Unexpected Support for European Integration: Memory, Rupture, and Totalitarianism in Arendt's Political Theory

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Abstract: Collective memory is an important source of social stability, allowing human beings and political communities to integrate new experiences into existing narrative frameworks. In addition to sustaining individual and group identities, remembrance can also maintain cycles of hatred. Building on Arendt's political theory, I present an alternative interpretation of memory as a resource for political change following historical ruptures. This constructive reading focuses on the ability of communities to create new futures out of the shattered pieces of the past. For Arendt, the experience of totalitarianism was a caesura that made nationalist histories, and the nation-state that came with these interpretations of the past, untenable. Following such breaks, communities must reconstruct the past into new narratives. Arendt's unexpected early support for European integration—despite its supranational, technocratic, and economistic qualities—is an example of how memory can function as a resource for political transformation in the aftermath of historical ruptures.

Introduction

Ever since the "memory boom" of the 1970s, the emerging field of memory studies has focused on collective memory as a source of stability that allows individuals and communities to integrate new experiences into existing historical frameworks. Scholars have concentrated on the "sins" of memory, condemning remembrance for tying identities in the present to past grievances.[1] Collective memories of past events are interpreted as

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[1]Daniel L. Schacter, *The Seven Sins of Memory: How the Mind Forgets and Remembers* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2001). See also P. Finney, "On Memory, Identity and

obstacles to conflict resolution at best; at worst they are identified as key factors driving "cycles of hatred."[2]

In contrast to this stabilizing, "negative" conception of remembrance, I build on Hannah Arendt's political theory to develop an interpretation of memory as a constructive, "positive" resource for political innovation in the aftermath of historical ruptures.[3] Using Arendt's reading of Walter Benjamin, I argue that totalitarianism created a tear in the fabric of historical time that gave individuals and the communities they form the opportunity to rethink the link between the past and the present. Following this "Benjaminian moment" of crisis, Arendt argues that human beings must imitate the actions of a pearl diver, who scours the depths for bits of the past that have "'undergone a sea-change' and survive in new crystallized forms and shapes that remain immune to the elements, as though they waited only for the pearl diver . . . [to] bring them up into the world of the living."[4]

My argument builds on Arendt to defend two basic claims: (1) that common memories, preserved and passed down through storytelling and political communities, are crucial in creating and preserving political life; and (2) that experiences of broad, societally shared ruptures in the fabric of historical time—such as the experience of totalitarianism—provide individuals and communities with the resources for fundamental political transformation. Given Arendt's opposition to deterministic philosophies of history, these rifts must be understood as contingent opportunities for change taken up by concrete individuals.

War," *Rethinking History* 6, no. 1 (2002): 1–13; Herbert Hirsch, *Genocide and the Politics of Memory: Studying Death to Preserve Life* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); Dimitar Bechev and Kalypso Nicolaïdis, *Mediterranean Frontiers: Borders, Conflict and Memory in a Transnational Era* (New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 2010); Sarah J. Purcell, "War, Memory and National Identity in the Twentieth Century," *National Identities* 2, no. 2 (2000): 187–95; Giorgos Antoniou, "Commemorando le guerre civili: Memorie pubbliche e politiche del ricordo nell' Europa del Novecento: Introduzione," *Memoria e Ricerca* 21, no. 1 (2006): 5–20.

  [2]Martha Minow, *Breaking the Cycles of Hatred: Memory, Law, and Repair*, ed. Nancy L. Rosenblum (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); Charles S. Maier, "A Surfeit of Memory? Reflections on History, Melancholy and Denial," *History and Memory* 5, no. 2 (1993): 140.

  [3]For more on these "positive" and "negative" readings of memory, see Helmut König, *Politik und Gedächtnis* (Weilerswist: Velbrück Wissenschaft, 2008), 23–31.

  [4]Seyla Benhabib, "Arendt and Adorno: The Elusiveness of the Particular and the Benjaminian Moment," in *Understanding Political Modernity: Comparative Perspectives on Adorno and Arendt*, ed. Lars Rensmann and Samir Gandesha (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 31–33; Hannah Arendt, "Walter Benjamin: 1892–1940," in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, by Walter Benjamin, ed. Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1977), 51.

Even with this caveat, these two claims stand in tension with each other given Arendt's commitment to the idea that all political life, not just postrupture politics, is based on "great words and deeds." While this tension cannot be fully resolved, understanding the relationship between memory, rupture, and totalitarianism in Arendt's political thought can help explain her postwar political views, especially her early and unexpected support for European integration. I argue that Arendt's positive evaluation of the European Communities in the 1950s—despite their supranational, technocratic, and economistic qualities—is rooted in her vision of the European project as a political transformation driven by the reconfiguration of memory in the aftermath of the totalitarian historical rupture.

My use of Arendt's political thought to build a more constructive or "positive" understanding of memory is not meant to undermine or falsify the predominant "negative" reading in memory studies. As a survivor of Europe's age of total war, Arendt was well aware of the dangers of remembrance. However, she was also wary of going to the opposite extreme, warning repeatedly against the wholesale destruction of memory.

For Arendt, the dangers of forgetting are twofold. First, the ability to create a narrative of the self through time is crucial for individuals. Without this ability, human beings cannot enter into the interpersonal relationships necessary for the creation of unique identities. Second, in order to live together citizens must be able to establish bonds that cut across social boundaries. These relationships extend both to their ancestors, from whom they inherit the world, and to their descendants, to whom they shall leave it. Individuals depend on the community to provide them with a common framework onto which they can link their individual memories of past events. Arendt notes that memory "is helpless outside a pre-established framework of reference, and the human mind is only on the rarest occasions capable of retaining something which is altogether unconnected."[5]

In addition to establishing the important role that memory, rupture, and totalitarianism play in Arendt's thought, my argument also provides a new perspective linking memory and rupture to Arendt's early writings on Europeanism and European identity, which "have so far received little attention."[6] While many assume that Arendt had little interest in international law, others have sought to derive a "statist anti-cosmopolitanism" from her writings.[7] By

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[5]Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought* (New York: Penguin Books, 1977), 5.

[6]Patricia Owens, *Between War and Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Lars Rensmann, "Europeanism and Americanism in the Age of Globalization: Hannah Arendt's Reflections on Europe and America and Implications for a Post-National Identity of the EU Polity," *European Journal of Political Theory* 5, no. 2 (2006): 140.

[7]Anthony Burke, "Recovering Humanity from Man: Hannah Arendt's Troubled Cosmopolitanism," *International Politics* 45, no. 4 (2008): 518; Richard Devetak,

linking Arendt's hopes for the institutions that form the backbone of the European Union (EU) to her theory of memory and rupture, I move beyond speculation regarding Arendt's "diffuse … vision" for a "democratic-republican model of interlinked polities" to examine the sources of her support for the supranational project of European unification.[8]

Memory as the Guardian of Action

While memory has been recognized as a crucial part of Arendt's thought, its role and implications have not been sufficiently explored.[9] In one of the few sustained analyses of Arendt's writings on memory, Irene McMullin highlights the "evaluative quality" of Arendtian remembrance, which allows it to serve "a foundational role in the establishment and maintenance of the public arena." Whereas McMullin addresses the role of technology, I focus on the dangers that occur when these evaluative standards are called into question by traumatic experiences of historical rupture. Regardless of the cause, the stakes are high. After all, "in the absence of shared public norms for evaluating what should count as excellent human lives, citizens turn to competing private visions that regularly conflict."[10]

In order to understand why remembrance is so important for Arendt, I start by outlining the role of memory in her theoretical architecture. Arendt's political thought is based on a tripartite division of fundamental human activities. The first is man's labor as the *animal laborans*. For Arendt, "To labor [is] to be enslaved by necessity."[11] It is characterized by futility, as labor never leaves anything behind; labor is unproductive by definition. Arendt ties labor to the household (οἶκος), where chores such as cleaning, washing, cooking, etc., have to be repeated endlessly.

