal and disclosure. However, the quest for truth is not linked to the public realm in an essential way during either phase of his work. Arendt seizes upon this basic deficiency in order to call attention to how the phenomenon of plurality is eclipsed in favor of a more individualistic mode of understanding in the analysis of *Dasein*. Heidegger's subsequent exploration of disclosure in collective terms does not challenge the recourse to the self that underlies his ontology. For Arendt, therefore, there-being indicates that plurality is a condition for public life and that it also cannot be interpreted in the light of a productive teleology. Nevertheless, having demonstrated that Arendt both returns to Heidegger and criticizes his neglect of *praxis*, we must now examine how the political realm can be related to connected meanings that allow for public disclosure but remain impervious to the narrower objectives of a purely theoretical reason.

III

Arendt's conception of the political can be explored phenomenologically in terms of philosophy and the vital issues that it opens up on the margins of metaphysics. On the one hand, the classical distinction between *praxis* and *poēsis* is once again operative in Arendt's criticism of the classical notion of *theoria*. The traditional substitution of making for acting emerges early in Western metaphysics when Plato sharply distinguishes knowledge and opinion. The dominance of theory over practice continues in Aristotle's philosophy, which ultimately instates a teleological interpretation of political life. On the other hand, while offering a critique of metaphysics, Arendt also retrieves the structural significance of action as a testimony to plurality and as a key to narrative experience. The irreducibility of action to making becomes a rejoinder to all philosophies that reify our relationship to the past. Moreover, this possibility of new beginnings introduces a degree of instability into political life that cannot be assigned a purely theoretical meaning.

From the phenomenological standpoint, human action is embedded in a network of relations that are never constituted on a permanent basis.²⁶

Arendt argues strongly that actions are never undertaken in a condition of complete isolation. Doing not only entails responsibilities but implicates the actor in an unending process that inevitably results in personal suffering. Furthermore, the frailty of human institutions and laws has less to do with human nature than with the condition of natality, which allows new members to be introduced into a community that must be perpetually reconstituted.²⁷ This possibility of perpetual renewal runs counter to the physical boundaries and legal constraints that provide communities with relative security. Human action is essentially groundless in the sense of being indeterminate in its scope and consequences. The person who acts may be surprised to learn the meaning of a given set of activities long after they are completed.

In turning away from teleological accounts of human action, Arendt enables us to distinguish the space of appearances as the background to human intentions from the public realm as a place of genuine order. This space has precedence in time and occasion to what is articulated in overtly political terms. Hence Arendt contrasts the objective interests that bind people together in common purposes to the subjective 'in-between' that cannot be assimilated to practical results. The more evanescent reality is closely related to the process of acting and speaking that constitutes political life: "We call this reality the 'web' of human relationships indicating by the metaphor its somewhat intangible quality."²⁸ Actions invariably occur in an intersubjective context that 'produces' the stories that bear witness to personal meaning. Arendt emphasizes the anonymous character of these stories in order to maintain that the agent does not produce them.²⁹ There is a rift between the 'living reality' that the agent endures and the product that commemorates what has occurred in time.

Arendt clearly recognizes that, since most actions occur in language, the space of appearance provides a basis for recounting memorable deeds in terms of connected meanings. On the other hand, the stories that are related to lived history are meaningful as expressions of memorable words and deeds. However, the intricate web of human relations in which stories have a place does not foreclose detachment from the here and now. The gap between lived and narrated history can be understood in terms of a temporal difference that enables the historian to function in the mode of a reflective spectator.³⁰ A genuine narrative reveals the ontological significance of an agent whose words and deeds only acquire meaning in retrospect. The role of memory in preserving this meaning refers us back to the originally 'poetic' nature of all story-telling. From this standpoint, Aristotle's view that literature is more philosophical than history can be

freshly interpreted since the difference between literature and history does not exclude a common use of the imagination.³¹ Moreover, literature and history as kindred disciplines can be related in different ways to the centrality of *praxis* to narrative experience.