"Between Kant and Pufendorf: Humanitarian Intervention, Statist Anti-Cosmopolitanism and Critical International Theory," *Review of International Studies* 33 (2007): 151–74.

[8]Rensmann, "Europeanism and Americanism in the Age of Globalization," 163; Patricia Owens, "Walking Corpses: Arendt on the Limits and the Possibilities of Cosmopolitan Politics," in *International Relations Theory and Philosophy: Interpretive Dialogues*, ed. Cerwyn Moore and Chris Farrands (London: Routledge, 2010), 74.

[9]Joanna Vecchiarelli Scott and Judith Chelius Stark, "Rediscovering Hannah Arendt," in *Love and Saint Augustine*, by Hannah Arendt, ed. Scott and Stark (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 116; Seyla Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003), 86–91.

[10]Irene McMullin, "The Amnesia of the Modern: Arendt on the Role of Memory in the Constitution of the Political," *Philosophical Topics* 39, no. 2 (2011): 94, 97, 92.

[11]Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 83. Arendt uses the word "man" and the pronoun "he" to refer to the human. I follow Arendt in using masculine pronouns to ensure consistency in the text.

Arendt argues that it is not labor but work—a separate activity—that produces artifacts such as factory goods, art, books, and other objects that fill space and allow us to orient ourselves on the earth. Work is the activity of *homo faber*, who fabricates tangible articles. Although the products of work do not last forever, they are durable and can outlive their maker.

Arendt's third category is action, defined as speech and deeds. Action is an interpersonal activity carried out in the public sphere. Arendt argues, "With word and deed we insert ourselves into the human world, and this insertion is like a second birth in which we take upon ourselves the naked fact of our original physical appearance." Through action, humans freely reveal themselves as unique individuals: "This insertion is not forced upon us by necessity, like labor, and it is not prompted by utility, like work." Action is irreversible—one can never take back what has been done or said. It is also unpredictable, since the consequences of actions can never reliably be foreseen.[12]

According to Arendt words and deeds distinguish men from each other and from the rest of the world. Appearing in the world depends on plurality, since human beings cannot assert their individuality without others to identify themselves both with and against. Through words and deeds human beings cease to be defined by work or labor. They become a *zōon politikon* (ζῷον πολιτικόν)—a political being, living and defining itself with the help of others. In Arendt's understanding, "plurality is the condition of human action because we are all the same, that is, human, in such a way that nobody is ever the same as anyone else who ever lived, lives, or will live."[13]

It is at this point that memory comes into play. Although individuals are able to distinguish themselves through action, this process is futile without memory. Speech and deeds leave nothing behind. The experience of action must be preserved through "the mind's power of having present what is irrevocably past and thus absent from the senses." Even the everyday ways that individuals assert personal identities would have no lasting consequence in the absence of what Ronald Beiner calls "the saving power of remembrance." Without memory neither individuals nor communities would have a past or a future: "the living activities of action, speech, and thought would lose their reality at the end of each process and disappear as though they never had been."[14]

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[12]Ibid., 176–77, 237–40.

[13]Ibid., 8.

[14]Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind: Willing* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978), 11; Ronald Beiner, "Hannah Arendt on Judging," in *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, by Hannah Arendt, ed. Beiner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 155; Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 95. Arendt argues that memory provides the means by which future and past meet in the mental *nunc stans* ("standing now"). This space represents the nonhistorical eternal present in which thinking operates. It thus "beats . . . a timeless track into the world of space

Given its importance, the prospect of relying so heavily on a faculty as inconsistent as memory is both perilous and unsatisfactory. The continuity of the past and the possibility for action must be safeguarded in the more material ways associated with work. Arendt notes,

> In order to become worldly things . . . [words and deeds] must first be seen, heard, and remembered and then transformed, reified as it were, into things—into sayings of poetry, the written page or the printed book, into paintings or sculpture, into all sorts of records, documents, and monuments. The whole factual world of human affairs depends for its reality and its continued existence, first, upon the presence of others who have seen and heard and will remember, and, second, on the transformation of the intangible into the tangibility of things.[15]

I argue that this "reification of remembrance" is mediated through two areas of collective life: the viewpoint of the storyteller, who crafts a narrative that can be passed on to others; and the political community, which preserves these stories over time and provides a space in which they can continue to be told. Understanding the importance of these two mechanisms for the transmission of memory demonstrates why Arendt saw totalitarianism as such a threat to the fabric of historical time.

Fabricating Memory through Storytelling and the Political Community

Storytelling is crucial because it preserves action. It is only after words and deeds have been situated within a plot that they can be passed on to future generations. Arendt's understanding of memory and the importance of storytelling is based on her reading of Benjamin. In an essay edited by Arendt after his death, Benjamin writes, "A story . . . does not expend itself. It preserves and concentrates its strength and is capable of releasing it even after a long time." The story is a form of remembrance that can lie dormant while maintaining its "germinative power."[16]

Arendt takes this insight further by linking storytelling to history. She goes back to Herodotus, "the Father of Western History," who notes that his "purpose is to prevent the traces of human events from being erased by time, and to preserve the fame of [their] important and remarkable achievements." History takes great words and deeds out of the recurring cycle of

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and time" (Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind: Thinking* [New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978], 212).

[15]Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 95.

[16]Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 90.

the natural world and preserves them for posterity. It thus offers human beings the chance to gain immortality as individuals.[17]

The paradigmatic exemplar of this process is Achilles, who was able to gain "immortal fame" by his "great works and deeds." Although his actions were as futile as any other man's, they were saved from oblivion and passed down through time by Homer. Arendt observes, "Even Achilles . . . remains dependent upon the storyteller, poet, or historian, without whom everything he did remains futile." Spectators become the ultimate "guardians of the facts and the events of the world" by recording the acts of others and crafting them into stories.[18]

Although Arendt appreciates the importance of primary sources, she notes that they are quickly subsumed within the meaning-giving narratives produced by the historian "who perceives and 'makes' the story."[19] It is the outside observer who fuses accounts of individual events into meaningful stories. Arendt points out that despite his physical disability, Homer, "the blind bard," was able to "see" with a "backward-directed glance." Storytellers are able to overlook the "narrow aims" of the actors to concentrate on the "higher aims" and meanings that participants in the events themselves cannot comprehend.[20]

A powerful example of this process is Odysseus, who comes to the court of the Phaeacians as a dirty, unknown traveler. When he hears the court's bard sing of the Trojan War (book 8), Odysseus unites the roles of actor, listener, and sufferer. "Odysseus, listening, covers his face and weeps, though he never wept before, and certainly not when what he is now hearing actually happened. Only when he hears the story does he become fully aware of its meaning." Arendt observes dryly that Odysseus "would have been bored rather than moved if history were only news and poetry only entertainment."[21]

While storytelling makes memory tangible, narrative is neither the only nor even the best way to achieve permanence in the world. The fragility of memory highlights the differences between "communicative and cultural memory." Although both forms are socially mediated, communicative memory has a strictly limited temporal horizon. It depends on the difficult

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[17]Hannah Arendt, "The Modern Concept of History," *Review of Politics* 20, no. 4 (1958): 570; Herodotus, *The Histories*, ed. Carolyn Dewald, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 3. Cf. McMullin, "Amnesia of the Modern," 93.

[18]Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 194; Jerome Kohn, "Freedom: The Priority of the Political," in *The Cambridge Companion to Hannah Arendt*, ed. Dana Richard Villa (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 117.

[19]Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 192. Highlighting the importance of primary sources, Benjamin also observes, "experience which is passed on from mouth to mouth is the source from which all storytellers have drawn" (*Illuminations*, 90).

[20]Quoted in Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 77.

[21]Ibid., 132, 45. Also Arendt, "Modern Concept of History," 575.

and sporadic traditions of oral retelling. In contrast, cultural memory "mak[es] something lasting out of remembrance."[22]

The transition between communicative and cultural memory is a two-stage process. Arendt argues, "The whole factual world of human affairs depends for its reality and its continued existence, first, upon the presence of others who have seen and heard and will remember, and, second, on the transformation of the intangible into the tangibility of things."[23] Whereas communicative memory participates only in the first stage, cultural memory passes through both. It is no longer merely a product of the mind, but has been reified into an object in the world. Individuals "fabricate memory" to help define their collective identities through shared symbols, sites of remembrance, etc. The objects of cultural memory become a fixed point in the historical timeline of the group.

The power of cultural memory highlights the importance of the political community. Arendt notes, "Before men began to act, a definite space had to be secured and a structure built where all subsequent actions could take place, the space being the public realm of the *polis*." The polity provides a safe haven from violence through laws that govern social organization. It serves the dual function of making remembrance possible in the present and reifying the memory of words and deeds into permanent structures for future generations. In this way, "the laws [of the *polis*] hedge in each new beginning and at the same time assure its freedom of movement, the potentiality of something entirely new and unpredictable."[24]

By limiting liberty to ensure plurality, the mechanism of law ensures that individuals have the freedom to "act in concert" by creating "new beginnings." Arendt notes that "the boundaries of positive laws are for the political existence of man what memory is for his historical existence; they guarantee the pre-existence of a common world." By ensuring the safety of its members, the polity guarantees that witnesses will be present to testify to action. According to Patricia Owens, "The legitimate purpose of law . . . is to offer some stability and form to political words and actions that could otherwise seem so fleeting and transient."[25]

In addition to providing the preconditions for action through law, the political community also reifies remembrance. It "fabricates a memory" for words and deeds that can outlive both the individual actor and the generation

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[22]Aleida Assmann, Jan Assmann, and Christof Hardmeier, eds., *Schrift und Gedächtnis: Beiträge zur Archäologie der literarischen Kommunikation* (Munich: W. Fink, 1983); Arendt, "The Modern Concept of History," 573–74.

[23]Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 95.

[24]Ibid., 194–95; Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Brace Harcourt, 1951), 465.

[25]Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, 465; Owens, "Walking Corpses," 77. See also Hannah Arendt, "Ideology and Terror: A Novel Form of Government," *Review of Politics* 15, no. 3 (1953): 311.

of original witnesses. The polity's institutions reify past acts and make them immortal. Arendt argues, "The organization of the *polis*, physically secured by the wall around the city and physiognomically guaranteed by its laws—lest the succeeding generations change its identity beyond recognition—is a kind of organized remembrance." The polity also fabricates memory through archives, serials, and anthologies—i.e., through what Jeremy Waldron calls "the mundane apparatus of bibliographical structure."[26]

By reifying memory into concrete, tangible objects ranging from monuments to words on a page, the storyteller and the polity give the *zōon politikon* a durability previously reserved for the work of *homo faber*. However, these two mechanisms are not equally important. Arendt argues that the political community reifies remembrance in more basic and fundamental ways than storytelling and history:

> What the Greeks . . . thought of [the *polis*] and its *raison d'être*, they have made unmistakably clear. The *polis* . . . assures the mortal actor that his passing existence and fleeting greatness will never lack the reality that comes from being seen, being heard, and, generally, appearing before an audience of fellow men, who outside the *polis* could attend only the short duration of the performance and therefore needed Homer and "others of his craft" in order to be presented to those who were not there.[27]

While those outside the *polis* depend on poets to gain immortality, the political community guarantees that actions will endure without relying solely on storytellers and the limited attention spans of their listeners. Although storytelling is a powerful human capacity, narrative and the memories it preserves do not have the stability the *polis* provides. The political community, Jerome Kohn concludes, is the ultimate "situs of memory."[28] Threats to the political community are direct assaults on the reliability of remembrance. Because totalitarianism undermined the legitimacy of the nation-state, the established form of political community in the early twentieth century, Arendt saw it as a fundamental threat to the continuity of memory.

Totalitarianism and the Destruction of Memory

Ruptures in historical narratives endanger memory's capacity to save action by weakening the communal structures within which storytelling takes place. While these events present the opportunity to tell new narratives,

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[26] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 198; Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 256–57; Jeremy Waldron, "Arendt's Constitutional Politics," in *Cambridge Companion to Hannah Arendt*, 208.

[27] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 197–98.

[28] Kohn, "Freedom," 125; George Kateb, *Hannah Arendt: Politics, Conscience, Evil* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Allanheld, 1984), 158; McMullin, "Amnesia of the Modern," 93.

they also threaten the basic capacity for remembrance upon which action itself depends. For Arendt, the paradigmatic example of such a rupture is "evident in the total political breakdown we see in Totalitarianism."[29]

The aspect of National Socialism that concerned Arendt most was its desire to destroy plurality and "the gift of memory so dangerous to totalitarian rule." Arendt was wary of totalitarianism's embrace of the ideal of a unified body politic. She argued that unlike despotism and authoritarianism, "totalitarian domination is new, as new as the word itself and the claim to *total*, and not only political, domination."[30]

Within the "novel form of government" created by the Third Reich, *das Volk* ("the people," a singular noun) is reduced to a single person. The unique individual is lost in the body politic of the corporate state.[31] Totalitarianism rejects the *zōon politikon*; its ideal is man as *homo faber*, the producer of goods.[32] Arendt notes that total terror and control "substitutes for the boundaries and channels of communication between individual men a band of iron which holds them so tightly together that it is as though their plurality had disappeared into One man of gigantic dimensions." Laws meant to safeguard men living together are unnecessary. "To abolish the fences of laws between men . . . means to take away man's liberties and destroy freedom as a living political reality; for the space between men as it is hedged in by laws, is the living space of freedom."[33]

As human life is restricted and constrained, action and the public realm ceases. Under totalitarianism, "mere administration, in contrast to government, is the adequate form of men living together." An impersonal bureaucracy that controls all aspects of life replaces great words and deeds. In this situation, "'nobody' can be held responsible" for what they say or do, since everything is part of the organic order of the corporate state.[34]

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[29]McMullin, "Amnesia of the Modern," 104.