The example of drama demonstrates the unique capacity of narrative to become integrated into action and also to express itself as action. Arendt notes that the revelation of character is "so indissolubly tied to the living flux of acting and speaking that it can be 'reified' only through a kind of relation or *mimesis*," and, in this manner, elevates drama to a singular status among the arts.³² Drama imitates action, rather than character, in presenting "the living flux of action and speech" through an organized plot. Drama is not only a surprisingly political art but provides the sole artistic basis for transforming the political sphere into art. Moreover, drama is concerned with man's relationship to others and therefore returns us to the condition of plurality that underlies *praxis* in general.

The connection between plurality and narrative meaning that emerges in Arendt's political philosophy is a vital contribution to the future of phenomenology.³³ While following Aristotle in distinguishing *poēsis* and *praxis*, Arendt adopts a uniquely modern conception of the political sphere as both autonomous and free. The role of action in human experience is related to both story-telling and narrative history. While distinguishing lived history from standard forms of cultural documentation, Arendt provides a basis for both deconstructing official history and preventing lived history from being separated from objective experience. The key to both deconstruction and potential integration is the open nature of the political realm, that is to say, the plural structure of communal life. If lived experience did not compose a textual site in which story-telling can proceed in a politically undirected manner, the realm of constituted political meanings would overwhelm human plurality as a unique space of verbal exchange. If lived experience could not bear a significant relation to objective interests that provide communities with directions and motivations, the spoken and written tales which function as vital expressions of human plurality would cease to have genuine narrative significance.

For all of these reasons, Arendt's conception of drama enables us to grasp the kinship between literature and history as the point of contact between performativity and political meaning in the broadest sense. Arendt's interpretation of drama is basically Aristotelian but it also calls attention to an intangible dimension that opens onto the meaning of

what is being imitated. This meaning dwells in the larger space of appearances that is plural in nature, just as it enables us to imagine how the more limited meanings peculiar to the performative dimension can acquire political significance when linked to the broader community of objective interests. The difference between *poēisis* and *praxis* becomes more difficult to sustain once literature itself can be associated with a form of *mimesis* that is coextensive with patterned human activities that constitute everyday life. This association is less concerned with ultimate human objectives than it is with the simple fact of being together, which constitutes a starting-point for whatever can freely happen within the political realm. Hence, in passing beyond traditional readings of Aristotle as well as the theoretical bias of modern philosophy, Arendt develops a revised concept of *praxis* that indicates why an original sense of plurality remains important to whatever political future can be achieved in historical time.

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¹ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), pp. 18–19.

² *Ibid.*, p. 52.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 207.

⁴ Aristotle, *The Politics of Aristotle* (London: Oxford University Press, 1981), III.5 and VII.9, pp. 107–110, 300–303.

⁵ Aristotle, *The Nichomachean Ethics* (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1949), VI, 1139b, p. 132.

⁶ Arendt, p. 7.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 167.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 254.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 206.

¹⁰ Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, Vol. 1 (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1978), pp. 14–15.

¹¹ Arendt denies that “a simple return to tradition” will enable us to recover the political meaning of *praxis*. The philosophical notion of freedom in its classical, Christian and modern forms is also incapable of providing guidance, since it invariably assumes that men must leave the political realm and engage in either inner dialogue or experience intense moral conflict before taking up an authentic life. Arendt’s attitude toward foundations, therefore, does not exalt freedom as separate from plurality, which is thematized as a political condition and point of return. Cf. Hannah Arendt, “What is Freedom?”, in *Between Past and Future* (New York: Viking Press, 1969), p. 157.

¹² Martin Heidegger, *Phänomenologische Interpretationen zu Aristoteles. Gesamtausgabe v. 61* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1985), p. 86.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

¹⁴ Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Heideggers Theologische Jugendschrift", in *Dilthey-Jahrbuch* Vol. 6 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1889), p. 233.