[30]Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, 434; McMullin, "Amnesia of the Modern," 105; Hannah Arendt, "Authority in the Twentieth Century," *Review of Politics* 18, no. 4 (1956): 405.

[31]Arendt, "Ideology and Terror," 303. Agamben argues that under the *Führerprinzip* the leader takes on the agency, authority, and faculty of the sovereign in his own physical person (Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005], 83–84). On Arendt's account of the novelty of totalitarianism, see John L. Stanley, "Is Totalitarianism a New Phenomenon? Reflections on Hannah Arendt's Origins of Totalitarianism," *Review of Politics* 49, no. 2 (1987): 177–207; Robert Mayer, "Hannah Arendt, National Socialism and the Project of Foundation," *Review of Politics* 53, no. 3 (1991): 469–87.

[32]Mayer, "Hannah Arendt, National Socialism and the Project of Foundation," 471, 485.

[33]Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, 465–66. Also Arendt, "Authority in the Twentieth Century," 408; Arendt, "Ideology and Terror," 312–13.

[34]Arendt, "Authority in the Twentieth Century," 405, see also 408; Hannah Arendt, *The Promise of Politics* (New York: Schocken Books, 2005), 77.

The antipolitical nature of totalitarianism changes humanity's relationship to memory. The past can no longer serve as a storehouse of exemplars, of "immortal words and deeds" bearing witness to man's capacity for action. On the contrary, the individuality of exemplary persons breaks the unity of *das Volk*, destroying the foundations of the totalitarian state. The spontaneity of human action is replaced by mechanistic conceptions of nature and history, that is, by an "iron law" where everything is predictable and preordained.[35] In the totalitarian state, memory is not only unnecessary; it is a threat to its very structure.

This "disappearance of the individual" is more than just a metaphor. It is a fact. Since the individual has no place in totalitarianism, men can vanish without a trace. Individuals disappear as a result of deportation, denationalization, imprisonment in concentration camps, and slaughter in extermination camps. "The operation of the secret police . . . miraculously sees to it that the victim never existed at all."[36]

The death camps, like all other aspects of the totalitarian state, are in the realm of work. They produce what Arendt's teacher, Martin Heidegger, called "human material" through the "manufacturing of corpses in gas chambers."[37] Instead of being killed as individuals, men are slaughtered as part of the undifferentiated Heideggerian "they" (*das Man*). The anonymous individual's "death merely set a seal on the fact that he had never really existed." This process is part of an "organized oblivion that . . . extends even to the families and friends of the victim. Grief and remembrance are forbidden."[38] By destroying plurality and the possibility for action, the totalitarian state blocks remembrance at the individual level. If politics is "organized remembrance," then totalitarianism is organized oblivion.

The forgetfulness essential to totalitarianism at both the level of the individual and the community creates a gap in the narrative thread linking the past to the future. In the absence of a polity to fabricate remembrance into something durable, words and deeds cannot survive. Without memory "the monstrous forgeries in historiography of which all totalitarian regimes are guilty" become possible.[39]

> We are in danger of forgetting, and such an oblivion . . . would mean that, humanly speaking, we would deprive ourselves of one dimension, the

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[35]McMullin, "Amnesia of the Modern," 105.

[36]Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, 434–35.

[37]Martin Heidegger, "Das Ge-Stell," in *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 79 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1994), 27, translation mine, and the third Bremer lecture entitled "Die Gefahr." For more, see Karsten Harries, "Philosophy, Politics, Technology" in *Martin Heidegger: Politics, Art, and Technology*, ed. Karsten Harries and Christoph Jamme (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1994).

[38]Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, 452.

[39]Ibid, 332.

dimension of depth in human existence. For memory and depth are the same, or rather, depth cannot be reached by man except through remembrance.[40]

Arendt's fear of forgetfulness and the dangers of oblivion come out most strongly in her condemnation of Adolf Eichmann, the Nazi bureaucrat who organized the transport of the Jews to the death camps. Arendt criticizes Eichmann repeatedly for the gaps in his memory: "More damning, however, than any objective fact was Eichmann's own faulty memory." This defect is part of the general "thoughtlessness" that Arendt argued made Eichmann's crimes evil despite their bureaucratic banality.[41] From a certain perspective all Eichmann did was sit in an office, fill out forms, and follow orders. However, the true horror of these activities is found in his inability to think through and understand the outcome of his actions. It is as if he had lost the capacity of judgment, of the evaluative standards of memory.

Arendt argues that without memory individuals lose their ability to think, to understand the consequences of their actions. Evil becomes a part of everyday life. Human beings succumb to "the mindless peace of complacency."[42] Men may try to recover their capacity for memory, but totalitarianism has forever changed the world. Although this past has had the greatest impact on the Federal Republic of Germany, memories of totalitarianism and its most heinous crime, the Holocaust, have led to "the formation of a cosmopolitan memory." Despite the fact that its impact was centered on Europe, totalitarianism has affected—and continues to affect—politics around the globe. According to Seyla Benhabib, "The events of the twentieth century … have created a 'gap' between past and future of such magnitude that the past … can no longer be told as a unified narrative."[43] By exploring not only the dangers, but also the possibilities presented by the caesura of totalitarianism, I unearth the potential of memory and rupture to function as constructive resources for the rebuilding of a common world.

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[40]Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 94.

[41]Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 63, 287–88. For more references to Eichmann's memory, see also 48, 54, 55, and 106. See also Jacob Schiff, "The Varieties of Thoughtlessness and the Limits of Thinking," *European Journal of Political Theory* 12, no. 2 (2013): 99–115; McMullin, "Amnesia of the Modern," 104–6.

[42]Arendt, "Walter Benjamin," 38. Cf. Bryan Garsten, "The Elusiveness of Arendtian Judgment," *Social Research* 74, no. 4 (2007): 1071–1108.

[43]Benhabib, *Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*, 91; Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, "Memory Unbound: The Holocaust and the Formation of Cosmopolitan Memory," *European Journal of Social Theory* 5, no. 1 (2002): 87–106; Patricia Owens, "Hannah Arendt," in *Critical Theorists and International Relations*, ed. Jenny Edkins and Nick Vaughan-Williams (London: Routledge, 2009), 34.

Memory and Rupture as Constructive Resources

Following the rupture of totalitarianism, Arendt argues that the "gap between past and future" must be bridged to reactivate man's capacity for action. The survivors must find a way to overcome the totalitarian experience without forgetting its brutal lessons. In order to do so, individuals need a new narrative that links the past and future firmly to the present by rejecting the unifying, memory-numbing structures of totalitarianism.[44]

Arendt struggled mightily with the contradictory need she felt both to preserve and to overcome totalitarianism. She had to make certain that totalitarianism was not seen as the end result of an "invisible process" driven by deterministic "iron laws." She observes, "Thus my first problem was how to write historically about something—totalitarianism—which I did not want to conserve but on the contrary felt engaged to destroy."[45]

The crucial theoretical step that allowed Arendt to bridge the temporal, emotional, and cognitive gap she felt had been opened by the experience of totalitarianism is the concept of rupture. Treating the events of 1914 through 1945—starting with the Great War, which led to the rise of the Soviet Union and Nazism, and concluding with the Second World War and the Holocaust—as part of a historical caesura allowed Arendt to distance herself from this experience, while maintaining her ability to learn from it.[46]

Arendt realized that totalitarianism presented an opportunity for individuals to rethink the foundations of their communal life. While the past usually places limits on the range of possible plotlines, memory can also create opportunities for "new beginnings." By breaking the seemingly inevitable link between the backward-looking narratives and future possibilities, ruptures can rekindle a sense of hope. They offer individuals and communities the chance to free themselves from existing chains of cause and effect.

In developing her understanding of rupture, Arendt drew heavily on Benjamin's "Theses on the Philosophy of History" (1940). In these reflections, Benjamin seeks to understand how freedom can be saved from teleological conceptions of historical cause and effect. He argues that violent ruptures destroy existing narratives, leaving only fragments of the past behind. While this has the advantage of freeing human beings from teleological philosophies of history, it also breaks the "webs of narrative" that had previously supported the self-understandings of individuals and communities.

Much like Arendt, who sees the loss of the "right to have rights" of minorities within the nation-states of the interwar years as the start of Europe's

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[44]Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 26; Benhabib, *Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*, 86–92.

[45]Hannah Arendt, "A Reply," *Review of Politics* 15, no. 1 (1953): 77, 79.

[46]Owens, *Between War and Politics*, 2–3.

historical caesura, Benjamin's writings are haunted by totalitarianism.[47] In a particularly poignant image, he describes totalitarianism as an experience that ripped the future out of the fabric of historical time. Benjamin saw the angel of history in the image of Paul Klee's "Angelus Novus." He wrote,

> His face is turned towards the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe. . . . [A] storm is blowing from Paradise, it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward.[48]

This image highlights two important characteristics of rupture. First, breaks in the narrative thread of the past are not caused by a single experience, but by "a chain of events." A series of small rips gradually weaken the fabric of historical time before it is ultimately torn completely by the accumulated pressure of events. Second, ruptures force individuals and communities to question the important, unthematized background assumptions of the past. The angel's face is "turned towards the past," unable to close his eyes or tear them away as he travels into the future "to which his back is turned."

After Benjamin's suicide, Arendt sought to translate his theological reflections into political theory by giving the Angel of History a Janus face, from which he could look both into the past and the future from the *Jetztzeit* ("now-time") of the present. Arendt sought to save the human capacity for spontaneous initiative—for natality—from mechanistic conceptions of causality, which link all actions to never-ending causal chains that leave no space for the human ability "to begin anew."[49] By creating a fragmentary historiography, Arendt argues that certain events have the power to tear tradition asunder, creating a gap between past and future that breaks the links within existing chains of cause and effect. This creates a hiatus between the "no-more" and the "not-yet," where thinkers and actors have the opportunity to set the foundations for a new world (*novus ordo seclorum*).[50] Within these moments of rupture, individuals are invited to act spontaneously and rethink the foundations of politics "in concert" with each other.

Arendt's narrative account of action, combined with her understanding of historical rupture, shows how communal crises of self-understanding can unleash the critical potential of memory. Freed from the narrative constraints of established institutions and traditions, the past becomes an

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[47]Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, chap. 9; Seyla Benhabib, *The Rights of Others: Aliens, Residents, and Citizens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 216–17.

[48]Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations*, 257–58.

[49]For example, Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, ed. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), A444/B476–A457/B479, A538/B566–A558/B586.

[50]Arendt, *Willing*, 195–213.

important resource for social and political change. This not only involves the rearranging and reinterpreting of formative experiences. It is also a process of (re)discovery, as events that were previously forgotten are reinvigorated and given new meaning.

Historical ruptures affect not only existing traditions and social norms, but also institutions and the law. Following such caesurae, individuals can tear down the old walls of the polity (both physical and symbolic) and break the laws of their ancestors.[51] While Arendt believes that politics is all about "new beginnings," change is *more* possible and *more* likely in the aftermath of historical ruptures. This rethinking seeks to reestablish the conditions of collective life necessary for individuals to reveal their unique identities in the world again—a capacity that the experience of rupture threatens. After 1945 Arendt was on the lookout for "new beginnings," for projects that demonstrated man's continued capacity to "act in concert" after the historical rift created by totalitarianism.

Arendt's Unexpected Support for European Integration

Arendt found just such an initiative in the postwar project of European unification. As an attempt to overcome the legacy of National Socialism in Western Europe, the nascent European Union presented the "image of a peaceful, cooperative Europe, open toward other cultures and capable of dialogue."[52] Arendt argued that after two World Wars and the experience of totalitarianism, it was clear that the nation had become "the cheapest and the most dangerous disguise . . . in the political realm."[53]

Reflecting on the atrocities of the Second World War, Arendt was convinced that "the problem of evil will be the fundamental question of postwar intellectual life in Europe."[54] The established methods of dealing with the past through punishment or forgiveness were completely inadequate to the task. Reflecting on the crimes of totalitarianism, Arendt notes, "men are unable to forgive what they cannot punish. . . . This is the true hallmark of those offenses which, since Kant, we call 'radical evil.'" While the crimes committed by individuals in the name of totalitarianism are in the realm of

[51]Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 198; Roy T. Tsao, "Arendt against Athens: Rereading *The Human Condition*," *Political Theory* 30, no. 1 (2002): 110–16.

[52]Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida, "February 15, or What Binds Europeans Together: A Plea for a Common Foreign Policy, Beginning in the Core of Europe," *Constellations* 10, no. 3 (2003): 293.

[53]Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Penguin Classics, 1990), 195.

[54]Hannah Arendt, *Essays in Understanding, 1930–1954*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1994), 113; Tony Judt, "The 'Problem of Evil' in Postwar Europe," *New York Review of Books*, 14 February 2008.

forgiveness and punishment, she absolutely refuses to forgive or punish the crimes of National Socialism as a whole. Instead, she notes that human beings will remain "the victims of its consequences forever."[55]

Arendt contends that the underlying elements of totalitarianism were brought about by the failure of the nation-state "to integrate diverse social groups into a single body politic, and to uphold the uniform rule of law for all."[56] She argues that the division of the state into classes made expansion into a constituent part of nationalism, since economic conquest alone "could deliver a common stake to the nation as a whole." For Arendt, the principle of the nation-state "based upon the sovereignty of the people and its active consent to the government," combined with the economic imperative to expand, meant that "wherever the nation appeared as conqueror, it aroused national consciousness as well as desire for sovereignty among the conquered peoples." She argues that "the inner contradiction between the body politic of the nation and conquest as a political device" made the nation-state into a carrier of violence and war.[57]

While such criticisms of the structure of the nation-state are controversial, they were widely held—becoming "a recurring post-war theme"—"in the wake of [the] mass death and catastrophic violence experienced in the Second World War."[58] For example, Arendt's dissertation advisor, Karl Jaspers, noted that the ever-increasing potential for destruction in war—most evident in the "novel situation [that] has been created by the atom bomb"—had made the traditional categories of politics obsolete. Faced with "the threat of total extinction," the old politics of nation-states competing in the anarchic international system had to be replaced by a "new politics" of peace. Similarly, in 1945 Albert Camus argued that the new situation necessitated the creation of "a true international society" to replace individual sovereign states.[59] Like many other postwar thinkers, Arendt "wrote out of a sense of crisis," that led her to "oppose the restoration of the prewar European nation-state order and system of collective security

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    [55]Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 241.

    [56]Roy T. Tsao, "Arendt and the Modern State: Variations on Hegel in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*," *Review of Politics* 66, no. 1 (2004): 105, also 106–7.