¹⁵ Martin Heidegger, *Platon: Sophistes, Gesamtansgabe* 19 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1992), p. 17.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

¹⁷ Both Arendt and Heidegger interpret *appearing* in phenomenological terms. However, while Heidegger relates appearing to *Dasein's* ownmost possibilities as a struggle against publicness, Arendt affirms appearing as the 'space' in which the public realm can achieve meaning at a remove from the private realm. The pertinence of this hermeneutical difference to conflicting readings of Aristotle is discussed in Jacques Taminiaux, *The Thracian Maid and the Professional Thinker* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), p. 92.

¹⁸ Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), p. 70.

¹⁹ Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," in *Poetry Language Thought* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2001), p. 70.

²⁰ Arendt translates Aristotle's famous definition of man as *zōon politikoon* in suggesting how the expression *zōon logon ekhon* refers to the role of speech in politics. The political should not be confused with the social for qualitative reasons. However, Aristotle clearly understands that the *polis* alone was the place where "speech and only speech made sense and where the central concern of all citizens was to talk with each other." Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 27.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

²² The argument that Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* employs a modified version of this Aristotelian distinction in its basic structure is presented as an interpretive hypothesis in Jacques Taminiaux, "The Representation of the *Nichomachean Ethics: Poēsis and Praxis* in the Articulation of Fundamental Ontology", in *Heidegger and the Project of Fundamental Ontology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), pp. 111–143.

²³ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, pp. 118–22.

²⁴ Arendt, *The Human Condition.*, p. 155.

²⁵ Dana Villa emphasizes the un-Heideggerian features inherent in Arendt's relocation of authentic disclosedness in opinion and talk, which were marginalized in *Sein und Zeit*: "Authentic disclosedness is identified with a particular worldly activity – political action – and this activity is seen as having a 'proper location in the world,' namely, the public sphere." Cf. Dana Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger: The Fate of the Political* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), p. 140. From this standpoint, individuation is an event that occurs under conditions of plurality and requires the public space of performances in order to be fully realized.

²⁶ Taminiaux argues that Husserl can be credited with rehabilitating the perceived as phenomenal presence, but that he overlooked the importance of plurality in maintaining a conception of action that invariably depends on a unified center. Cf. Taminiaux, *The Thracian Maid and the Professional Thinker*, pp. 30–44. This mixed legacy would seem to compromise the value of phenomenology for an understanding of Arendt's work. However, phenomenology is not only concerned with ego constitution but also with the limit conditions that deepen the meaning of words and deeds. Action in this sense is part of an open world that is irreducible to the parameters of teleological rationality.

²⁷ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 191.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 183.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 184.

³⁰ Hannah Arendt discusses the importance of the spectator as an aesthetic category in *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), pp. 55–65.

³¹ Aristotle argues that the poet is concerned with possibility rather than with actuality. Moreover, poetry is “more philosophical and more significant than history,” since it is related to the universal rather than the individual. Aristotle, *Poetics* (Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1981), IX, 1461b, p. 17. While Aristotle on the one hand argues that poetry and history are quite different, he also indicates that poetry (as the order of *mimesis* in the strict sense) contains an *unfinished* meaning that brings it closer to living *praxis* than what the historian offers through more factual accounts of action. In a similar way, Arendt's conception of meaningful action could be communicated through literature as well as historical writing, since it would more deeply testify to the event of plurality in human communities than would the mere depiction of what happened in an earlier time.

³² Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 187.

³³ Arendt goes beyond Heidegger's conception of *language* as the locus of truth in emphasizing the political significance of narrative. Narrated action, rather than the disclosure of truth through verbal experience, relates human beings to the conditions of plurality and unfolds in the political space that can be grasped historically. Narrative provides the basis for political life and ‘dismantles’ the origin in dispersing otherness through an infinity of narrations. Cf. Julia Kristeva, *Hannah Arendt: Life Is a Narrative* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), p. 27.

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