    [57]Hannah Arendt, "Imperialism, Nationalism, Chauvinism," *Review of Politics* 7, no. 4 (1945): 454–55, 444–45; also Ronald Beiner, "Arendt and Nationalism," in *Cambridge Companion to Hannah Arendt*, 44–62; Dana Villa, "Hannah Arendt, 1906–1975," *Review of Politics* 71, no. 1 (2009): 25–26.

    [58]David Bates, "On Revolutions in the Nuclear Age: The Eighteenth Century and the Postwar Global Imagination," *Qui Parle* 15, no. 2 (2005): 174, 172.

    [59]Karl Jaspers, *The Future of Mankind*, trans. E. B. Ashton (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), vii, 6, 28; Albert Camus, "Between Hell and Reason," in *Hiroshima's Shadow*, ed. Kai Bird and Lawrence Lifschultz (Stony Creek, CT: Pamphleteer's Press, 1998), 260–61.

because Nazism and the successful rise of ethnic nationalisms have proven its weakness and failure."[60]

Arendt endorsed the postwar project of European integration as a possible solution to the "European crisis which made possible the German conquest of the continent." The European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) of 1951, created by Germany, France, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg, put the resources necessary for mechanical warfare under the oversight of shared institutions outside the constitutional architecture of the member-states. It was the first step toward the supranational governance of the continent. For Arendt, this represented an important move beyond "the dangerous disguise" of nationalism. As she had concluded as early as 1945, "A good peace is not conceivable unless the States surrender parts of their economic and political sovereignty to a higher European authority."[61]

Although Arendt was a great believer in the power and necessity of hope, she was anything but Panglossian. Her letters to her husband, Heinrich Blücher, during her postwar visits to the old continent make for rather depressing reading.[62] And yet, within the ruins of post–World War II Europe, Arendt saw reasons to be optimistic about the postnational project of integration. In a letter to Jaspers in May 1958, she referred to Europe as "a totally godforsaken place except for the presence of the Coal and Steel Community."[63]

These are not words that we would expect from Arendt. To start with, she was generally skeptical of grand political gestures—after all, one could never be sure where action would lead once it was set in motion. The grandiose rhetoric surrounding the early stages of the project, such as French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman's declaration that European unification would make war on the continent "not only unthinkable, but materially impossible," probably stirred Arendt's disgust at utopian projects that displayed a "contempt for reality." Naïve liberals promoting "hubristic . . . programmes for political change" had made similar claims about the restraining power of economic ties both before and after the Great War.[64]

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[60] Andrew Feenberg, *Heidegger and Marcuse: The Catastrophe and Redemption of History* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 138; Rensmann, "Europeanism and Americanism in the Age of Globalization," 144–45.

[61] Hannah Arendt, *Essays in Understanding*, 108, 113; Arendt, *On Revolution*, 195.

[62] See Hannah Arendt and Heinrich Blücher, *Within Four Walls: The Correspondence between Hannah Arendt and Heinrich Blücher, 1936–1968* (New York: Harcourt, 2000). Also Hannah Arendt, "The Aftermath of Nazi Rule: Report from Germany," in *Essays in Understanding, 1930–1954*, 248–69.

[63] Hannah Arendt and Karl Jaspers, *Correspondence, 1926–1969*, ed. Lotte Kohler and Hans Saner (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1993), 351.

[64] Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, 458; Patricia Owens, "The Ethic of Reality in Hannah Arendt," in *Political Thought and International Relations: Variations on a Realist Theme*, ed. Duncan Bell (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 105; also Owens,

Arendt was also wary of a project so closely connected to conservative Christian Democratic politicians such as Schuman and German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer. She did not share their anachronistic visions of European integration as a reunification of Christendom that was shattered by the breakup of the Carolingian Empire and the onset of the Reformation. The idea of *une Europe vaticane* was no more appealing to her than it was to the Marxist and Protestant opponents of integration.[65]

Finally, Arendt can hardly have been enthusiastic about the technical, economistic approach to "sectoral integration" developed by French technocrat Jean Monnet, the main institutional architect of integration. Along with many of her contemporaries, she had a rather bleak, dystopian vision of an industrial future governed by bureaucrats. Her critique of industry and increased mechanization centered on the threat that technology and new forms of administration pose to political life.

Much like Theodor Adorno and Herbert Marcuse, who wrote of a "totally administered society" that flattens individuals into an interchangeable "one-dimensional man," Arendt also feared the dominance of economic thinking in public life.[66] She deplored the increasing encroachment of economics into politics, a phenomenon she described as "the rise of the social."[67] It is hard to see why Arendt would endorse Monnet's vision of a hyperproductive, economically efficient, technologically advanced, and integrated European "metallurgical state" (*état métallurgique*), where both workers and goods could move freely through a common market.[68] In fact, based on her

"Hannah Arendt," 35. For an example of naïve liberalism, see Norman Angell, *The Great Illusion: A Study of the Relation of Military Power in Nations to Their Economic and Social Advantage* (New York: Putnam, 1910).

[65]Philippe Chenaux and Jean Marie Mayeur, *Une Europe vaticane? Entre le Plan Marshall et les Traités de Rome* (Brussels: Éditions Ciaco, 1990). For an example of Arendt's view of Adenauer, see Arendt and Jaspers, *Correspondence*, 370. Other thinkers like Theodor Adorno shared this suspicion of Adenauer and the Christian Democrats. In 1956 Adorno observed that despite the difficulties inherent in political involvement, "we must be against Adenauer" (Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, "Towards a New Manifesto?," *New Left Review* 65 [September–October 2010]: 57).

[66]See Richard Wolin, *The Frankfurt School Revisited and Other Essays on Politics and Society* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 232.

[67]As Arendt points out, "Economics . . . could achieve a scientific character only when men had become social beings and unanimously followed certain patterns of behavior, so that those who did not keep the rules could be considered to be asocial or abnormal" (*The Human Condition*, 42).

[68]See "L'organisation politique et économique de l'Europe occidentale," in *Une Europe inédite: Documents des archives Jean Monnet*, ed. Bernard Lefort (Villeneuve d'Ascq: Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, 2001), 61–71.

theoretical priors, it is easier to imagine that for Arendt this vision of Europe would have been more of a dystopia than a dream.

Despite these considerations, Lars Rensmann suggests that Arendt's support for the Coal and Steel Community as a "genuinely political [act] of foundation and cooperation" is rooted in her belief that the nascent EU represented a "*political* federation" based on "the idea of freedom and public deliberation." Similarly, Owens argues that we can explain Arendt's support for integration by seeing the ECSC as part of "a modest cosmopolitanism of inter-republic law." Both point to Arendt's general support for local councils that break down existing political boundaries within "a postnational democratic-republican model of interlinked polities" as evidence for this interpretation of Arendt's support for European integration.[69]

While such explanations provide some resources to help explain Arendt's support for European integration, they do not hold up under closer scrutiny. Arendt endorsed the council system that emerged from the Paris commune and the small "soviets" of the early Russian Revolution as "revolutionary organs of self-government" because they drew their authority directly from the people, instead of from representatives to which the people "surrendered their power."[70] Given her support of local, subnational political councils, where individuals who knew each other could "act in concert," Arendt can hardly have been enthusiastic about supranational political structures like the High Authority of the ECSC, where technocrats could make decisions without being directly accountable to the peoples of the member states.[71]

In addition to considerations of size, Arendt's views on the councils that flickered into existence during the French, American, and Hungarian revolutions is rooted in the fact that she saw these as attempts to "shake the state concept and its sovereignty." So far so good: by inducing states to permanently cede sovereignty over certain decisions to structures outside their internal constitutional architecture, the ECSC did indeed question both of these ideas. However, Arendt also notes that "if men wish to be free, it is precisely sovereignty they must renounce."[72] Far from bringing nations to renounce their sovereignty, freeing individuals from the stultifying constraints of sovereignty, the treaties founding the ECSC (1951) and the European Economic Community (1957) merely moved this basic principle

[69]Rensmann, "Europeanism and Americanism in the Age of Globalization," 160, 146; Owens, "Hannah Arendt," 39; Owens, "Walking Corpses," 76.

[70]Arendt, *On Revolution*, 247, 248.

[71]The High Authority was a sticking point for a number of postwar intellectuals. For instance, Alexandre Kojève gave up his career as a philosopher to take up a position at the French Ministry of Economic Affairs. From there, he wrote "memorandum after memorandum against supranationality and the High Authority" (Craig Parsons, *A Certain Idea of Europe* [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003], 58).

[72]Hannah Arendt, *Crises of the Republic* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1969), 231; Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 165.

up to a higher level. For Arendt, this meant one of two things: "supranational authority would either be ineffective or monopolized by the nation that happens to be the strongest." These reflections make it hard to connect Arendt's support for the early phases of integration to the attention she drew to "the formation of councils and small-scale republics and popular bodies not always limited by national or state frontiers."[73]

And yet, despite all this, Arendt was a strong supporter of the postwar European movement. Instead of rejecting the Schuman Declaration of 1950, with its lofty, idealistic rhetoric, bureaucratic approach, and economic nature, Arendt described it and the movement it spawned as "the pardon and the promise" of the postwar world.[74] How can this be? Where does Arendt's support for the ECSC and the project of European integration more generally come from?

It is hard to come to definitive conclusions on the reasons for Arendt's views of European integration, since she "never clearly and systematically set out her thought in this area." Despite the "fragmentary character of Arendt's writings on these themes," I argue that this strong support is rooted in Arendt's interpretation of the supranational institutions created in postwar Europe as the first step in the foundation of a new "community of memory."[75] Although many aspects of the proposal went against her theoretical priors, Arendt recognized the Schuman Declaration and all that followed it as a form of action par excellence. I contend that Arendt saw early steps of European integration as a "new beginning," i.e., as an attempt to found a new political community around the "pearls" brought forth from the depths of the shattered narrative of the nationalist past.

Given her background as "a theorist of the unprecedented, of political novelty," I argue that Arendt supported integration because she saw it as an affirmation of the continued capacity of individuals to "create something anew" despite totalitarianism's attempts to destroy "action in concert."[76] Arendt never set out a concrete institutional design for the cosmopolitan future she imagined. In part this might have been because she was unsure of how to fit all of her reflections—the many pearls she had brought up from the past—into a coherent whole. Additionally, Arendt did not believe that political theory, or "the philosophy of mankind," as she called it, could or should "prescribe any particular political action."[77] From this perspective, it is not the contents of the proposal for the ECSC that are crucial, but the mere

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[73]Arendt, *Crises of the Republic*, 230; Owens, "Hannah Arendt," 40.

[74]Arendt quoted in Nikola Tietze and Ulrich Bielefeld, "In Search of Europe: An Interview with Jacques Delors," *Eurozine*, 1 July 2011, 2.

[75]Owens, "Walking Corpses," 73; Aleida Assmann, "Europe: A Community of Memory?," *GHI Bulletin* 40 (Spring 2007): 11–25.

[76]Owens, "The Ethic of Reality in Hannah Arendt," 116.

[77]Hannah Arendt, *Men in Dark Times* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1968), 93, 90–91.

fact that it sought to take up the past in a new way, giving birth to a form of politics that might prove better than the nation-state at preserving plurality and natality.

For Arendt the idea that European unification could be the answer to "the German problem" grew directly from Europe's experience of totalitarianism. This built on the convictions of many of the individuals involved in the continental resistance during World War II:

> Those who emerged to wage war fought against fascism and nothing else. And this is not surprising; what is surprising precisely because of its strict, almost logical consequence is, rather, that all of these movements at once found a positive political slogan which plainly indicated the non-national though very popular character of the new struggle. That slogan was simply EUROPE.[78]

Like many survivors of the war, Arendt saw Europe as the solution to the problem of violence on the old continent. Totalitarianism and the Second World War were the nadir; a sign that drastic change was needed. However, despite the traumatic nature of this experience, Arendt feared that if the memories of it faded from the lived experience of individuals, the imperative for change would also be lost. To prevent this from happening, she believed that these memories must be continually "refabricated," actively and consciously remembered, recalled afresh for posterity. Despite the attempts of politicians to use memory as an instrument of short-term politics, she argued that totalitarianism must remain at the center of the modern historical consciousness. As a mode of preserving the memory of fascism and ensuring the possibility of political action, Arendt supported what she described as the "very healthy and necessary efforts to federate the European nations."[79]

Arendt argued that the lessons of the past, including the plight of minorities within the national states of the interwar years and the destructive power of nationalism displayed in two World Wars, showed that the nation-state had become untenable as the basic unit of political organization on the continent. Arendt endorsed the project of European integration as a possible solution to the "European crisis which made possible the German conquest of the continent." As early as 1942, she had become "a believer in European unity" by going back to "a tradition of political thinking which should be our particular concern today and which seemed almost lost in the nationalism of the 19th century." Thus founding of the ECSC in 1951 can be seen as the kind of "non-violent, non-imperial, non-ideological political founding" Arendt sought.[80]

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[78]Arendt, *Essays in Understanding*, 112.

[79]Ibid., 416–17.

[80]Ibid., 108; Hannah Arendt, "A Believer in European Unity," review of *Friedrich von Gentz: Defender of the Old Order*, by Paul R. Sweet, *Review of Politics* 4, no. 2 (1942): 247; Owens, "Walking Corpses," 75.

There are actually a number of aspects of the institutional infrastructure of the ECSC that fit within Arendt's general political framework. Although Arendt did fear administration, she also recognized it as an important aspect of "good governance," i.e., of the political community that provides the space for memory and action through law and other forms of bureaucratic order.[81] Her deepest worries about supranational authorities in the abstract was that they would centralize power completely by destroying all forms of agonistic political plurality and opposition, resulting in "not only a forbidding nightmare of tyranny . . . [but] the end of all political life as we know it."

Despite their supranational character, neither the ECSC nor the institutions created by the EU since then have ever had their own police force or other means of direct coercive enforcement. Instead, Europe has left the implementation of its directives to the member states, ensuring that power remained "strictly limited, rooted in and controlled by newly defined territorial entities." In delegating certain decisions up to the supranational level, the member states have continued to act as "elementary republics" controlling the apparatus of legitimate coercion.[82]

These considerations may have been enough to convince Arendt to abandon her preference for "*inter*-national authority" in favor of the supranational European institutions created in the 1950s. Despite her reservations about grand political gestures and international law, Owens notes that Arendt was never able to "completely separate herself from the Kantian legacy of strengthened institutionalization of laws above and below the nation-state." Although it was limited to certain sectors within Europe, it is possible to chart a path from the initial steps of regional integration in one part of the world toward similar movements elsewhere, eventually leading to the "worldwide federated structure" that Arendt theorized.[83]

This is not to say that Arendt abandoned all caution or that she did not see the flaws of the European project. On the contrary, she worried that a European federation could turn into a vehicle for a new, pan-European nationalism.[84] However, this possibility lay far in the future. It presumed that Europe would be able to homogenize differences, uniting its members as tightly as the nation-state had done. Subsequent events have shown that national identities are surprisingly resilient, despite the EU's efforts to encourage the creation of a truly European, nonnational understanding of the past.[85] Arendt's endorsement of the European project is rooted in her

[81]Cf. Michelle Rodriguez, "The Challenges of Keeping a World: Hannah Arendt on Administration," *Polity* 40, no. 4 (2008): 488–508.

[82]Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*, 81; Arendt, *On Revolution*, 267.

[83]Arendt, *Crises of the Republic*, 231; Owens, "Walking Corpses," 81; Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*, 81.

[84]Rensmann, "Europeanism and Americanism in the Age of Globalization," 139–70.

[85]Cf. Jan-Werner Müller, "Europäische Erinnerungspolitik Revisited," *Transit: Europäische Revue*, no. 33 (2007): 125–37.

conviction that a Europe founded on the legacy of the anti-Nazi resistance can become a new political federation guided by the ideas of freedom and public deliberation at a level beyond the nation-state.

Conclusion

I began by distinguishing a constructive conception of memory I associated with Arendt from the more common interpretation of remembrance as a stabilizing force. Scholars of memory often associate the latter view, which sees remembrance as a hindrance to action because it binds individuals and communities to causal chains based on past grievances, with Friedrich Nietzsche. Despite its popularity, this is an extremely one-sided reading. Looking beyond the *Untimely Meditations* (1876)—and, more specifically, the essay "On the Use and Abuse of History for Life"—to the *Genealogy of Morals* (1887), Nietzsche himself admits that no culture, society, or stable social order is possible without history and memory. Although he is not prepared to endorse memory as a "positive" or constructive force, Nietzsche concludes that humanity is faced with the "paradoxical task" of having to remember its history while not being completely trapped by the past.[86]

Arendt's conception of memory as a stabilizing force mirrors the prevailing understanding of collective memory. However, Arendt does not associate memory solely with destructive "cycles of hatred." On the contrary, she sees memory as an important resource for political innovation following Benjaminian historical ruptures. Arendt argues that these tears in the historical fabric of time force individuals to question underlying structures and established historical narratives by creating a gap between the past and the future. Though Arendt is committed to the belief that "new beginnings" are a fundamental aspect of all politics, she argues that ruptures make "action in concert" more likely, powerful, and necessary. By breaking the seemingly inevitable link between the backward-looking narratives of the past and prospects for the future, these moments unbind elements that were previously fused together, allowing them to be reconstructed in new ways.

Arendt does not have a robust, general theory of rupture, nor does she discuss whether fundamental narrative reconstructions are possible without drastic breaks in historical time. However, she recognizes that totalitarianism is not the only rupture in human history. In particular, she points to "the Reformation's irremediable split of Western Christianity" during the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648) as another "most disturbing" event "that [could not] be explained by any existing chain of causality."[87] In *Men in Dark Times* (1955), the only non-twentieth-century thinker Arendt engages with

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[86]Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Geneology of Morals and Ecce Homo*, ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 57.

[87]Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 249, 248.

and "treats as though he is a contemporary" is Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, who wrote in the aftermath of this rift.[88] She also voices a worry about future ruptures, particularly the dislocations that will result from the increasing dominance of technology in the modern world.[89]

Arendt argues forcefully that totalitarianism must remain at the center of the modern historical consciousness. The EU has made an important contribution to the singular focus on totalitarianism and the Holocaust in postwar Europe.[90] However, it has not succeeded in saving the memory of totalitarianism from the oblivion of historical normalization. On the contrary, as Paul Scheffer points out, "Nightmare images of a possible return to previous violent conflicts [have become] a distraction." While older generations accept the idea of Europe born out of the rupture of 1945, this narrative has less traction with younger cohorts.[91] Despite its importance for the history of European integration, the EU has not been able to forge these events into a coherent "story of peoplehood," existing alongside national narratives of history.[92] Contrary to Arendt's fears about the rise of a pan-European nationalism, the EU appears to have not been successful enough in overcoming the old nationalisms of the nineteenth century.

At the start of the second millennium, the generation that experienced and can remember totalitarianism and the events of the Second World War is no longer active in public life. Whereas previous generations of European political leaders were able to draw on shared memories of the rupture dating back to 1945, the cadre that has come to power since the turn of the millennium does not have access to this reservoir of the shared experience of war. As a result, it has become increasingly clear that Europe "can no longer play the war card" to motivate and justify integration.

Ironically, this problem may be related to the industrialist economic foundations of the EU and Arendt's analysis of "the rise of the social." Despite many initiatives in culture and education, the EU is organized around a Common Market with the goal of increasing productivity across national borders. The increasing embrace of neoliberal economic rights and freedoms

[88]Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*, ix, vii. See Seyla Benhabib, Roy T. Tsao, and Peter J. Verovšek, eds., *Politics in Dark Times: Encounters with Hannah Arendt* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

[89]Arendt, *The Human Condition*, chap. 6.

[90]Chiara Bottici, "Europe, War and Remembrance," in *The Search for a European Identity: Values, Policies and Legitimacy of the European Union*, ed. Furio Cerutti and Sonia Lucarelli (London: Routledge, 2008), 45–58.

[91]Paul Scheffer, "EU Can No Longer Play the War Card," *De Morgen*, 19 January 2012, http://www.presseurop.eu/en/content/article/1416561-eu-can-no-longer-play-war-card; Neil Fligstein, *Euro-Clash: The EU, European Identity, and the Future of Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 141.

[92]Rogers M. Smith, *Stories of Peoplehood: The Politics and Morals of Political Membership* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

by European institutions through what is usually referred to as "negative" integration has made the "fabrication" of a common memory more difficult among younger generations, who have learned to think of the EU as a purely economic project.[93]

This result is precisely what Arendt feared. It can hardly be an accident that the rise of the first cohort of European leaders who have no personal memory of the Second World War coincides with a return to nationalist thinking and national solutions to the problems posed by the Eurozone crisis that started in 2010. Whereas previous cohorts of European leaders—from the early constellation of Monnet, Schuman, and Adenauer to the later grouping of Jacques Delors, François Mitterrand, and Helmut Kohl—were able to use the past to create common ground and commit to common, European solutions, these resources for continental solidarity do not appear to be available any longer.[94] The fading of the rupture of totalitarianism from European memory thus threatens to turn what Arendt referred to as "the pardon and the promise" of European integration into a short interlude in the history of "the cheapest and the most dangerous disguise" of the nation-state.

[93] Alessandra Beasley, "Public Discourse and Cosmopolitan Political Identity: Imagining the European Union Citizen," *Futures* 38 (2006): 139.

[94] Peter J. Verovšek, "Memory and the Euro-Crisis of Leadership: The Effects of Generational Change in Germany and the EU," *Constellations* (forthcoming).